

COULD DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION DONE RIGHT IMPROVE THE SURVIVAL RATES OF 80% OF CMOS WHOSE CEO'S ARE UNDERWHELMED WITH THEIR PERFORMANCE?

By Michael Gale and Chris Aarons, Authors of [*The Digital Helix: Transforming Your Organization's DNA to Thrive in the Digital Age*](#)



A recent Harvard Business Review article asked the question, “[Why don’t CMO’s ever last?](#)” While this is a pretty dramatic headline, it is only surpassed by a quote on the first page that says, “80% of CEOs are unimpressed with their CMOs.” Aside from making for difficult one-on-ones and senior team meetings, working in marketing can’t be that healthy if the leader of your organization is unimpressed. Since trust is earned and a key currency at the executive suite level, this makes any cross-department work difficult as well. This is especially true for digital transformation, which often starts in marketing (over 35% of occasions from our primary research).

Remember, digital transformation and is often seen as the leading indicator of an organization's ability to thrive in the future. Our research showed that the 16% of organizations that do it extremely well get amazing economic returns:

87%

Saw enhanced growth in demand

56%

Saw sales and customer satisfaction rise

42%

Found new opportunities to solve digital challenges they had not recognized before

Cut OPEX

3X

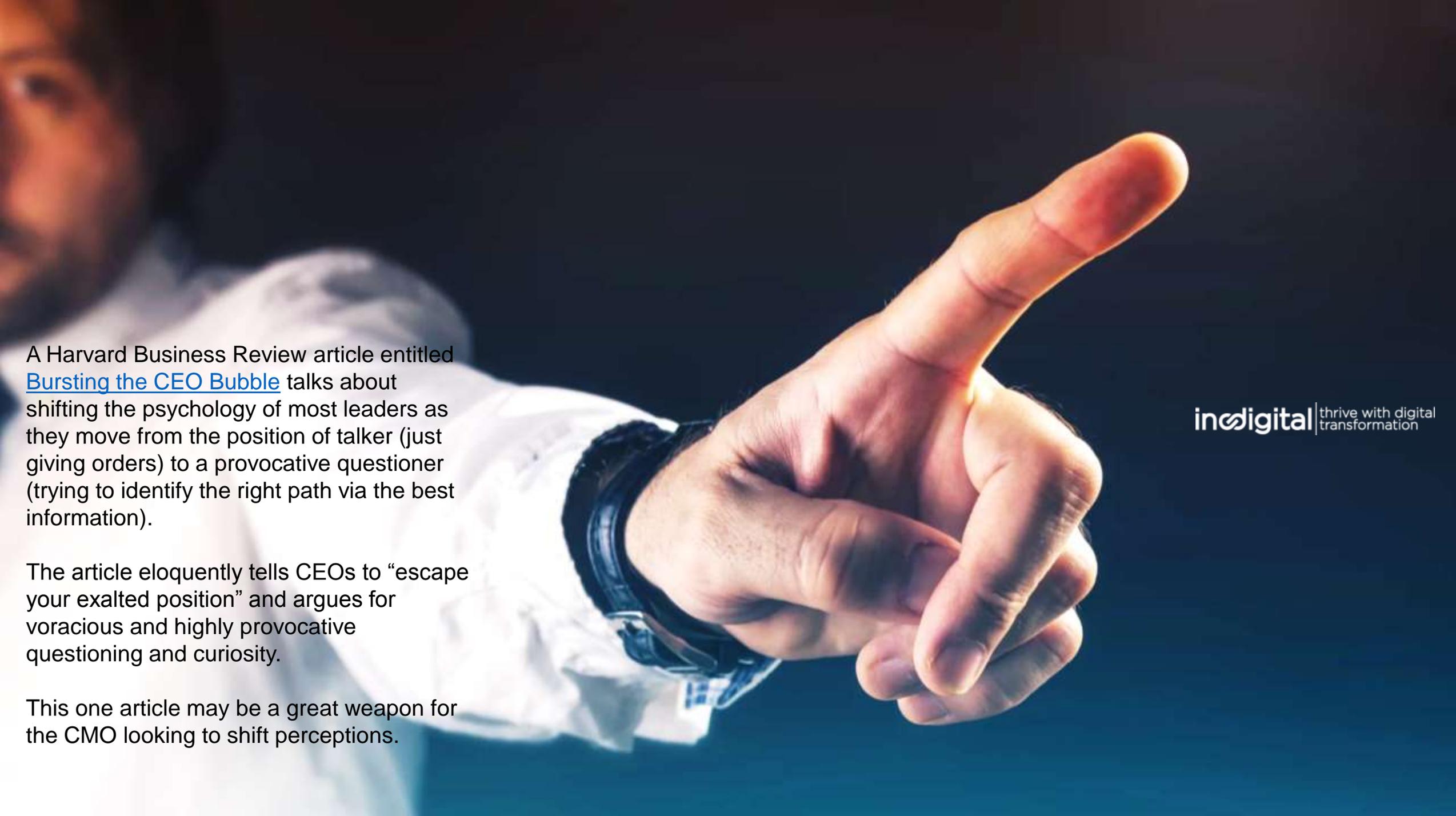
more than others.

