

# HANDELSKRAFT 2024

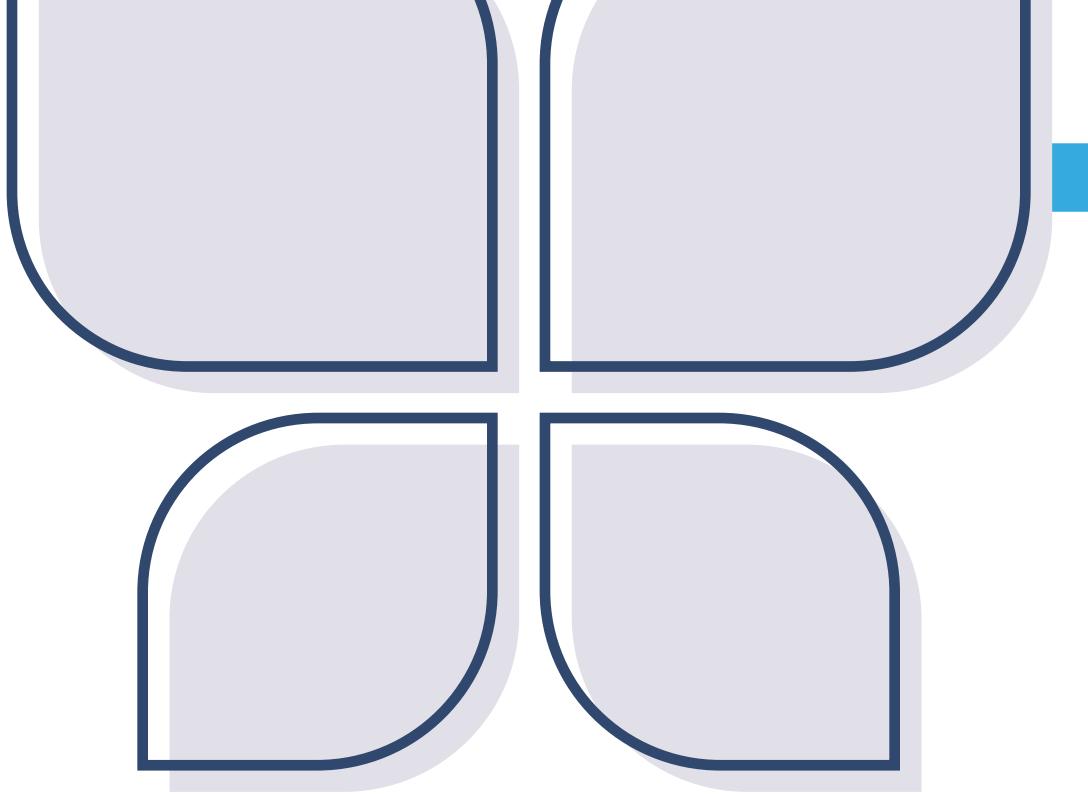
DIGITAL METAMORPHOSIS





# HANDELSKRAFT 2024

DIGITAL METAMORPHOSIS



## DIGITAL METAMORPHOSES

Digitalisation is more than an office Wi-Fi connection. Digital transformation is more than the conversion of paper into digital formats. Digital success is more than a functioning online shop. New Work is more than flexible working hours.



Digital metamorphoses are necessary to keep up with the constantly changing economy. Unlike in nature, however, where the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is as fascinating as it is well researched, digital metamorphoses do not come with a blueprint for companies to turn to. Nevertheless, there are technological trends and impressive use cases that are covered in this trend book.

Those who want to transform themselves need to know where they stand and where they want to go. In a business context, stages of development can differ greatly. While some companies are still working on connecting PayPal, others are already focusing on orbs and World ID. While many of them have only just found a daily routine involving generative artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT or Bard, a few are already preparing to process payments via retinal scans and World-coin.

Planning for digital metamorphoses and being open to change does certainly not mean that it is necessary to adopt everything that is currently on the market in terms of AI. However, the disruptions surrounding generative AI clearly show that

refusing to embrace digital metamorphoses is not an option. Planning for them is vitally important. This requires a »big picture« approach, the courage to engage in multi-stream project management and the development of a comprehensive digital experience platform (DXP) that benefits both customers and employees. In other words: Who would choose to remain a caterpillar forever when they could take on a metaperspective as a butterfly?

No matter what stage of digital maturity companies are currently at – it is never too late to open up to change and to embrace and help shape new forms of collaboration, action and consumption.

