

# Digital Transformation Programmes through PRISM MODEL

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# Introduction

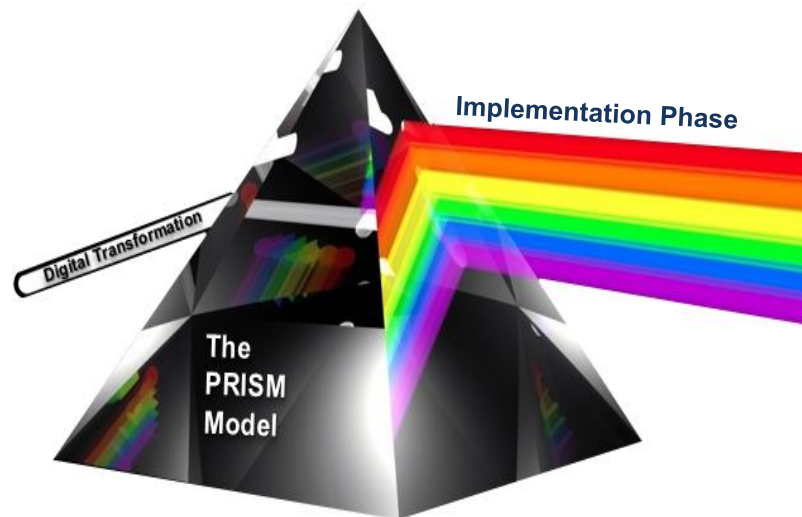
Two key words, especially in COVID 19 times, that are changing the organisations globally and which hold the capability to make or break the situation for any organisation are: **Digital Transformation**. But the key question to ask is what makes these programmes tick? Recent studies reflect that more than 70% of transformation programmes fail while only around 10% of the total are able to achieve the stipulated target.

Despite the high failure rates, more and more organisations globally are investing religiously in digital transformation programmes. The reason is simple that in today's world the things are changing so rapidly that an organisation working on legacy system / structure will soon be forced out of business or will have to settle with lower margins. Although there is no fixed mantra to deliver a transformation programme right but if done correctly the benefits clearly outweigh the costs of investment. According to a blog on UK government's website: Digital and Technological transformations alone have resulted in £1.7bn saving for 2014-15 period for the government. Once the figures for past 3 years are combined, savings would increase to £3.6bn. Digital transformation programmes are currently the key to succeed in the over competitive market and around 30% of senior executives today feel that digital transformation has now become a matter of survival. The need of the hour is to digitalise the businesses to reduce operational costs, improve order fulfilment journey and most importantly impact on customer satisfaction. As per IDC, retail banks in US spent around US\$1 trillion (circa £800bn) between 2014 and 2018 on digital transformation programmes. Looking at the wider impact IDC reports that businesses will spend US\$2.3 trillion (circa £1.8 trillion) a year on digital transformation and this investment is expected to increase by 17.1% YoY. COVID-19 is further expected to fuel this increase by 5.1%.

Business Transformation through technological innovations and information technology is leading the way in helping organisations to achieve their targets across the spectrum of benefits. Although Digital Transformation programmes are a portion of actual business transformation programmes but do account for some of the heaviest budgets. There are numerous scholarly articles presenting guidelines and directions for organisations on how to select the right business transformation program. But, there are a very few, which talk about how to run and implement a transformation programme successfully once you have decided to move forward. After the decision has been made, an unsuccessful transformation attempt will lead to huge losses for both parties, the client and the suppliers. Apart from the cost factor, most importantly it could tarnish well-established vendor-client relationship. In this paper, we will discuss on the right technique for the implementation of Digital Transformation programmes to achieve the organisational needs. PRISM Model will be the centre stage of this paper and will act as a key enabler for organisations in carefully applying the drivers for implementation.

# PRISM Model

A Digital Transformation programme is like a complex machinery where if every part works correctly only then the programme will be able to deliver the adjudged benefits. PRISM Model will guide through not just the right selection but also successful implementation of Digital Transformation programmes. It focuses on the part that even if we select the correct prism (Digital Transformation Programme), there is a huge possibility that the programme will not be successful. So, rather than focussing only on the selection, which has been explored in multiple scholarly articles, in this article the aspect of right placement of prism is also covered in detail so that the right mix of colours is generated after dispersion. It's quite important that the programme should stay focused on all aspects of it i.e. selection, design, approach and implementation as focus on any single area will lead to hardships sooner or later in the programme.