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This puts immense pressure everywhere within the organization and creates multiple potential points of failure for the CMO.

As you might imagine, if the CEO is unimpressed, peers pick up on it begin to act accordingly. At the same time, marketing's staff may see a lack of corporate confidence and cooperation as the organization is not willing to put its full faith behind their efforts. In all, this is not a good place to be because everything is connected.

But it is interesting to view this issue from the CEO's perspective as well.



A Harvard Business Review article entitled [Bursting the CEO Bubble](#) talks about shifting the psychology of most leaders as they move from the position of talker (just giving orders) to a provocative questioner (trying to identify the right path via the best information).

The article eloquently tells CEOs to “escape your exalted position” and argues for voracious and highly provocative questioning and curiosity.

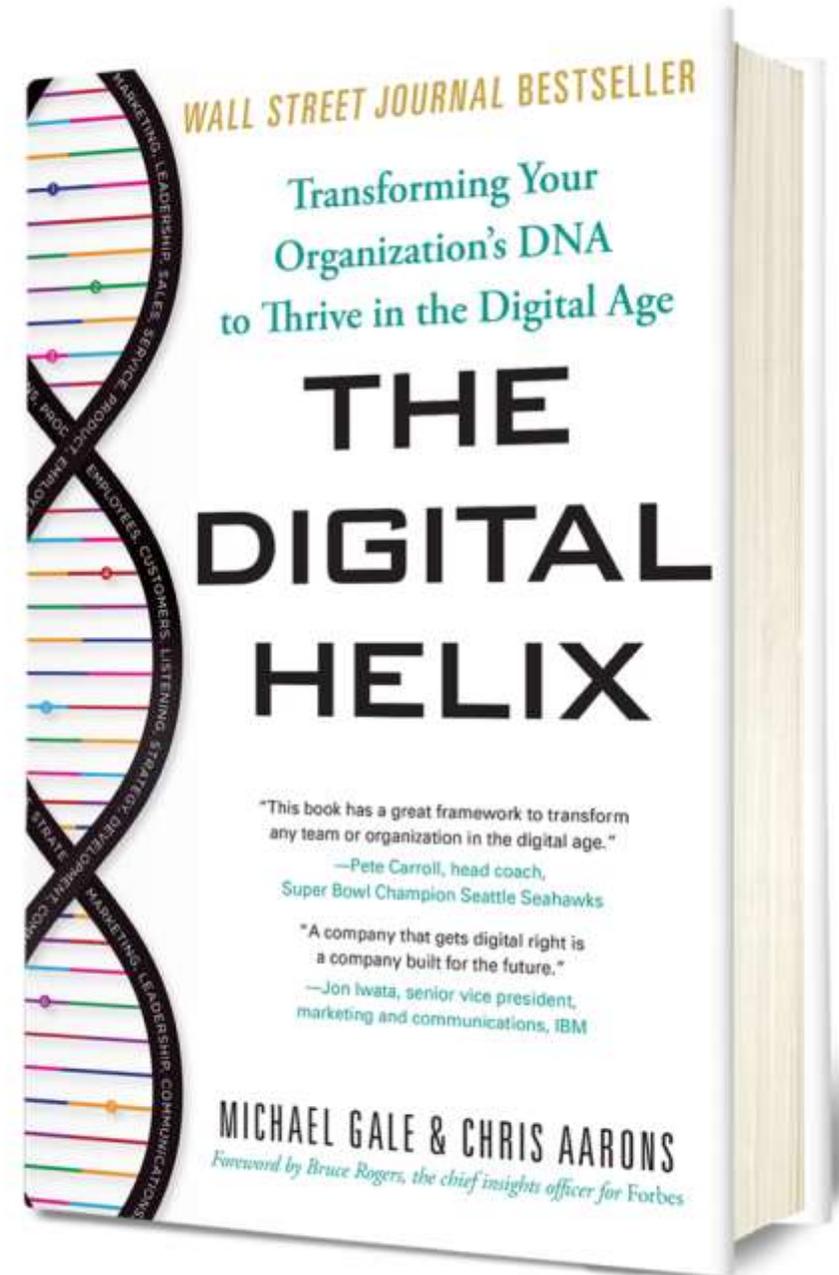
This one article may be a great weapon for the CMO looking to shift perceptions.

