



ASPEN NETWORK
OF DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURS

aspen institute

Digitalization Learning Lab Brief



January 2022

About this report

The pandemic accelerated the transition towards digitalization for many small and growing businesses (SGBs) and the entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs) that support them.

What was perceived as a buzzword in past years has now become a necessary step for organizations to overcome numerous challenges and work to quickly transform processes and services. ANDE's goal is to learn and support ESOs and SGBs as they discover what digitalization means to their organizations.

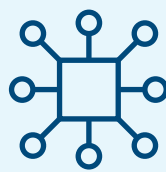
ANDE's Digitalization Learning Labs are a series of convenings that aim to support the digital transformation of the SGB sector by exchanging knowledge among ANDE members and evaluating their needs. With program design support from Accenture Development Partnerships, ANDE's global chapters aim to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing among professionals in the SGB support sector and assess the needs of ESOs to help promote their digitalization.

The content of this document is divided into the [three modules](#) of the Learning Lab sessions that were carried out by ANDE chapters. Each one includes the purpose of the stage, the diverse methodologies that support digital transformation and reflections of how and why to use these, which are based on the experience of three ANDE members who were interviewed for this report. Following you will find:



MODULE 1:

Know your user
– create your offer



MODULE 2:

Define what you need
to deliver digitally



MODULE 3:

Visualize, measure, and
iterate your digital strategy

Acknowledgements

ANDE Digitalization Learning Labs are part of the Global Inclusive Growth Partnership (GIGP), a collaboration between the Aspen Institute and the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth.





Module 1

Know your user - Create your value proposition

Purpose: understanding the potential users, their behaviors and needs in order for organizations to offer them a product or service better aligned to them.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Camille Linqier

– Partnerships and Programme Manager at African Management Institute

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Knowing the needs of our customers and which of our products are working or not, are two of the most important learnings organizations can get. By constantly focusing on products and services, organizations often hold a bias that prevents them from objectively analyzing the needs of their customers.

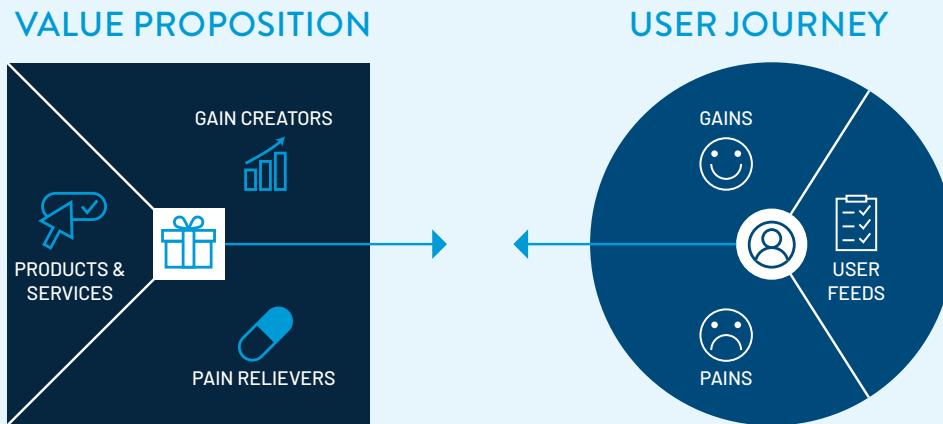
We have learned, and subsequently helped companies keep track of their products by collecting data that allows them to make more informed decisions. At the same time, we try to make them understand their customers to offer them a better product.”

The data a company is able to obtain through sales reports, for instance, does not translate into a complete understanding of its users. To solve this, participants of this module will use the Value Proposition Canvas, a tool that helps organizations understand their customers' needs. This involves analyzing the obstacles they face, identifying what is working and what the user wants from a company and its products or services. Then, organizations are able to create a set of value proposition benefits for their customers.

Fig 1. Value Proposition Canvas

The VPC helps organizations to observe customers and identify characteristics that you assume, observe, and verify in the market. Then it drives organizations to create a set of value proposition benefits to attract customers.

“We need to look at our customers and create the habit of wanting to serve them, while observing our products and their performance.”



In this scenario, the Value Proposition Canvas becomes an essential tool that allows both SGBs and ESOs to identify the needs and characteristics of potential users to offer the appropriate products and services.

Fig 2. Value Proposition.

The Value Proposition describes the benefits customers can expect from your products and services. Organizations must first understand their users in order to offer them a Value Proposition that fulfills their expectations.

“We have seen many companies that have started selling their products online. These tools allowed them to continue doing business and expand their reach.”