Prism in this model acts as a filter to enable only the eligible programme to move in to the implementation phase and spectrum acts as a guardrail to guide the programme towards successful implementation.

# Should we go for it? The PRISM

The prism acts as a key enabler in selection of the right transformation programme and presents variety of aspects which should be well considered before reaching a conclusion. Prime factors are discussed below and shall act as guidelines in reaching the right conclusion. These factors and their intensity will vary from organisation to organisation depending on several factors such as the industry, competition and strategy.

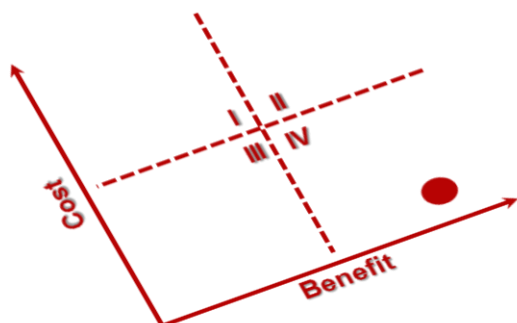
## Technology and Sociology

Significant number of Digital Transformation programmes fail majorly due to lack of communication. A transformation programme generally spans through multiple functions and each business stream should be made aware about the programmes well ahead of time and get their buy-in. Once there is trust in the transformation relationship the chances of success increases manifold. In fact after narrowing down the root causes for failure, more than process or technology, people hold the biggest chunk. Like any good marketing strategy, a Digital Transformation programme should also implement a transparent and interpretable communication strategy to hold all the stakeholders on the common ground. Needless to say, this strategy will depend on the organisation structure and synergy between the teams. The relation between Technology and Sociology is persistent and clearly evident across various business sectors, technology platforms or locations.

## Vision & Plan

It sounds simple but is very important. A programme without a vision and plan is bound to fail. Vision is critical to determine the long term benefits to be achieved through the transformation programme and charting down the long term vision in terms of plan will make the things transparent and understandable to implement.

## Cost vs Benefit



Among other financial calculations, one very important aspect is Benefit vs Cost matrix of implementation. Although it is suggestive that programmes falling in Quadrant IV will be most appropriate but generally due to the high cost involved in transformation, Quadrant II can be considered good to go as well. On the other hand, programmes in quadrant III need careful evaluation before giving a green signal while anything in quadrant I should be avoided. Time invested by internal business teams in making a programme a success should also be considered while considering the viability and benefit. It is imperative that other

important ratios and calculations are well considered before commencement of the programme.

## Vendor Selection

It is not necessary to pick up the best supplier in the market as this decision depends on a number of important factors such as the programme need, future projections, organisational strategy etc. but it is of utmost importance that the right supplier is chosen. One supplier might have expertise in a specific area of transformation while other might have skills in different areas so instead of single supplier there could be multi-supplier model but this might further add to complexity and need careful evaluation. Once the supplier is chosen then the right governance model should be set up early on for appropriate vendor – supplier management.

## Regulatory constraints

Government / Legal regulations and constraints should be explored early in the lifecycle and even before the start of programme. One major transformation programme at a leading Telco was aiming to optimise the organisational processes and a well-known consultancy firm was hired to provide the solution. After months of effort most of the process improvements suggested had to be discarded as improvement suggestions required major regulatory approvals. There was a huge cost incurred and very less benefit delivered in the end.