Our research and numerous interviews for the book, [The Digital Helix](#), shows that digital transformation success requires seven critical Digital DNA components to be connected and aligned.

One of these is executives as digital explorers.

This is essential for the 1 in 6 organizations we have measured that see real returns from their digital transformation efforts, and it shows how leaders need to go beyond telling and ordering, and charting the course with their teams in the trenches.

When you put this together with the role marketing should be playing in digital transformation, we see four keys for dramatically changing a CMOs fortunes with the CEO and simultaneously improving their chances to get digital transformation right.



1. LANGUAGE IS VITAL, EDUCATE AND ADOPT

We talk about myths and realities of the new digitally transforming world in the book. The numerous interviews and years of research show us how much the right words push transformation for digital leaders. For example, think of two simple changes, using the word “engagement” instead of “reach”, or discussing leading indicators rather than KPIs. Engagement is everywhere and reach is overly simplistic. A simple word or concept cannot adequately describe the intertwined complexity of the new digital world. Customers now use their portfolios of experiences (a collection of everything they take away from what they see and view, online and off) to make decisions. The simple idea of focusing on reach does not keep the focus where it needs to be, on the totality of a customer’s experiences. The same can be said about the term “KPIs”, as they look backwards. In our fast-paced environment, successful organizations focus on looking forward and around the corner. That is why leading indicators are so vital: what happened yesterday is not always an indication of what will happen tomorrow or in the future.

EXERCISE:

Build The Right New Language

Get your teams together and build a new lexicography for marketing. Create an example of each new word and how it differs from older terms and values. Also, look for real things you and the team need to stop, start and do differently to make the terms deliver and come alive. Finally, show the list of words and examples to other groups within the organizations to get feedback and buy in.

2. MANY CEOS STILL LIVE IN A BINARY WORLD, SO HELP EDUCATE THEM

You cannot underestimate the value of being on the same playing field with the same reference points when having strategic discussions. This is a CMO's job and there are examples aplenty within yours and other industries showing how competitor and customer behaviors are changing. You can make this education process tangible by showing real world examples to ground the discussions. But real leaders will not only help the CEO see this new world with examples, but also provide a plan to show how this information is being used by marketing to move swiftly forward.

[*The Digital Helix*](#) book has key chapters and on the drivers for change and the digital DNA components to focus on that includes themes and streams, customer portfolios of experiences, sales moments and marketing and communications as a flow to aid your discussions.



EXERCISE:

Educate The CXO

We wrote [*The Digital Helix*](#) to help leaders thrive in the Digital Age. The key is to actually go through the drivers and challenges exercise in the book as a team to show the other leaders how digital transformation is going to change how everyone thinks and acts. Also, it is important to show how marketing is looking to change the relationship with the customer. This is important because the CEO may not be the only leader “unimpressed with the CMO.” This is not because most CMOs are bad. It is largely due to the fact that marketing is the key link between customers and the organization and thus the softest point when struggling to evolve in a digitally transforming world.



