Key Takeaways

Reinvent Your Business With Technology . . .
Or Fade To Black

Every company now continuously reinvents its business with technology at the core — or watches while its customers defect and its markets are disrupted. Thousands of digital startups are already doing this, but so are innovative B2C stalwarts like CaixaBank and The Washington Post and B2B giants like John Deere and NEC.

Digital Innovators Rewrite The Rules Of Business

The mission of digital innovators is to harness digital assets and ecosystems to continually improve customer outcomes and, simultaneously, improve operational excellence. They do this by applying digital thinking to customer experiences, operations, ecosystems, and innovation.

Digital Innovation Means Business Innovation

Every industry has a unique transformation opportunity. Digital customer engagement is common across all industries. But manufacturers, for example, are digitizing their products, manufacturing, and supply chain processes. Retailers are transforming the role of stores in customer loyalty and engagement. Banks are building digital platforms to embed their services into partners’ services. And media companies are ramping up to create on-demand entertainment platforms.

Why Read This Report

Digital technology dramatically improves the economics and capabilities of every business. Using hardware, software, algorithms, and the internet, it’s 10 times cheaper and faster to engage customers, create offerings, harness partners, and operate your business. Digital natives like Amazon and Tesla and innovative giants like CaixaBank and Siemens embrace digital’s new rules of business. They create customer value with technology at the core. It’s your job as a digital business leader to apply the rules to engage, compete, and grow.

This is an update of a previously published report; Forrester reviews and updates it periodically for continued relevance and accuracy.
Digital Rewrites The Rules Of Business

The Vision Report In The Digital Business Playbook

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with Martin Gill, Pascal Matzke, Frederic Giron, Jacob Morgan, Benjamin Arnold, Annika Gunderson, and Peter Harrison
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Table Of Contents

2 Reinvent Your Business With Technology . . .
   Or Fade To Black

4 Digital Innovators Rewrite The Rules Of
   Business

   Rule No. 1: Deliver Easy, Effective, And
   Emotional Customer Experiences

   Rule No. 2: Focus Operations On Things
   Customers Value

   Rule No. 3: Build Platforms And Partnerships
   To Accelerate And Scale

   Rule No. 4: Innovate At The Intersection Of
   Experiences And Operations

10 Digital Innovation Means Business
   Innovation

   What It Means

12 Digital Innovation Will Define The Future Of
   Your Business

15 Supplemental Material

Related Research Documents

Accelerate Digital Innovation Through A Business
Technology Partnership

Predictions 2017: In Digital Transformation, The
Hard Work Of Operational Excellence Begins

The Top Emerging Technologies For Digital
Predators

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Reinvent Your Business With Technology . . . Or Fade To Black

Digital technology dramatically alters the balance of power between customers and companies. While customers gain the power of information and choice, digital technology also dramatically improves the economics of business. Using software, hardware, algorithms, and the internet, digital business leaders find that it’s 10 times cheaper and faster to engage customers and deliver outcomes that their customers value. Digital natives like Amazon, Netflix, Tesla, and Uber understand this. Their business paradigm focuses on using digital experiences to always deliver on rapidly evolving customer expectations and outcomes. As Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, says:

“You want to be customer obsessed, not competitor obsessed. Customers are always dissatisfied, and they always want more. If you’re competitor obsessed and you’re a leader, you see everyone behind you, and you slow down a bit. But customers pull you along.”

We believe that every company must become a digital innovator. Every CEO must continuously reinvent their business with evolving technology at the core — or watch while their customers defect and their markets are disrupted. Thousands of digital startups are already doing this, but so are innovative B2C stalwarts like CaixaBank and The Washington Post as well as B2B giants like John Deere and NEC. Digital innovators:

› **Focus on customer outcomes.** Digital innovators work outside-in, from a customer’s frame of reference, continuously evolving products and services to better deliver the outcomes their customers desire. Tesla updates the software in its cars over the internet to improve the driving experience. Amazon prioritizes initiatives based on revenue and customer satisfaction to turn customer focus into a business discipline.