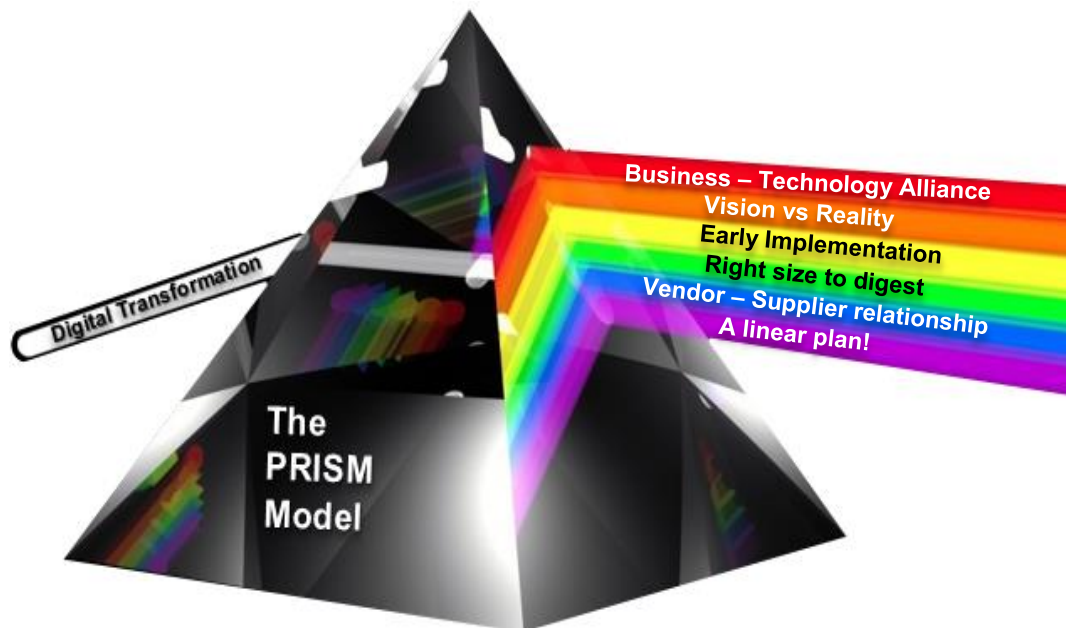
## Change Management

It is absolutely critical to choose the appropriate Change Management frameworks in addition to PRISM model. These frameworks will not only help in right selection but also support the management team in making the right decisions.

Apart from above key reasons, there are other factors dependent on transformation programme, which contribute to the success of the programme. Watching India's successful launch of '*Mangalyaan*' (Mars Orbiter Mission, it is a space probe orbiting Mars since 24 September 2014. It was launched on 5 November 2013 by the Indian Space Research Organisation) documentary, I realised that similar to any space mission program, launch is as critical as maintaining the right momentum to reach the destination. All the key factors of the space mission programme seemed very analogous to a transformation programme: kicking in the thrust at the right time, burning the fuel appropriately, steering in the right direction and finally the landing at the right spot and at the right speed! There are hundreds of things which can go wrong but a careful planning and execution will conclusively result in success.

# The right technique – The SPECTRUM

Once the programme has passed the PRISM test and is in implementation phase, there are multitudes of other factors which need to be considered to maintain the momentum for the programme to succeed. These factors have been categorised as the SPECTRUM which need to be carefully examined during implementation journey for the programme to achieve its stipulated targets. Moreover, it's fundamentally necessary to keep a continuous tab at all these factors rather than just a scheduled weekly / monthly health check.



## Business – Technology: Tug of war!

A tussle between Business and Technology is one of the most prominent among the early signs of failure. As already mentioned in the part where relation between Technology and Sociology is briefly discussed, this is a consequence of failed communications strategy. More than the technology or the process, it is the people who lead a programme to failure.

It is of utmost importance that there is a sync and constant buy-in from both Technology and Business teams for the Digital Transformation programme. A technology enabled transformation programme generally crosses several functional teams and all impacted teams should be properly communicated and involved. A communications strategy shall not only include what and when but also who as the most important question. This shatters the myth that only Programme Managers lead to failures because all the teams hold equal responsibility for success or failure.

The first and most important check in place is the PRISM, which should not let any programme pass to the implementation phase until there is an agreement between Technology and Business over the agreed benefits delivered from the Transformation programme. The Second important check is during the implementation where Technology team should not diverge from the goal of realising the agreed benefit while Business teams should have constant faith on their teams. It depends from organisation to organisation that which segment, business or technology, of the company drives the change but it is significant that both are aligned constantly. As a single gear cannot put a machine into momentum and

it is the synchronous movement of all gears which leads to a successful run, similarly an organisational environment should be developed which promotes this kind of culture.