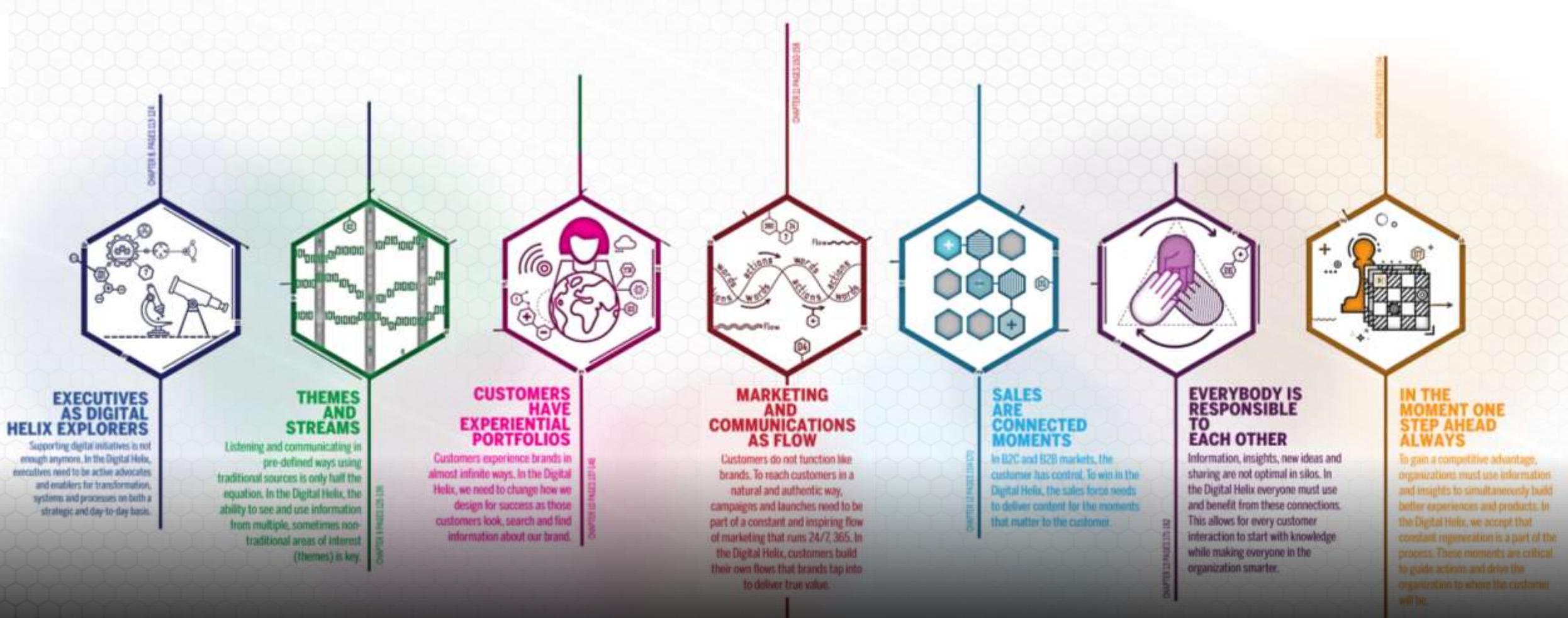
3. BE DIGITALLY TRANSFORMED IN MARKETING AND LET GO

You cannot lead a revolution from the back table. You need to explore, use new themes and streams of information, focus on the customer's portfolio of experiences, manage around sales moments and have marketing and communications deliver everything as one flow. Showing that marketing is leading and working to find new ways to reward and collaborate with service, sales, product design and across the organization is vital because the best way to change the conversion is to lead it.

EXERCISE:

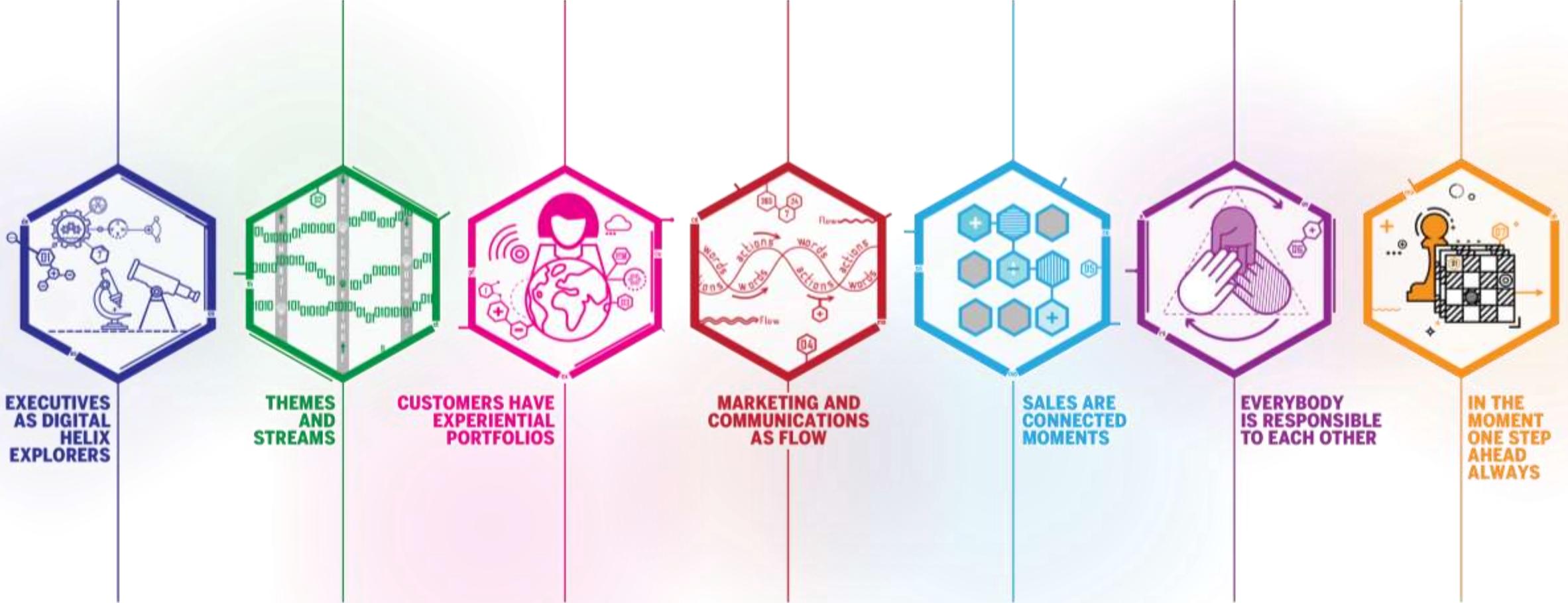
Show Your Digital Transformation

While this might sound trite, having a war room for each the seven digital DNA components you are working on is a great way to keep focus and show progress. Find partners with stakeholder groups and reward everyone for collaborating, sharing and learning together (not just for ticking items off lists of deliverables). The secret here is you need to show this as a living process.