› **Generate revenue from new digital products and services.** Digital innovators use technology to change the economics of their business, reaching new markets and creating opportunities to deliver new customer outcomes. It’s why Capital One UK developed its credit-checking service QuickCheck. It’s why HBO delivers its content everywhere. It’s why PayPal, itself a disruptor, bought person-to-person payment provider Venmo.

› **Reinvent their business models with technology at the core.** Digital innovators use technology assets — along with people, capital, and physical assets — to create new business models. Digital marketplaces like Airbnb and Uber grab attention, but we have also identified five other digital business models to learn from (see Figure 1). For example, Bosch, General Electric, and Siemens are building internet-of-things platforms to generate new digital services revenues.
### Figure 1: Digital Business Models Augment Or Replace What You Already Have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business model</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Digital marketplaces</td>
<td>In this model, companies build digital platforms that match buyers and sellers in a two-sided market, often without owning the underlying assets. These platforms focus on enabling an outcome faster, easier, and often cheaper than was previously possible.</td>
<td>Hong Kong’s GoGoVan uses drivers’ vans for delivery. LendingClub uses lenders’ money. Amazon sells and takes payment on other sellers’ inventory. Other examples include Airbnb, Carousell, DHL MyWays, Netflix, Salesforce, Staples Exchange, Transport for London, and Uber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Direct-to-customer engagement</td>
<td>In this model, companies cut out intermediaries and use digital platforms to reach and serve customers directly. As a result, they learn more about their customers and become better at satisfying their underlying desires.</td>
<td>Unilever bought Dollar Shave Club to sell razor blades directly to customers for a monthly subscription. Tesla sells cars without dealers. DirectAsia sells car insurance directly to drivers. Other examples include 3M, L’Oréal Makeup Genius, Nike, Nutmeg, and Pampers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Internet-of-things (IoT) services</td>
<td>In this model, companies harness IoT platforms to add services to products, sometimes changing the revenue from purchase to service or subscription.</td>
<td>General Electric provides predictive maintenance services for its oil drills. Medtronic optimizes diabetes care with artificial pancreases. Eneco’s Toon helps customers manage home energy use. 365FarmNet and DuPont Pioneer help farmers with precision agriculture. Other examples include John Deere FarmSight, Schindler Elevators, and ScottsMiracle-Gro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Digital products</td>
<td>In this model, companies create entirely new revenue streams through innovative digital products and associated services. Many digital products can also become embedded into services offered by digital ecosystem partners.</td>
<td>UPS offers digital 3D printing services in its stores. Mint helps consumers optimize their budgets through a digital product. Other examples include Amazon Alexa, Google Nest, and Netflix original content.</td>
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Digital Innovators Rewrite The Rules Of Business

The New York Times bravely shares its mission: “While the past two years have been a time of significant innovation, the pace must accelerate. Too often, digital progress has been accomplished through workarounds; now we must tear apart the barriers.”² To thrive, even to survive, you must use digital technology to transform the very core and model of your business. You must become a digital innovator and:

*Harness digital assets and ecosystems to continually improve customer outcomes and, simultaneously, increase operational effectiveness.*

After thousands of discussions and sessions with $1 billion-plus companies and the vendors that serve them, we have learned that digital innovation is just as important for B2B companies dealing with rapidly evolving customer expectations as it is for B2C companies battling for consumers’ loyalty. Digital innovators are rewriting the rules of business (see Figure 2). We introduce you to the four rules of digital business here. We then explain each one in more detail in the following section:

1. **Digital experiences: Deliver easy, effective, and emotional customer experiences.** Digital innovators use technology to anticipate what customers need, then exceed those expectations to engage them in their immediate context along every step of their journeys.³

2. **Digital operations: Focus operations on things customers value.** Digital innovators organize and operate with a focus on the customer. They align intermediary metrics like engagement with business metrics like customer lifetime value.