## **Vision vs Reality**

During the course of planning, design or implementation it is quite common that Business / Technology teams start divulging from the real problem and get involved in developing a state of the art solution for transformation. There is no denial that solution will be best suited for the problem in hand but focus on delivering the solution on time should not be diluted. We all want to keep our best foot forward, which is totally acceptable considering the huge money invested in the transformation, but it is also of prime importance that we stay focussed on the goal.

## **Get it in! – Early Implementation**

Architectural design should be such that it can disintegrate itself from the implementation i.e. based on the requirement and approach it is flexible enough to take both the high and low road as the time demands. The benefit of this type of architecture lies in the fact that people just don't want to keep hearing about the change but they also need to see the change to accept it. If the implementation is always aiming for the stars and taking the high road it will take longer than expected and ultimately people will start losing interest in it. So it is required that simple solution is first modelled for users to play and get acquainted while the technology team should keep on making it more sophisticated for upscale implementation. Once the Business teams start realising the benefit, which transformation programme is bringing in, they will become more focussed and aligned.

Show & Tell and Click & Test sessions are tried and tested ways to achieve the hands down success. These shall be set for the business users during the development phase itself to provide them an early visibility on the solution under implementation. Various DevOps and Agile delivery methods focus on such techniques while tweaking waterfall model, these sessions can be planned early on as well. These interactive sessions not only provide a communication medium between the Technology and Business teams but also act as checkpoints for Programme / IT Managers to realise any early warnings of upcoming hazard and steer the course accordingly. This brings us to our next point:

## **Right size to digest**

*“Rome wasn't built in a day”*. The key here is to appropriately slice and dice the programme so that it becomes workable and digestible for the teams involved in the transformation. Most appropriate technique is to plan the Transformation programme in the best agile way possible. The idea is to keep the team motivated and realise the benefits piece by piece. Managers will have to appreciate the short term wins, which will ultimately lead to the final victory.

Most programmes face this issue sooner or later in the implementation because if the agile approach is not taken then either the requirements become too cumbersome to handle or development will succumb to the pressure. Traditional waterfall model does not promote engagement and collaboration among the team members and these are crucial for any transformation programme to succeed. Overall programme should be chunked in the most business friendly way but still with the size that is digestible and logical.



## Vendor – Supplier relationship

There are numerous case studies talking about this delicate relationship, whether it's Atos Origin – KPN deal gone sour a decade ago or the recent case study on NHS – Fujitsu relation gone to court for resolution. Both sides will have the reasons for sour deal but it is also the responsibility of both the Vendor and Supplier to understand each other's limitation and capabilities. Proper support and direction from supplier while constant focus on the target and full dedication from vendor will definitely lead to a healthy and long-term relationship. What KPN and Atos did to change the situation at that moment is commendable as both supplier and vendor took a leap of faith and corrected their mistakes to reach a successful implementation. This is more relevant in today's date as due to increased competition there is a fierce battle between vendors to win a premium transformation deal. Suppliers considering these as happy days generally tend to squeeze the juice out of every deal and unknowingly leading a programme towards potential failure. These situations tend to lead towards design and development teams working under immense pressure and ultimately leading to mistakes or failures.

The size and capacity of a transformation programme should be first genuinely assessed internally before even engaging a third-party supplier. Generally, this assessment, when done, is focussed towards cost saving rather than judging the right capacity. Once the capacity is judged correctly it would also support the organisation to decide whether to invest in the programme and carry out a proper Cost – Benefit discussion. Someone wrote a beautiful quote that is quite relevant here: *“Taj Mahal would not be so Beautiful & Everlasting if Shah Jahan would have taken quotation and gone for the lowest.”*

## Plan should be linear not circular!

When things start going downhill the management should start finding the correction path rather than engaging in the blame game. It is a general tendency to find the defaulter first rather than the fault which often leads to conflicts at multiple levels. As soon as the management teams start engaging in the blame game, the technology teams start becoming more defensive rather than offensively taming the beast. This takes things further downhill and finally leading to revising the original plan. Surprisingly, it has been noticed that if this habit is not changed, this pattern keeps repeating itself. There will always be some wins and losses in the transformation journey, but the team should keep focussed on the target. Wins should be celebrated while lessons should be learnt from the losses.