One of these masters of change is BayWa AG. In 2023, the long-established global company celebrated its 100th anniversary. Back in 2016, BayWa started its journey by adding an e-commerce platform for B2B and B2C customers to its analogue sales channels. In 2021, the company received the »E-Retailer of the Year« award for its online shop offering a wide range of agricultural and technical products as well as selected services, prevailing against top dogs such as Amazon and Douglas. In 2023, BayWa was ranked among the top 10 leading digital companies in the

chemicals and commodities sector, confirming once again that digital success is not a question of industry, but rather a question of the right mindset, strategies and technologies.<sup>1</sup> Whether it is cloud services, the migration of a content management system (CMS), system integration, a new marketing automation or internal order solution: BayWa is taking a pioneering, »big picture« approach to digitalisation, thus embracing it as an ongoing process, as a multi-metamorphosis.

»BAYWA AG«  
SUCCESS STORIES



Just like BayWa, around 500 other companies are taking this path with dotSource. For 18 years, we have been supporting our clients in becoming, being and remaining adaptable in e-business. These success stories are presented in numerous publications, webinars, via the Handelskraft formats (blog, podcast, conference) and, like every year, in the trend book.



**Frank  
Ertel**

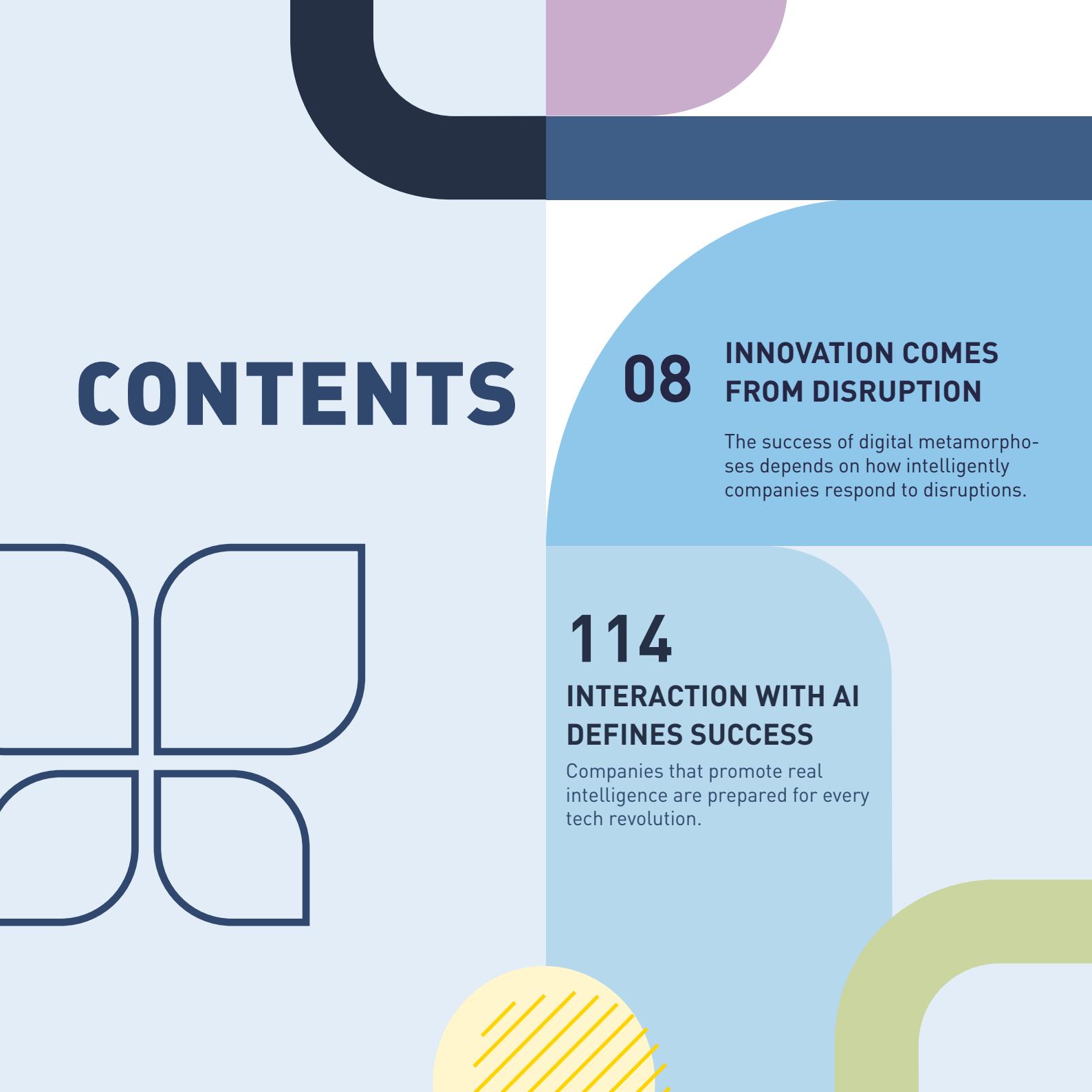
**Christian Otto  
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Bohnenberg**