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**FIGURE 1** Digital Business Models Augment Or Replace What You Already Have (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business model</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Digital services</td>
<td>In this model, companies use APIs and digital platforms to deliver a core competency such as banking services, fulfillment, customer care, or ad placement into a customer’s offering.</td>
<td>PayPal offers payment services. Dwolla delivers real-time money transfers between banks. Saxo Bank offers a trading platform. Stripe offers payment services. Other examples include BBVA API Market, Nest Rush Hour Rewards, Shutl, Walgreens Print On Demand, and Yodlee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Insight services</td>
<td>In this model, companies monetize their data by placing it in a customer’s context. They aggregate data sets — including yours — and artificial intelligence to deliver proprietary insights with business APIs.</td>
<td>IBM’s The Weather Company sells weather insights to airlines and energy companies. Plexure helps retailers optimize store experiences. Other examples include 365FarmNet, DataSpark, Decibel Insight, Deloitte Spotlight Reporting, DuPont Pioneer, FICO, goBalto, and Urban Engines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Digital ecosystems: Build platforms and partnerships to accelerate and scale.** Digital innovators build digital platforms to reinforce their core competencies. They incorporate best-in-class capabilities from partners to grow with less capital or labor investment.

4. **Digital innovation: Innovate at the intersection of experiences and operations.** Digital innovators quickly launch new offerings, then improve them on the fly. They also use customer insights to identify incremental, and sometimes breakthrough, innovations.

**FIGURE 2 Digital Innovators Rewrite The Rules Of Business**

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**Rule No. 1: Deliver Easy, Effective, And Emotional Customer Experiences**

The first rule of digital business is to deliver great experiences that customers value to grow your business. But what customers value is always changing because their expectations are shaped by the best companies across all industries. When digital disruptors empower customers with great experiences, you must embrace the threat and respond with force. Forrester’s Customer Experience
Index (CX Index™) gives you a way to assess your customers’ experience relative to expectations and helps you figure out what to do to exceed their expectations. As a digital innovator, you will transform your customer engagement model to:

› **Deliver coherent, contextual, and connected customer experiences.** Your customers expect you to remember them as they move between devices and steps in their journey. One technique is to use journey-mapping software and analytics to share understanding and insights across your company so you can apply technology where it best improves experiences. Starbucks listens to customers on mystarbucksidea.com and uses those insights to deliver time-saving, seamless, and engaging customer experiences.

› **Digitally enhance products and services.** Digital innovators augment products and services with sensors, software, algorithms, and networks to improve the physical experience. And they add new digital insight services like predictive maintenance or automated replenishment. Caterpillar uses all four technologies to empower customers and dealers to get the most out of its 240-ton mining trucks. These advances demand a new software competency and new skills like continuous delivery and software product management.

› **Automate digital interactions with a focus on trustworthiness.** Digital innovators track evolving expectations and personalize interactions based on a customer’s full context, not just their segment or last action. Increasingly, they also use algorithms that understand natural language, answer questions, and anticipate what a customer needs next — being careful not to step over the line into the creepy zone. For example, The North Face uses IBM Watson to help wilderness trekkers find the perfect gear for their next trip.

**Rule No. 2: Focus Operations On Things Customers Value**

The second rule focuses on transforming teams, processes, and business operations in service of customers. Digital innovators reshape business operations to (see Figure 3):

› **Simplify production and processes with software and algorithms.** Digital innovators use technology to automate, streamline, or eliminate processes, all with a view toward improving their ability to rapidly respond to evolving customer expectations. One such advance is robotic process automation: using software and artificial intelligence to accelerate administrative activities. One bank saw its mortgage application times drop from 20 days to two days using Wipro’s technology to automate the document-intensive process.

› **Empower employees with tools and insights to help deliver customer outcomes.** Employees are your customer ambassadors and the practitioners who pull the knobs and levers of your customers’ experiences. They need insights to engage customers with confidence. Empowered employees can also surprise you. Bosch Rexroth launched its ActiveCockpit collaboration tool to help manufacturing workers coordinate tasks between machines. But it turns out that this tool also helps them mass-customize its products.
Measure functional success with customer-centric metrics. Digital innovators organize by customer outcomes or journeys (think educating and engaging instead of marketing and selling). And they improve outcomes by aligning departments, teams, and processes around measures of customer value. For example, in the UK, Capital One aligns cross-functional teams of marketers, technologists, customer service, and product managers to improve engagement and conversion. Everyone on the team works toward the same outcome.