If a transformation plan starts failing, the cracks start appearing early on. Here the characteristics of a great programme management come in to play to understand the gaps that have led to failure. Rather than just trying to revisit the plan and doing quick fixes, if the plan needs complete revamping then it should be done early on rather than waiting till the end to fail by going in circular motion to do a quick fix. Some cases differ than the other and project might be able to move forward with minor fixes, but these need the right eye to find and fix.

There are thousand things which can go wrong in a transformation programme but if the above key factors are kept in mind the chances will surely be reduced to the minimum. Intensity and variety of the factors will vary with each organisation as every organisation has a different structure and team synergy. It is essential to not lose the focus on the target and always look at the bigger picture.

# Case Study

It's a cold December month and there are heated discussions happening inside the closed conference room of a leading Telco in UK. The team is going through their fifth re-planning session for a 3-year transformation programme, which started full-fledged transformation journey only 10 months back. Programme Manager intervenes and says: "Look guys! This is not going to work if we do not reduce the cost estimates further for the next release!" Team is baffled as there is huge pressure from both sides to reduce the cost estimates while catering to never ending change in scope of the requirements. After hours of discussion delivery manager comes up with a lean implementation plan but fails to reach a consensus. Finally, Design Lead says: "This is not going to fly and even if we deliver this, we will still miss all the business benefits."

Team of highest calibre put together to deliver this Digital Transformation programme struggled for another 2 months before business and technology teams decided to stand down a premium transformation programme, which was certainly going to change the way business operates currently and increases the customer satisfaction multi-fold. A Telco with strong gating process in place to validate the progress and check the delivery status at every stage, failed in a strategic transformation programme with around a million pounds spent in last 1 year.

## The Beginning

As one of the greatest hits of Linkin Park (a rock band) goes "*It starts with one thing...*" and that one thing for a leading Telco was to increase the customer experience through digitalisation. Almost 90% of organisations in today's world are thriving to achieve better customer experience by bringing in digitalisation in one form or the other.

These few words in the problem statement carried a lot of weight as it required complete automation of the order management system. Telco in discussion had multiple legacy systems in their order journey that were not speaking with each other and required a lot of manual input from teams working in silos. This created significant delays in order entry, errors in order validations and revenue leakage due to miscommunications. For the customers it created poor experience as these issues led to delays and commitments to projected delivery dates were seldom met. To add on to this, it also sometimes created rift within internal teams as it took hours, if not days, to figure the current state of the order and team responsible for handling the order at that stage. Being a global Telco, the operations were spread across systems and multiple teams based globally.

Looking at all these and other associated issues, Telco decided to implement an automated order management system which will increase efficiency multi-fold by bringing in a single system to manage the order from Lead to Cash. Significantly reduce revenue leakage and drastically improve customer experience by providing transparency and regular updates. Most interesting aspect of this system was its capability to dramatically reduce any future development time by having easy configurable blocks that can be re-used.

## First step to success (failure)

This simple sounding solution required few of the best solution architects in the Telco to scratch their brains hard in defining the architecture of the new system and conducting detailed analysis of current systems, processes and capabilities.

Telco hired three experts: 2 in design and 1 in business analysis to draft the solution and requirements to work with the in-house technology architects. The concept of this dynamic digital solution was still in its infant stage and hence Telco did not want to spend large chunks in building a team without thinking the solution through. Although it's an effective way to optimise costs as nobody knew how the overall solution will develop in due course but this also acted as the first step to failure.

Technology design team started developing the solution, worked late hours and had multiple heated arguments on the agreed capabilities of the system. Meanwhile, business analysis expert tried to engage with few of the teams working on these systems to define the requirements for the new system. Design and BA experts worked day and night to come up with a set of 1000+ requirements and 700+ page design document. It was a highly thought through design and would have certainly made the Telco a leader in digitalisation and be on top of its game.