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Malik**

dotSource Management

# CONTENTS



08

## INNOVATION COMES FROM DISRUPTION

The success of digital metamorphoses depends on how intelligently companies respond to disruptions.

114

## INTERACTION WITH AI DEFINES SUCCESS

Companies that promote real intelligence are prepared for every tech revolution.

**10**

## AI EXPERTISE MEETS NEW WORK

Companies that embrace New Work are quicker to build up skills that are needed in a digitally disruptive business environment.

**78**

## E-COMMERCE IS TRANSFORMING

Commerce trends are drivers in shaping successful digital customer relationships.

**46**

## FRAMEWORKS PROVIDE CLARITY

With specific requirements, agile approaches and measurable key figures, companies can turn shared visions into scalable digital products.

**60**

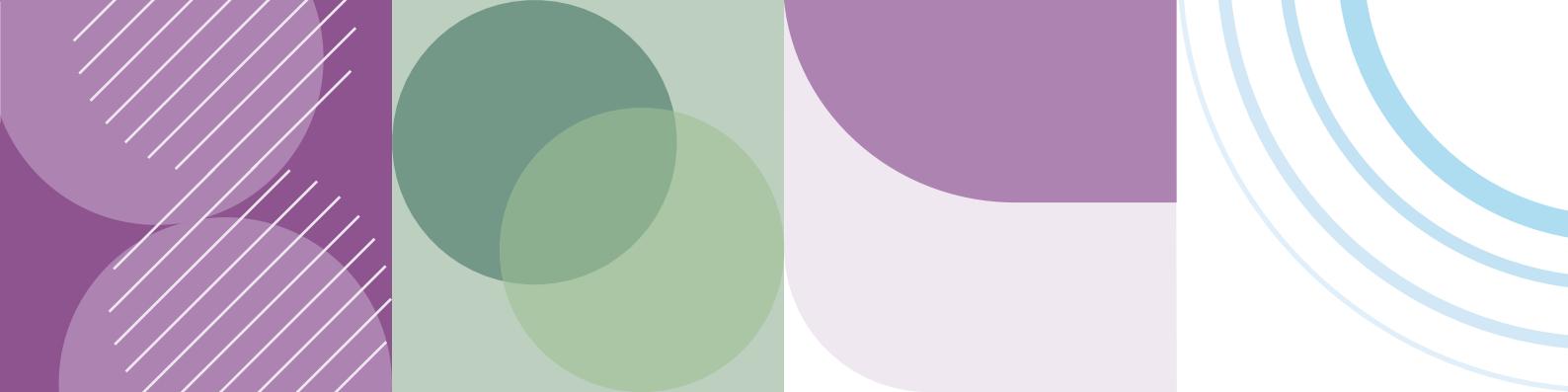
## TECHNOLOGY SETS STANDARDS

Companies remain agile by adopting a far-sighted approach to digitalisation instead of rushing to introduce technologies.

# INNOVATION COMES FROM DISRUPTION

1969, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2022 – the emergence of the Internet, the founding of Amazon, Netflix, Google and Spotify. The launch of the iPhone, the rise of Airbnb and Uber. The release of ChatGPT. Nine milestones of digital disruption. Turning points that shape a giant market structure. Innovation drivers for industries. Game changers for consumers. The tenth milestone followed in summer 2023: the cryptocurrency project Worldcoin.