**FIGURE 3 Examples Of Digital Business Success**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMW DriveNow</td>
<td>BMW and Sixt created a co-owned, joint venture that lets consumers drive BMW cars on a pay-as-you-go basis. It is now in 12 cities, including London, Milan, and Copenhagen, with over 5,500 vehicles serving more than 800,000 registered customers.</td>
<td>DriveNow (ReachNow in the US) is profitable and accounts for an estimated 10% of London’s car-sharing market and 50% of Germany’s car-sharing market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPont Pioneer</td>
<td>DuPont Pioneer provides a data service to help farmers better understand their farm chemistry and improve yields while minimizing operating costs.</td>
<td>Higher yield for Pioneer customers; increased customer acquisition and retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidor Bank</td>
<td>By orchestrating business capabilities from a range of digital innovators, like payment provider Ripple, crowdfunding network Fundsters, and cryptocurrency platform Kraken, Fidor Bank can rapidly deliver innovative experiences and new services to its customers rather than spend time and money building software.</td>
<td>Rapidly brings new experiences to save customers time; customer acquisition (base up by 24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric (GE)</td>
<td>GE uses Digital Twins — digital representations of physical machines built using live data from sensors on the real machine — to predict part failures. AI suggests changes to machine operating characteristics to reduce wear and reduce or eliminate unnecessary downtime, creating enormous value for GE’s machinery customers by extending their return on assets.</td>
<td>Lower cost of ownership and higher return on assets; increased market share and revenue growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rule No. 3: Build Platforms And Partnerships To Accelerate And Scale

The third rule of digital business focuses on the partner ecosystems you develop or tap into. The cost of integrating your business capabilities with other suppliers, distributors, and partners has plummeted with the availability of APIs, internet-based connections, and digital delivery channels. That forces you to consider what your core competencies are, the capabilities you must control, and what you can borrow from others. If a partner can do nonstrategic things better, faster, and cheaper, then use them. It will keep you lean and nimble. Digital innovators ask how they can:

› Use partnerships to accelerate product and service innovation. The combination of cloud computing and business APIs brings digital economics to business development. This lets you partner for noncore capabilities to rapidly create new products, free up capital, and shift risk. Innovative retailers, for example, use Amazon’s fulfillment services to warehouse and ship their products to customers. Dunkin’ Donuts built its new mobile loyalty app using capabilities from six partners for loyalty and promotions.
Scale a core capability through an ecosystem platform and business APIs. If you are the big kahuna, with partners clamoring to enter your kingdom, then build APIs that others can plug into. Firms like Amazon, Staples, and Tesco shift inventory risk to third-party sellers by creating their own supply chain ecosystem platforms. German retail giant REWE founded a digital business to build a next-generation digital platform that can handle thousands of sellers, millions of SKUs, and omnichannel presence.14

Create agility through business simplification. Devote resources to what differentiates you. It makes no sense to waste valuable tech talent tinkering with technology around your noncore business capabilities. Digital innovators look for ways to focus on things that differentiate them — for example, product design and development (and not manufacturing) or digital services (and not IT infrastructure). Digital startups, for example, use a cloud provider like Microsoft Azure or Salesforce rather than building their own data centers.