4. ADOPT THE SEVEN DIGITAL DNA MARKERS IN HOW YOU WORK, THINK AND INVEST

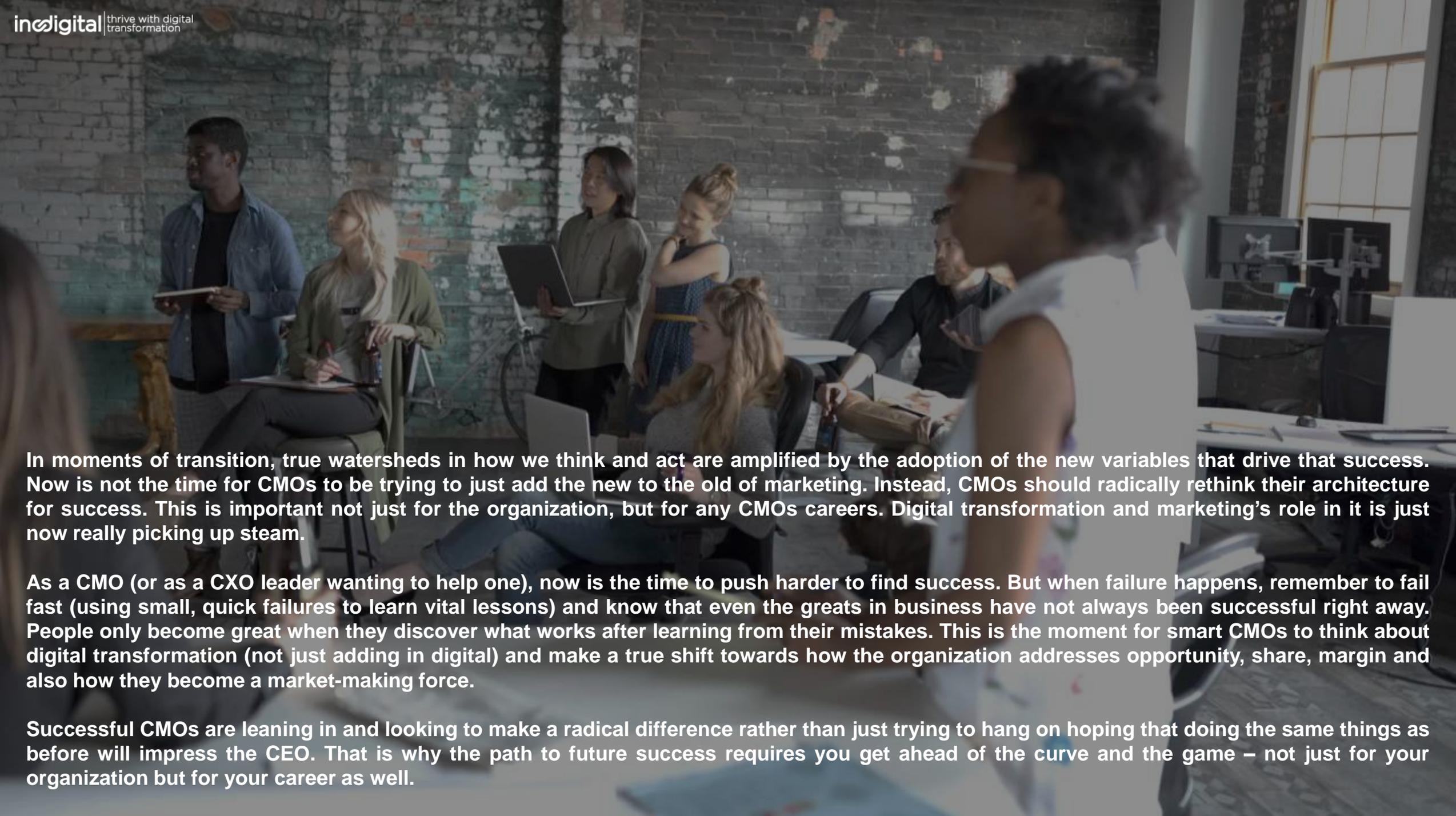
Digital transformation is touching everybody, and everything we think and do. There is little doubt that if your decisions as marketers don't start with a digital mindset, you are not going to be successful. In fact, 40% of organizations are abandoning the march forward to become digital at their core due to perceived failures. That is why showing progress and success (small wins) can counteract any failures to keep your digital efforts moving ahead.



EXERCISE:

Try And See Where You Are

Inside the front covers of the book, we have laid out the seven digital DNA components for success. Think of these like a status or health check for the organization. Invest some time with some key colleagues and discuss where you are on these markers. The conversation alone should spark ideas and show weaknesses that need to be addressed.



In moments of transition, true watersheds in how we think and act are amplified by the adoption of the new variables that drive that success. Now is not the time for CMOs to be trying to just add the new to the old of marketing. Instead, CMOs should radically rethink their architecture for success. This is important not just for the organization, but for any CMOs careers. Digital transformation and marketing's role in it is just now really picking up steam.

As a CMO (or as a CXO leader wanting to help one), now is the time to push harder to find success. But when failure happens, remember to fail fast (using small, quick failures to learn vital lessons) and know that even the greats in business have not always been successful right away. People only become great when they discover what works after learning from their mistakes. This is the moment for smart CMOs to think about digital transformation (not just adding in digital) and make a true shift towards how the organization addresses opportunity, share, margin and also how they become a market-making force.

Successful CMOs are leaning in and looking to make a radical difference rather than just trying to hang on hoping that doing the same things as before will impress the CEO. That is why the path to future success requires you get ahead of the curve and the game – not just for your organization but for your career as well.