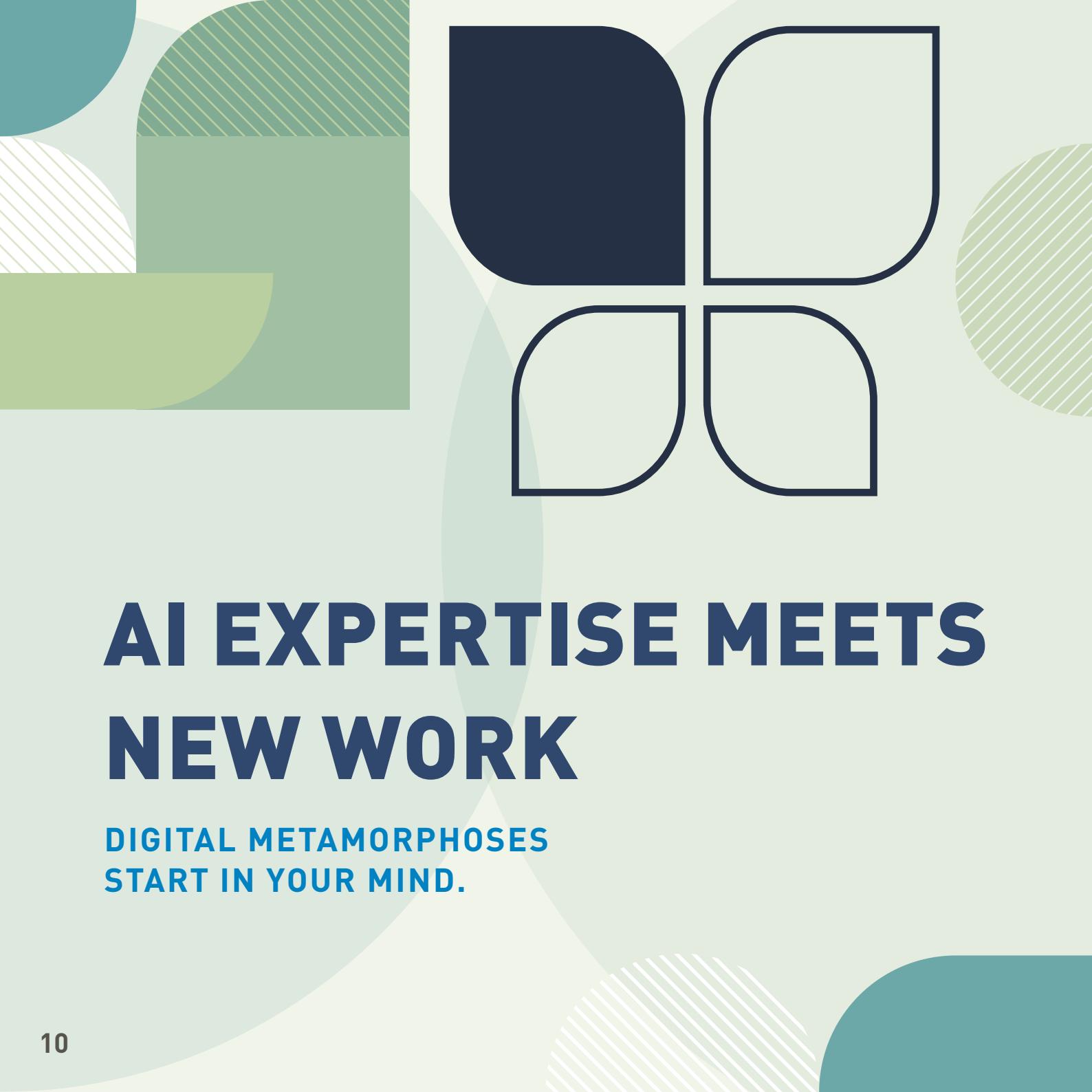
Disruption is the word of an era that has seen the economy change more rapidly than ever before. However, there have always been disruptive moments in history: Over 500 years ago, Gutenberg's printing press fundamentally changed society.



Disruptive change may have been a driving force throughout history, but in recent decades we have witnessed an unprecedented transformation of the economy. With the emergence of the Internet, the resulting network effects as well as Moore's Law, the frequency of disruptions has increased. The 1990s in particular saw a veritable wave of innovations sweep across industrialised nations, turning them into global disruptors. It is not only the companies launching such technologies and devices that benefit from them, but above all the people who have been using these products ever since.

The release of ChatGPT in November 2022 impressively demonstrated just how crucial the

willingness to embrace change is for companies. This is because the large-scale viability of AI raises expectations regarding change even further. In the future, the success of metamorphoses will be determined not only by how flexibly companies can adapt to developments, but also by whether they are able to use real intelligence to shape digital innovations in the age of AI.