Technology team fully convinced of the requirements and design rolled out an RFP for selecting a System Integrator (SI) / supplier for implementing this solution. As mentioned before this acted as first step to failure as it did not consider the **Business – Technology sync** part of the PRISM Model. Later when the supplier started validating the proposed solution and requirements with Business teams after securing the funding they realised Business (Head of customer facing / order management departments) had a different set of expectations from what the ground level teams thought. Also, they had more visibility in terms of legal requirements for implementing this solution and these views should have been considered from the start. Although these views and expectations were not a roadblock or a stopping force to the transformation programme but certainly derailed the plans as the supplier teams had to go and completely revisit the requirements with Business, and this also led to impacts on design. This revisit was not factored in time and cost to deliver the programme.

Also, this is where programme started stepping on the 2<sup>nd</sup> step to failure where they diverged from the next aspect of Prism Model i.e. **Vision vs Reality**. As stated before, Technology teams sometimes start diverging from the real problem and get involved in developing a state of the art solution for transformation. There is no denial that this solution will be best suited for the problem in hand but focus on delivering the solution on time should not be diluted. Proposed solution was designed around a COTS product, from a leading supplier, that was proposed to release later in the year while the solution implementation had to start much earlier. This started to create cracks in the supplier and vendor design team relation since the beginning of implementation. When supplier added this to complexity, vendor side Design Lead said “You do not worry about that, we have it covered in our discussions with COTS product supplier”. Selected SI supplier although having prior relationship with both the customer and COTS supplier decided to leave this problem out of equation. The new requirements provided by Business further added to the already complex vision and led to the panic factor, which ultimately led to the collapse of a well thought through solution and programme.

## **The Journey Begins – Welcome On board!**

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was rolled out to select the best supplier for implementing the thought through solution. Requirements and design was clear to all the preferred suppliers and they were given sufficient time to come back with a proposal. But what went wrong was that procurement / business owners focussed on cost parameters than the proposed planning. Suppliers in a race to win this multi-year multi-million pound bid provided plans that were either not feasible for implementation or would demand each team member to stretch to the limits. The plans provided as part of RFP response were to fit the tight budget demand from Business Owner rather than feasibility. Design team in Technology, on the other hand, reviewed these bids but failed to underline the importance of right plan. They had worked for months in defining the solution and were well aware of its complexities and could have focused on receiving the right plan. This is where the **Vendor – Supplier relationship** part of the

PRISM started derailing. Suppliers should not bid to win but should bid to deliver a capability to the customers that would make the difference in their business. Some would argue that every business aims to maximise profits and revenue but if a penny saved now leads to the loss of hundreds later then obviously it's not the right approach. Honesty and Clarity not only from Suppliers but also from the Business Owners play a big role in the success of a Digital Transformation programme. Also, there could be techniques applied while signing the contract which forces both supplier and customer to collaborate for success. Even with all these initial hurdles a herculean team was quickly setup to combat this mighty transformation. Programme Manager promised "A party in The Shard" once this transformation is successful, and everyone should have sensed the rocky road ahead then only!

## The Middle – Building the house of cards

"We are going to build an ingenious order management system, which is truly flexible, fully dynamic in nature and never been implemented before!" said the Technology Architect from vendor responsible for the technological aspects of this complex programme.

Putting aside the Business – Technology Sync and Vision vs Reality issue discussed in earlier section the whole team started tackling this monster head on. Within two months Business Analysts had tried to get the sync in place with business teams by organising day-long workshops and designing the wireframes. Meanwhile, as a User Story got ready, the designers started working on defining the design, developers started designing the UI and testers started on creating the test cases. Everyone when they met over the hustled lunches just discussed, how nose-deep they are buried under their work. Everything seemed to be going fine but there was one aspect which is not covered above and was taking the blow with each passing day, programme budget and timelines!