Rule No. 4: Innovate At The Intersection Of Experiences And Operations

The fourth rule of digital business is about your innovation process itself. No matter how you go about it — design thinking, Agile development, rapid prototyping, or continuous delivery — you must transform product and experience development by starting small and adapting as you learn with rapid releases. Continuous improvement is as important for Tesla’s over-the-air software enhancements and Procter & Gamble’s digital product and packaging visualization as it is for Alibaba.com’s and National Australia Bank’s mobile apps. A digital innovator will:

Innovate at the core of business, where experiences and operations drive revenue. Digital innovators don’t just bolt on a pretty digital face. They create new product and service offerings with both the experiences and the operations to support them (see Figure 4). They build multidisciplinary teams, incorporating designers and developers as well as process owners and product managers. This is how DBS Bank in Singapore reinvented itself as a digital bank, launching a banking platform in 2017 with 155 APIs to power financial services of ecosystem partners.15

Develop a test-and-learn culture that sparks multiple innovation pipelines. Digital innovators empower product and process owners to take measured risks. Pest control company Orkin, for example, gave its product team the freedom to develop smart traps that send photos of trapped animals back to headquarters to accelerate their removal.16 It started with a prototype, but it also considered upfront how it would operate in the field with franchise owners and pest control technicians.

Harness insights from direct customer engagement to relentlessly refine offerings. Digital innovators instrument every asset and measure every touchpoint so they can close the loop between data and action. They are insights driven because they harness and apply data and analytics at every opportunity to differentiate their products and deliver valued customer outcomes.17 For example, FirstFuel Software’s smart metering helps Pacific Gas and Electric give customers insight into their energy use so they can optimize costs.
Digital Innovation Means Business Innovation

Every industry has a unique transformation opportunity (see Figure 5). Manufacturers, for example, are digitizing their products and their manufacturing and supply chain processes. Retailers are transforming the role of stores in customer loyalty and engagement. Automotive companies are creating digital entertainment and service centers. Banks are building digital platforms to embed their services into partners’ services. The media industry is building on-demand digital entertainment platforms. There is a story embedded in every row and column of the following table (so, call us to talk), but three points stand out across industries and functions:

› **Customer engagement drives digital transformation in every industry.** Marketing, sales, customer service, and product development are big priorities in every industry. Only firms that transform their digital customer engagement to deliver improved customer outcomes will win. Doing it well across the entire customer journey is daunting, as various leaders have little incentive to work across functional boundaries. To break old product silos, Microsoft uses a customer satisfaction metric to align leaders across marketing, sales, and service.
› **Digital innovation is the untapped hero of customer service.** A service call is an indicator of an unmet expectation. So why does it get so little airplay? Forrester believes that as customer service leaders wake up to the benefits of digital self-service, they will dismantle the artificial systems and metrics that optimize call center response times regardless of customer satisfaction and lifetime value. If you divert even 5% of your customer service budget to digital, you could radically improve your postsale engagement.

› **IT processes continue to have huge transformation potential.** As ING Bank found, if you don’t also transform IT, everything else becomes a digital bolt-on. Even when CEOs and CMOs lead the transformation, our data shows that they believe in the importance of IT transformation. Everything from systems to processes to support models is ripe for digital transformation. It’s time to jump on the cloud and microservice architectures that unlock the ability to build and deploy applications rapidly at scale.
Digital Innovation Will Define The Future Of Your Business

Your company’s survival depends on your ability to throw over habits and approaches you mastered in an offline world and embrace the new rules of business. As a digital business leader, you must help your business transform to deliver the always-better outcomes your customers expect rather than the products or services you’ve traditionally sold. In 2022, you should expect that:
 › **CEOs will put technology at the core and surround it with people and process.** Think this is crazy talk? In its CIO Journal newsletter, The Wall Street Journal reported that Bernard J. Tyson, CEO of Kaiser Permanente, said that though it wasn’t a tech company, “if he was building his company today from scratch, he said he would start with technology and marry it with people.” He recognizes that you can’t layer technology on top of nondigital capabilities; you must first ask what the technology can do and how to harness its power. This is not news to startups, of course. (It’s why startups sometimes get into trouble when they have to add people to their technology, as Uber and Zenefits have learned.)

 › **The war for talent will reach new peaks.** You need specialists who can come in and quickly resolve a technical problem. The war for talent in disciplines like data analytics and machine learning will steadily get more heated. Having decided that your competitive differentiation depends upon developing unique intellectual property in these fields, you will no longer be willing to outsource these skills to vendors. At the same time, you need strategists with technology insight to understand rapidly evolving markets and steer strategic investments.