# AI EXPERTISE MEETS NEW WORK

DIGITAL METAMORPHOSES  
START IN YOUR MIND.



Egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly – biological metamorphoses are an inherent part of nature. In the business world, the power for change lies in the hands, or rather, in the minds of people. This is exactly where successful digital metamorphoses begin. Embedding openness to change in their corporate DNA is mandatory for companies these days. In a world of constant change, this kind of openness is something that also plays a role in our day-to-day work – and not only that: The way we work and collaborate has a significant impact on how successful digital metamorphoses are.

To avoid making piecemeal investments and simply waiting for the next change, those in charge need to create a working environment that fosters, encourages and demands curiosity about trends, the courage to innovate and a passion for learning new skills.

This sounds like a trend that played an important, if not the key role before the age of AI: New Work. The social philosopher and anthropologist Frithjof Bergmann laid the foundation for the concept of New Work around 50 years ago.<sup>2</sup> Since the emergence of GAFA (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple) in the 1990s, it has found its way into more and more companies around the world. With the revival of AI, however, this approach is becoming even more relevant.



Consequently, companies that are already embracing New Work have the tools for AI-driven collaboration at their disposal:

- Diverse teams
- An open mindset
- Bold ideas
- Courage to change
- Empathetic leadership
- Feedback and no-blame culture
- Transparency and knowledge management

The extent to which these factors are embedded in companies determines how successful and future-proof they will be in the age of AI. The good news is that it is never too late for change. What it takes to benefit from artificial intelligence in the long run is real intelligence – people who know how to harness the opportunities

offered by technology to achieve business goals and who empower others to do the same. After all, obtaining AI expertise is a team effort.

### **Successful teams:**

- build up AI expertise step by step.
- work together to evaluate which departments should be the first to be considered for minimum viable products (MVPs) based on AI.
- hand over responsibility to those people who have both a professional and personal interest in AI.
- ensure transparency.
- are driven by innovation and see change as an opportunity rather than a threat.



**»New Work is a movement that has to be embraced by every company and organisation that wants to position itself for the future. It is about redefining work.«<sup>3</sup>**

Josephine Charlotte Hofmann, Fraunhofer IAO

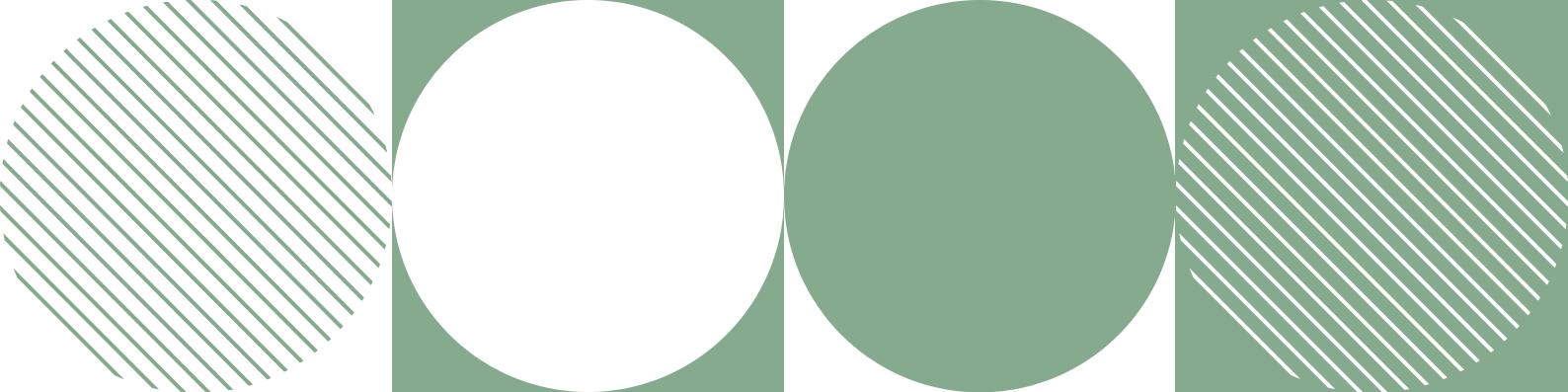
**»Not all employees need to become AI experts, but a basic understanding of the technology [...] is also required outside of IT departments.«<sup>4</sup>**

Wilhelm Bauer, Director, Fraunhofer IAO

## AI AS A JOB CREATOR

Similar to the triumph of the Internet, which has made digital the new normal, the use of AI will become part of everyday life in the coming years. The ability to work iteratively with AI will become a key skill for employees. This calls for real intelligence: Critical thinking, analytical reasoning, the ability to solve complex problems, creativity and originality will emerge as the new core competencies in companies – even beyond AI and data experts.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, new job profiles will be created and new training programmes will be required. This means that human resources (HR) and management teams should engage in an even more in-depth dialogue with operational stakeholders to identify needs at an early stage, adjust job advertisements and train themselves.