Module 2

Define what you need to deliver digitally

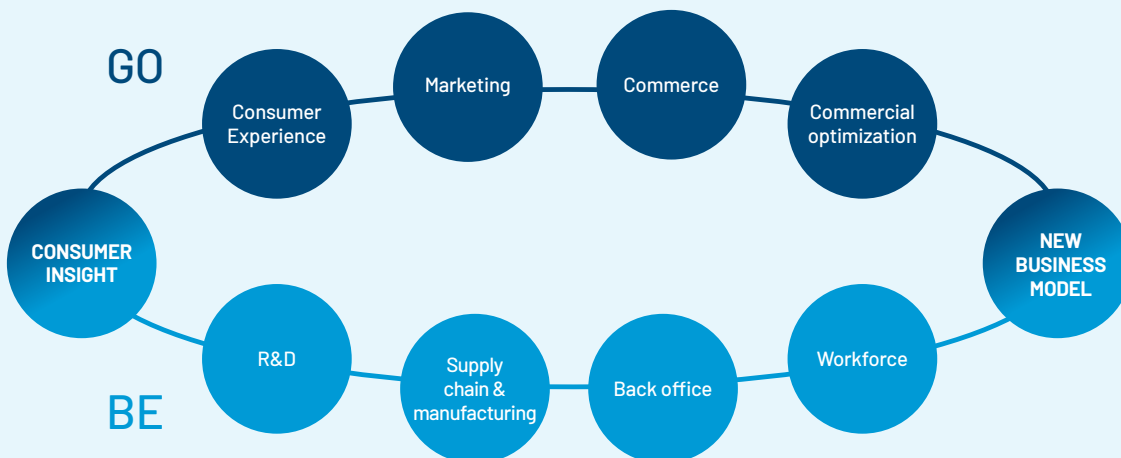
Purpose: help organizations to analyze their digital strategies to identify opportunities for improvement via user scenarios. These transformation processes may be applied in products, services, and in both internal and external processes.

Digital transformation begins by answering these questions: What do we want to transform through digitalization? Who is most impacted by this transformation and what do we want to achieve with it? By pairing the answers with consumer insights, we can then start to develop a roadmap.

Participants of this module learn to use two methodologies: First, “Go vs. Be Digital”, a tool that helps build new business models based on digital transformations around an internal process, a product, or a service. Second, “Digital Journey Canvas”, that helps plot the course of actions that a user has on a given scenario and allows organizations to analyze how many resources they will need to implement a digital offer.

Figure 3. “Go vs. Be model, Accenture Development Partnerships”

Go vs Be model helps organizations to define their digital strategy from two perspectives, the first one—Go—focuses on the external offering of a product or service and how to deliver it to the customer, while the second—Be—focuses on internal processes or transformations inside the organization that will help building a new business model, product or service.



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Shyama Sinha

— Engineer Solutions at Vera Solutions

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Despite the fact that most of our products were already digital, we made relevant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. We changed the way we delivered information to our clients and that is how we began this digital transformation, in the way we impart workshops.”

The creation of a digital strategy sparks transformation that can generate changes in the business model, in the mindset of staff, and in the way they operate. “For us and our clients, digital transformation means moving forward and obtaining tools that will help us to be more efficient in the way we operate our businesses.” The process of defining what you need to deliver digitally not only means to involve new technologies, it becomes a reflection exercise that focuses on both your organization and your customer journey.

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SGBs are looking for better ways to gather and manage data in ways that can eventually help them be more strategic. Data management is only one of the many examples of how organizations need and can transform digitally.”

Digital strategies have narrowed the communication gap among SGB teams and increased collaboration and efficiency. This also applies for ESOs, who became able to see the areas they should focus their work, how they would implement the digital strategy considering both customer insights and their digital journey. It's not only about the technology they can access or use, but the strategy of how to use it and where to use it.

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Organizations like us play a key role in helping entrepreneurs accelerate their digitalization processes. Technology is an enabler, and I believe that support organizations can help SGBs get on the right path to the digital transformation they need.”



Module 3

Visualize, measure, and iterate on your digital strategy

Purpose: create a digital roadmap, a visual and high level representation of how a solution will evolve. It is an action plan that encourages collaboration, aligns stakeholders, and provides context for everyone involved in the project. This phase comes after defining what organizations want to offer through a value proposition and building the digital journey they need to follow internally or externally. Organizations now must create an action plan and prepare their teams for these transformational processes.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Jimena Barrera

— Project Manager for Digital Transformation at ProMujer

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One of the benefits of following a digital roadmap was understanding digital strategies in waves. This allowed us to evaluate and prioritize our main focus areas. The roadmap is a living and dynamic document that stimulates co-creation. After establishing this ‘how to do it’, participants will learn how to become agile teams in order to successfully follow the road they just developed.

ProMujer is a traditional organization that has been around for 30 years, and only recently chose a path towards agile management, innovation, and digital transformation. If we are committing ourselves to open spaces to innovate and create new tools for women, it makes sense that we also begin to explore new frameworks and new ways of organizing ourselves as a team.”

Agile methods allow you to build teams with a unified perspective. More than a method, agility becomes a mindset, a commitment to constant improvement with the ability to put aside traditional ways, focusing on autonomous, effective, and creative teams that constantly measure and evaluate to improve their performance. Just as the digital roadmap is a 'living document,' agile teams know how to adapt and align with this rapid and evolving tool. Teams take ownership of the decision-making, they become proactive and start to seek solutions by themselves. It allows leaders to determine the objectives.

Through these Learning Labs, ANDE contributes to organizations that are committed to the construction of these virtuous systems, to carry out projects that generate a real impact. *"At ProMujer, we have learned with these methods how to prioritize and how to articulate alliances with startups, fintechs, and impact investors to build collaborations to generate real impact in the digitalization of SGBs, especially women-led SGBs."*

Conclusion

Digital transformation is a process with unprecedented opportunities for both SBGs and ESOs. More than the adoption of technology, digitalization is a road of constant innovation, in which new tools are implemented to adapt or make organizations grow according to their objectives, needs and the challenges they face.

The path to reach this transformation is as important as the destination. Encouraging SGBs to have a broader perspective and acknowledge the potential digital tools can have in their organizations, creating a habit of innovation that allows them to continuously adapt to changes in the future.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SGB sector experienced an acceleration in the adoption of digital tools, modifying the way thousands of organizations do business. Both SGBs and ESOs should continue to work together in order to enhance, shift and transform the entrepreneurial ecosystem through inclusive digital means.



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