

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN SMES: A CASE STUDY EXAMPLE FRAMING FUTURE STRATEGY HOLISTICALLY THROUGH APPLICATION OF THE EAS3EL CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

### Introduction

This case study investigates the implementation of digital transformation (DT) in small and medium-sized enterprises (Li et al, 2018) using the EAS3EL conceptual model. The study delivers DT through process, culture, and people investment.

### Literature Review

Building on the formative works aiding our understanding of DT (Vial, 2019; Rêgo et al., 2021) and through a scoping review of the literature, Bustard et al. (2022) highlighted the need for a more holistic framing of DT, and the EAS3EL conceptual model was developed (Figure 1). Critical to this model is the underpinning value disciplines (Treacy and Wiersema, 1993) using the metaphor of the legs of an easel, meaning that one (central) pillar of customer intimacy, operational excellence or product/service leadership should take the central support in developing competitive advantage.

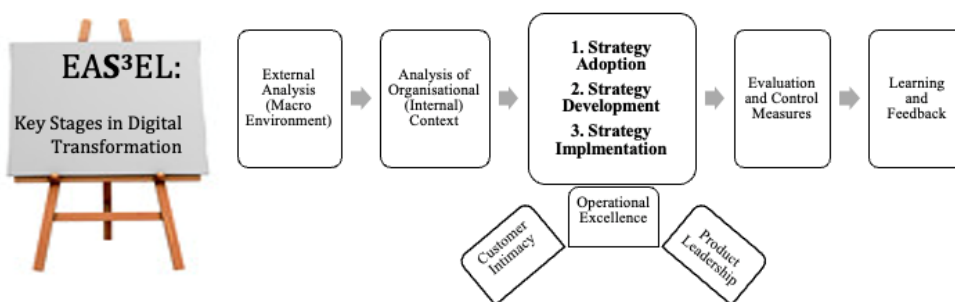


Figure 1. EAS3EL Conceptual Model

The model was subsequently used to direct DT at a services marketing SME through an action research methodology (Baskerville, 1999). The case company's employees were heavily involved from the initial stages of the DT, and a DT audit, eliciting key data which would help inform the strategic focus for the DT project, was carried out with all employees at outset to establish a baseline of culture.

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According to the Operations Manager, the most impactful quick wins from the DT process were in operational improvements and included: 50% of a core team member's workload being freed up; reduction in turnaround time from 3.5 days to 2 days; and an increased ability for Project Managers to track real-time progress on projects.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this case study highlights successful implementation of DT in an SME (Peter et al., 2020) extending impact using the EAS3EL conceptual model. The study emphasizes the importance of a clear business strategy, cultural change, and people investment in achieving successful DT implementation (Zacharias et al., 2016). The EAS3EL conceptual model offers a holistic approach to DT, supporting the alignment of business strategy, digital capabilities, and organizational culture. The use of action research methodology also proves to be effective in validating and improving the application of DT within an SME. The study underscores the need for a comprehensive DT strategy, to facilitate DT implementation in SMEs.

**Keywords:** Digital transformation; DT; SME; EAS3EL; Action research

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