As companies increasingly interact with AI, various job roles and expertise profiles will change fundamentally. Industrial workers, for example, will need new skills to be able to work safely with adaptive robots.

Employees in controlling, by contrast, will need less expertise in budget planning and management in the future. Instead, they will have to improve their decision-making and communication skills to be able to evaluate the output of AI in a business context.

### **To accompany the shift in skills responsibly, companies should:**

- ANALYSE WHAT SKILLS ARE NEEDED.**
- SPECIFY JOB ROLES IN THE CONTEXT OF AI.**
- DIVIDE TASKS BETWEEN HUMANS AND AI.**
- DEFINE THE REQUIRED AI EXPERTISE.**
- CREATE AN AI EXPERTISE PROFILE FOR EACH JOB ROLE.**
- IDENTIFY TRAINING MEASURES.<sup>4</sup>**





# TESTING, SHARING, PROMPTING

The pace at which economic evolution is progressing in the age of AI is breathtaking. However, instead of getting caught up in an AI frenzy for the sake of AI and rushing into digital metamorphoses, it is advisable to view AI acceptance and expertise among employees as a project and proceed step by step:

## 1. Preparation phase

- Define goals and assess the consequences

## 2. Experimentation and qualification phase

- Launch pilot projects before using AI on a large scale

## 3. Evaluation and adjustment phase

- Continuously check and evaluate interactions with AI
- Use ideas and innovations from operational stakeholders for optimisation<sup>6</sup>

»Test, test, test« – what is true for successful change management also applies to digital metamorphoses towards becoming an AI-savvy company. In this context, it is no less important to share insights with the rest of the company. Passing on the experience that team members have gained from using tools saves time, fosters a collaborative spirit of innovation and helps build up AI expertise more quickly and effectively – exactly where it is needed.

Setting up a dedicated communication channel, for example via Microsoft Teams, where only content and test results as well as dos and don'ts are shared, or establishing a collaborative knowledge repository, for example in Confluence, are key measures to ensure that expertise in dealing with AI is not lost. This is particularly important since new tools and developments seem to be emerging on a daily basis.



Hackathon events that focus exclusively on the company's AI projects are also promising opportunities for conducting tests outside of everyday working life, gaining new insights as a team and driving innovation forward.

A community of practice (CoP) is another useful approach to building up and expanding AI expertise within a company. It consists of several small groups working on specific topics related to AI. These should primarily address relevant business matters, but can also have a more global focus. It is important for CoP

members to regularly exchange views and share their knowledge with others. Whether in weekly team lead calls or monthly all-company meetings – transparency is essential, making it possible to give feedback and provide inspiration to fellow employees, which helps drive digital metamorphoses forward.

Prompt engineering is the art of providing AI with the right instructions. For companies, this is becoming a key skill that enables them to optimise their use of AI. Even the best-trained AI solution is useless if people do not know

how to use it. To put it differently: If users do not understand which prompts ChatGPT, for example, responds to best, they will not receive satisfactory answers.

If queries are too broad or vague, the responses will also be too broad or vague. Consequently, it is important to be as specific as possible in your prompts, but not to write too much text and, above all, not to disclose any sensitive corpo-

rate or personal data. dotSource's »Prompt Engineering« cheat sheet allows companies to further enhance their employees' interactions with AI.