“THE DIGITAL AGE IS HERE”

By Jimmy Rayon / October 19, 2017

Format: Kindle Edition/Verified Purchase

“FULL OF GREAT INFORMATION”

By Shanellon / October 22, 2017

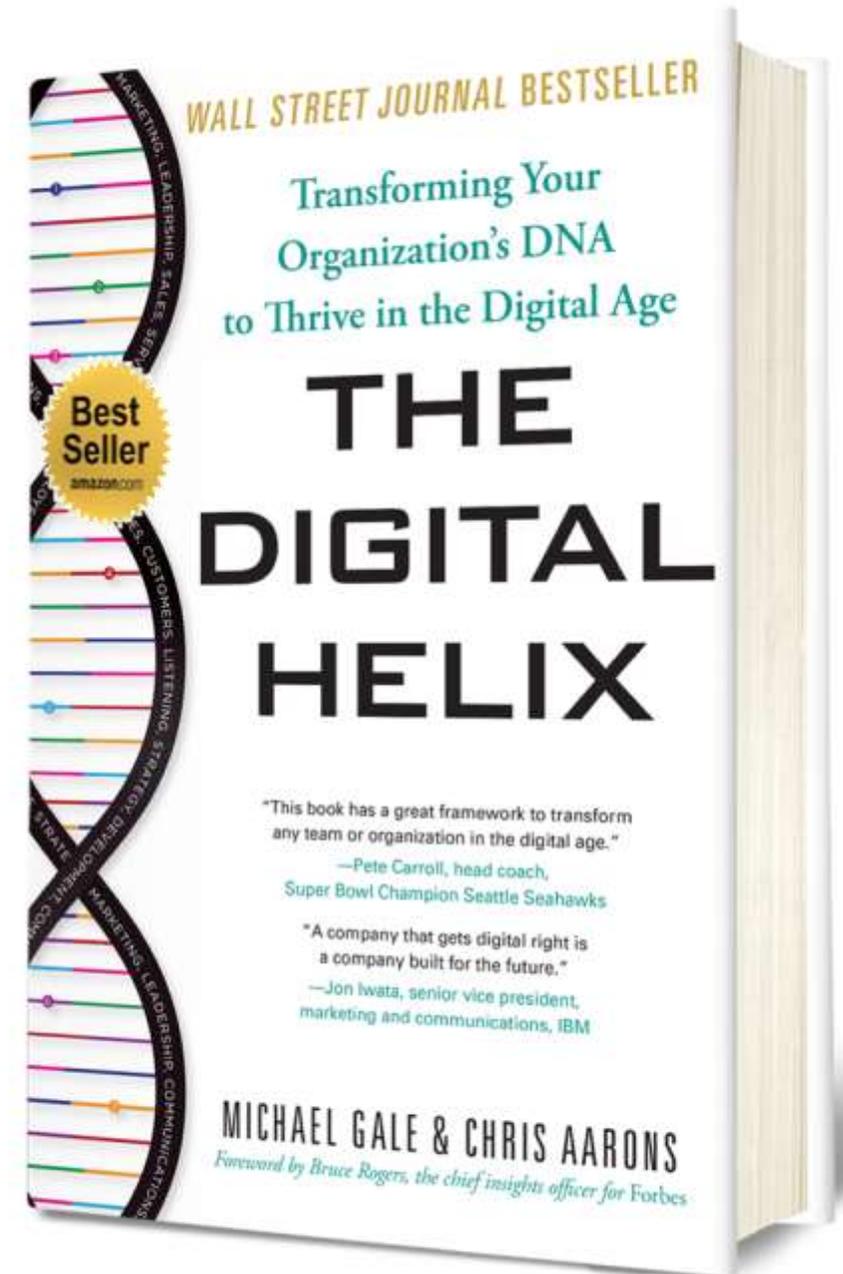
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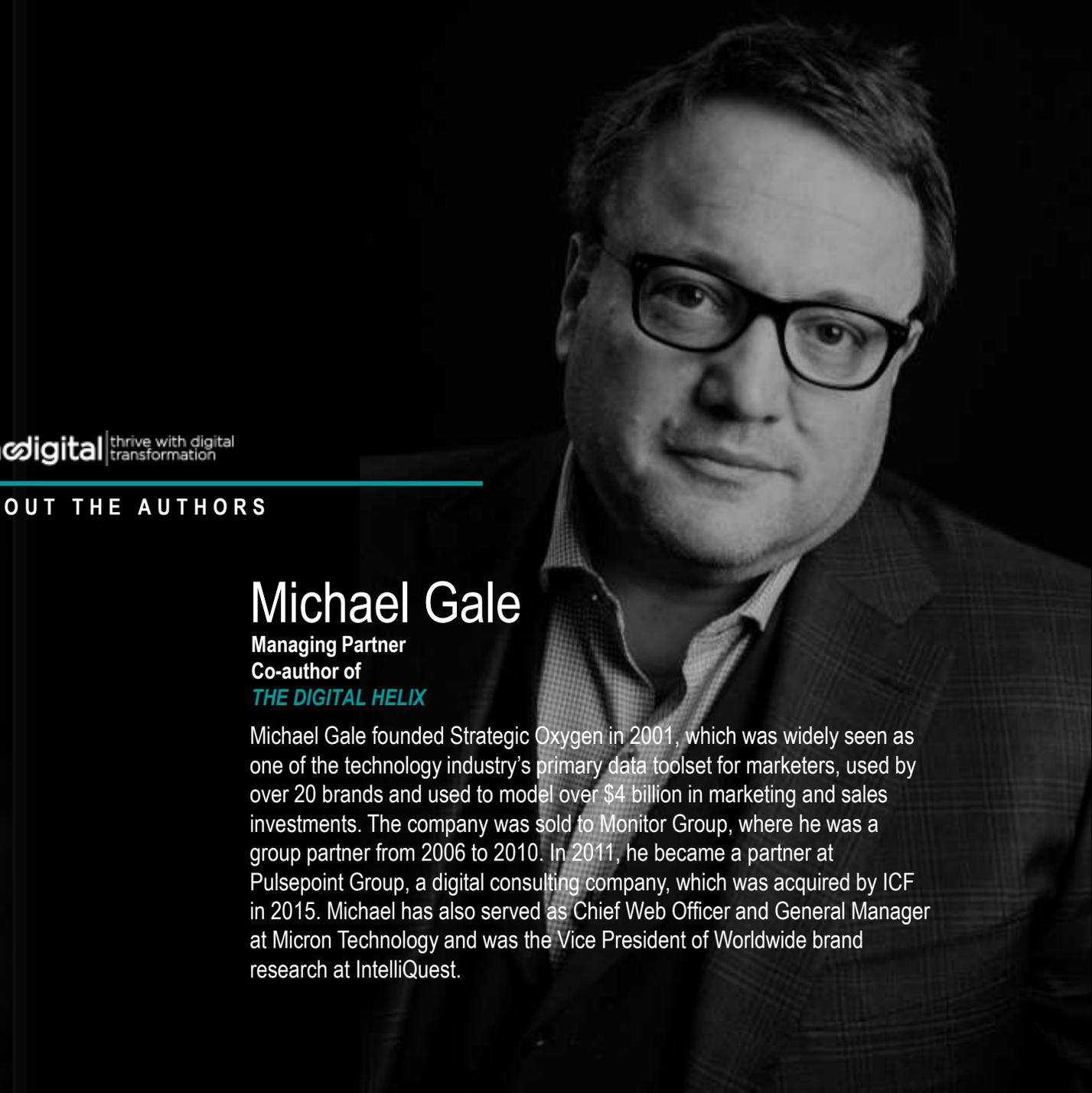
“WHY ALMOST ANY ORGANIZATION CAN – AND SHOULD – DEVELOP A DIGITAL-FIRST DNA FOR ITSELF”

By Robert Morris

HALL OF FAME TOP 500 REVIEWER VINE VOICE / October 3, 2017

Format: Hardcover





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Chris Aarons has helped launch dozens of companies and products using a unique mix of digital, sales and marketing strategies. At Pulsepoint Group, Chris helped leading organizations become digital in both their practice and delivery. In 2006, he launched one of the first social media departments at AMD and later wrote the book *Social Media Judo: The Essential Guide to Mastering Social Media and Delivering Real Results*. Chris also teaches digital marketing at the University of Texas at Austin and has won numerous awards for his digital programs while working for clients such as Adobe, Amazon, AMD, Cisco, Dell, DXC, HP, LG, Microsoft, Philips and others.

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Michael Gale founded Strategic Oxygen in 2001, which was widely seen as one of the technology industry's primary data toolset for marketers, used by over 20 brands and used to model over \$4 billion in marketing and sales investments. The company was sold to Monitor Group, where he was a group partner from 2006 to 2010. In 2011, he became a partner at Pulsepoint Group, a digital consulting company, which was acquired by ICF in 2015. Michael has also served as Chief Web Officer and General Manager at Micron Technology and was the Vice President of Worldwide brand research at IntelliQuest.