Although there were separate discussions happening in the background for budgeting all additional scoping that is covered in the last two months, but people missed again on another important aspect of PRISM Model, which was going to hit hard now, **Right size to Digest**. Although the team kept moving forward but the end never seemed near and the reason was that the transformation programme was planned in a way that a major part of the application was supposed to be launched in first phase. With first phase initially planned just six months after the launch the team putting in the initial proposal, with the mind set of winning the contract, had not rightly calculated the complexity of commitment. First phase of the programme was already delayed by two to three months but the work planned for six months was actually at least one to two years job! Unnerved by these setbacks the team kept working in at least 15 hour long shifts, keeping personal lives at stake, just to keep the company's name. Technical Authority from client side who was involved from day 1 and supplier's design team knew the mammoth task but still planned a huge chunk for first phase and that too against very aggressive timelines. Had they planned in right sizes the first phase could have been implemented earlier and team could have been saved from final blow, which could have been avoided through **Early Implementation** aspect of PRISM Model.

## ...and The End

As now the six month long first phase had reached in its tenth month, without anything in live environment, the business started losing its patience. If there had been an early implementation by right sizing the project, the business teams and consumers of this Telco could have started reaping in the

benefits. Having realised some concrete benefits early on, it would have given the team, the business and all the stakeholders much needed confidence boost.

These ten months were not easy for the Digital Transformation Programme Manager as he had to deal with senior most management of his own company as well as client's senior management on regular basis. Digital Transformation Programme Manager ensured that the core team members from each business streams, from his team, met approximately every week in these ten months to review the plan with him. The mistake that the team made repeatedly during these meetings was to keep the target same but adjusted the plan every time. As for the final point in the PRISM Model, **plan should have been linear and not circular**. Instead of reviewing the same plan and trying to adjust the timelines / activities the focus should have been further dividing the complex and mammoth Phase I into smaller and achievable phases. Half of the time in these meetings was spent in finding someone to take the blame for current delays. There were times when Lead Business Analyst suggested to have the programme divided in multiple phases to reduce the mammoth task in smaller chunks but design architects said "This is not going to fly and even if we deliver this, we will still miss all the business benefits." The failure of the team to reach consensus and failure of the programme manager to reinvent the wheel finally led to the closure of a strategic transformation programme, which was supposed to be delivering the best in customer experience and order management.

Although the team of highest calibre had put in tremendous effort, keeping their personal lives at bay, the programme closed in a year and failed to deliver the incredible benefits it was supposed to bring in to the business. Having followed through the guardrails of the PRISM Model these issues could have been avoided and probably the team could have enjoyed their "party in The Shard".

# Conclusion

Looking at the amount of money and number of companies that are ready to embark on one or the other Digital Transformation journey, the figures are astounding. Digital Transformations programmes are spread across all the industries globally and its predicted that by 2023, 50% of organizations will neglect investing in market-driven operations and will lose market share to existing competitors that made the investments, as well as to new digital market entries. Same study, from IDC – one of the top digital transformation market research firm in the world, predicts that 80% of digital leaders will devise and differentiate end-customer value measures by 2025 using Digital Transformation. So, every organisation will have a Digital Transformation programme running in one flavour or the other. Now, although the selection of right Digital Transformation Programme for the benefit of the organisation is a tricky decision but it's even trickier to run that programme successfully. This is the reason that even with the best teams on-board, more than 70% of Transformation Programme fail to achieve their stipulated benefits.

PRISM Model is designed to cover the complete aspect of transformation journey from selection to implementation. There are obviously finer details related to technology and team governance but they seldom play a major role in programme failures. If the PRISM Model is followed through the programme it will not only help to steer through most of these challenges but will also support in timely implementation. Thus, increasing the chances of success manifold and in turn reducing the percentage on number of failed programmes.

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- ❖ We work with clients to develop and implement digital transformation strategies that impact their products and business models
- ❖ We help our clients transform their operations and processes in line with this strategy
- ❖ We also help them build a key enabler for achieving these objectives: agility and automation in the technology function
- ❖ Our program and change management services ensure on-track implementation of the various transformation initiatives

All of these services are underpinned by proven methodologies, frameworks and tools. These are based on design thinking approaches that ensure stakeholder buy-in at each stage. Our clients find our global experience, collaborative approach, and the ownership we bring to ensure outcomes in every one of our engagements, as a key differentiator.

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