 › **Disruptive business models will continue to overturn industries.** Direct-to-consumer business models will continue to disrupt wholesalers and retailers. Digital connections will cut out the middleman. Manufacturers will sell directly to customers, like Dollar Shave Club’s razor blade replenishment. Two-sided mini-markets will Uber-ize more industries, such as loans, insights, bookings, retail, and restaurants. Forrester believes that digital technology will disrupt the $984 billion US wholesale trade market by eliminating tiers, consolidating distributors, and changing the economics of selling, service, and fulfillment. Your business success will depend on your ability to tie into digital ecosystem platforms.

 › **Firms will acquire digital startups to build new revenue streams.** When it comes to technology, you’ve long chosen to build it or buy it. In the digital realm, there are two new ways to acquire technology. You can invest in a startup and gain preferred access to its services. Sprint invested heavily in Jay-Z’s Tidal to gain access to streaming music. You can also buy the company, as ScottsMiracle-Gro did recently when it acquired Blossom for its smart irrigation technology. Be careful: You will need the skills of a venture capitalist, investment banker, and integration specialist to do this successfully.

 › **Intelligent systems will drive 70% of your customer engagements.** We’re already familiar with Alexa and Siri as voice interfaces to autonomous systems, but intelligent systems capable of teaching themselves are already here. By 2022, your artificial intelligence and machine-learning systems will be handling or supporting the vast majority of your customer interactions. These systems will be highly attuned to each customer’s preferences and able to tailor each engagement based on your customer’s context and moment of need. Your customers will rapidly come to expect this level of tailored service. They won’t tolerate employees not anticipating their needs.
The next wave of digital platforms will not come from traditional technology vendors. The software industry has 50 years of experience building world-changing digital platforms. But what lie ahead are industry-specific digital platforms birthed in places like Seattle (Amazon with data centers), Iowa (John Deere with farming), and Munich (Siemens with manufacturing). The software industry will pull out the stops to shoehorn its way into these business discussions. The service provider industry will continue to have big opportunities because someone must still implement the platforms. Case in point? Atos is building a practice to implement Siemens’ MindSphere predictive maintenance platform.

“The pace must accelerate. Too often, digital progress has been accomplished through workarounds; now we must tear apart the barriers.” (The New York Times)
Supplemental Material

Survey Methodology

The Forrester Data Global Business Technographics® Business And Technology Services Survey, 2016, was fielded between June and August 2016. This online survey included 2,810 respondents in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the UK, and the US from companies with 500 or more employees.

Forrester Data Business Technographics ensures that the final survey population contains only those with significant involvement in the planning, funding, and purchasing of business and technology products and services. Research Now fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

Please note that the brand questions included in this survey should not be used to measure market share. The purpose of Forrester Data Business Technographics brand questions is to show usage of a brand by a specific target audience at one point in time.

Companies And Individuals Interviewed For This Report

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KPMG
LiquidHub
Luxoft
MRM//McCann
MU/DAI
Ness Digital Engineering
Persistent Systems
PwC
Salesforce
SapientRazorfish
Tata Consultancy Services
TIBCO Software
VML
West Monroe Partners
Endnotes


3 See the Forrester report “The US Customer Experience Index, 2017.”

4 See the Forrester report “The US Customer Experience Index, 2017.”

5 See the Forrester report “Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy Starts With A Customer Journey Map.”


7 See the Forrester report “Software Must Enrich Your Brand.”

8 See the Forrester report “Brief: Be Cool, Not Creepy.”


11 See the Forrester report “The State Of Robotic Process Automation.”


13 See the Forrester report “How Ecosystems Fuel Digital Business.”

14 See the Forrester report “Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy Starts With A Customer Journey Map.”

16 Source: Interview with LiquidHub, the company that built the smart trap.

17 See the Forrester report “The Insights-Driven Business.”

18 See the Forrester report “Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy Starts With A Customer Journey Map.”


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