## Good prompting:

- **REDUCES THE EFFORT REQUIRED TO CREATE TEXTS MANUALLY.**
- **SAVES VALUABLE RESOURCES.**
- **INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY.**
- **LEAVES MORE TIME FOR ESSENTIAL TASKS.**
- **BOOSTS INNOVATIVE STRENGTH.<sup>7</sup>**

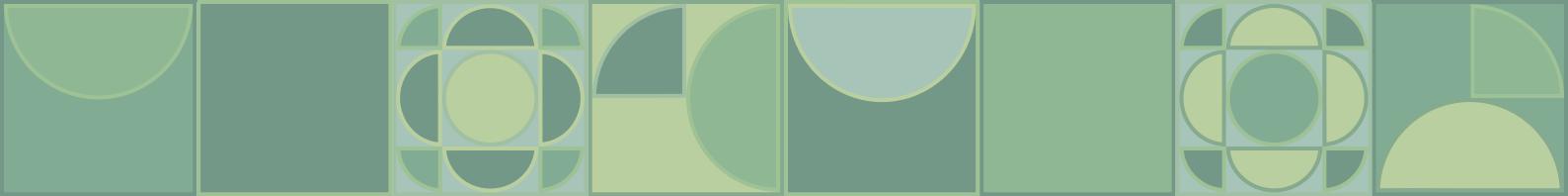
»AI«  
WHITE PAPER



To ensure seamless use of AI in compliance with legal requirements and data protection regulations, it is essential to understand its opportunities and limitations. AI solutions store and process all the content they are provided with. Before using such a tool, it is vital to check how reputable the company behind it is and whether the solution is still in its beta phase.

### **5 tips for a conscious approach to AI:**

- Have your legal department investigate the companies behind AI solutions
- Share the findings with the entire company
- Do not use customer data or confidential business information for prompts
- Formulate prompts using anonymised data
- Label AI-generated images as such



# NEW WORK CONCERNS EVERYONE

Whether digital start-up or long-established company – New Work has an impact on the entire business world. It is not just about how companies master digital metamorphoses such as building up AI expertise, but also about

how they ensure that their employees enjoy the work they do. After all, satisfaction is crucial to business success – happy employees are more productive employees.

Workplace productivity rises by up to **37%** when employees feel connected.<sup>8</sup>

**About 50%** of managers have noticed that customer satisfaction increases when employees are happy.<sup>9</sup>

For **65%** of employees and **61%** of managers, work-life harmony is the most important aspect of their job.<sup>10</sup>

**70%** of employees consider the purpose of their work to be the most important aspect.<sup>10</sup>

Besides increased output while maintaining a high quality of work, other good reasons to invest in employee satisfaction include the following<sup>11</sup>:

- **Fewer absent days**
- **Reduced risk of burnout**
- **Greater commitment**
- **Increased motivation**
- **Attraction of new talent**
- **Stronger retention of highly qualified employees**

## EMBRACING A FEEDBACK CULTURE

A lack of appreciation for employees can become an existential challenge for companies in times of labour shortage. As early as 40 years ago, studies showed that a culture of appreciation positively influences productivity.<sup>12</sup>

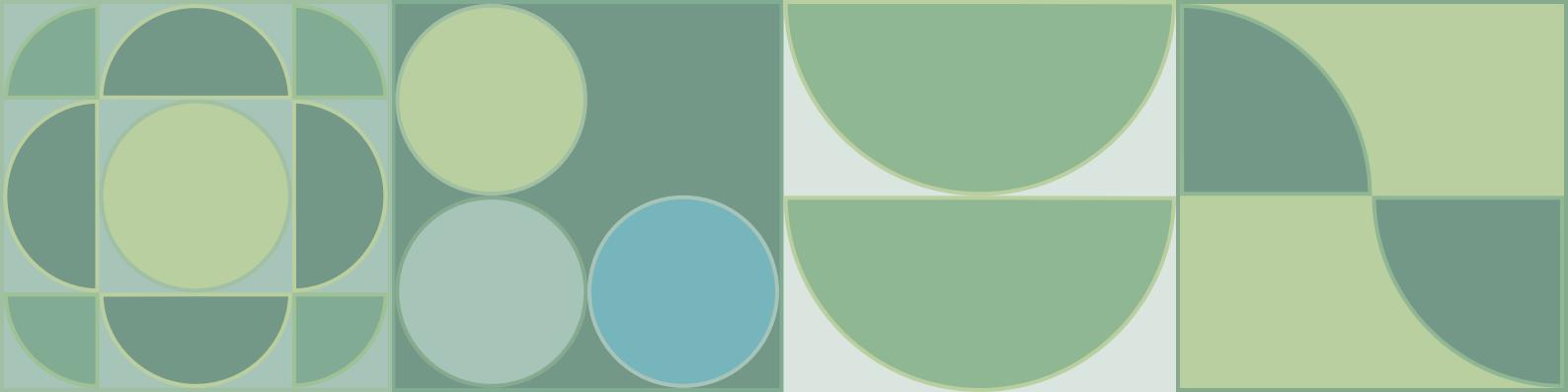
This shows that it is vital for companies to find and promote talent and to retain and value high-performing employees.

When it comes to new working and remuneration models, the following are essential aspects to consider:

- Viewing them as an opportunity
- Incorporating them in an organisational structure that focuses on employees
- Reflecting on them in regular dialogue and on equal terms with employees<sup>9</sup>

## LEADERSHIP IS GOOD, TRUST IS BETTER

Dissatisfaction at work adds fuel to the fire that companies have been trying to put out for years: a shortage of skilled labour. One of the main reasons people leave a company is the relationship to their managers. Although laying all the blame on one person or one group of people may seem like the easy way out, the fact that more and more employees are quietly or actually quitting should incentivise those in leadership roles to reflect on their leadership style.



»Employees do not leave jobs, they leave managers.«<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Travis Bradberry, Author and Expert on Emotional Intelligence

**61 %** of German employees will no longer be with their current employer in three years.

By way of comparison, in 2018, only **35%** of employees could imagine changing jobs within 3 years.

**87 %** of employees are not emotionally attached to their place of work – a fact that costs the German economy between 118.1 and 151.1 billion euros every year.<sup>14</sup>

Employees who trust their managers are employees who can go above and beyond and drive a company forward. Just like satisfaction, trust is a crucial success factor. This is because trust:

- reduces costs.
- leads to better results.
- fosters creativity.
- makes innovation possible.
- provides orientation.
- creates a feeling of safety.<sup>15</sup>

For years, trust has been at the top of the ranking of the most important values.

Trust: **36%**

Responsibility: **27%**

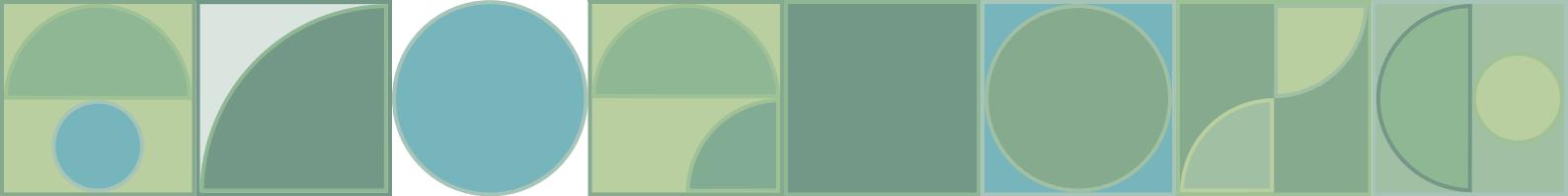
Respect: **17%**<sup>16</sup>

Managers also consider a value-based corporate culture to be highly relevant.

About **77%** rate teamwork and a healthy corporate culture as particularly important.

Approximately **76%** see values as the strongest form of guidance, especially when it comes to difficult decisions.

Around **74%** value health more than success and profit.<sup>16</sup>



## BRIDGING THE TRUST GAP

Those at management level who do not introduce the values of New Work out of their own conviction will fail when it comes to the following key factors contributing to business success: authenticity and trust. Managers are fully aware of this.

It is up to the management level to enter into dialogue with employees in order to bridge this gap. Regular 360-degree feedback is one of the fundamental measures for strengthening trust and increasing employee loyalty. And yet, it exists: the gap between perceived and genuine trust.<sup>15</sup>

**92%** of managers believe that the employees they lead are satisfied.

**30%** of employees are actually satisfied at work.<sup>9</sup>

Only **25%** of German employees are fully satisfied with their direct superior.<sup>14</sup>

**70%** of employees would leave their current company for one that invests more in its employees' professional development.<sup>17</sup>

Joint weekly meetings, regular performance reviews as well as face-to-face conversations every now and then – in compliance with feedback rules – are good opportunities for clear communication and transparency on both sides.

Regular internal training as well as external coaching are further ways to build and strengthen a value-based corporate culture.

A culture that everyone can help shape, pass on and refer to. One that promotes modern leadership at all levels. It is not just CEOs and team leads who are leaders – project managers, tech leads and mentors also need good leadership skills to pass the shared corporate culture on to their teams.

**It can cost a company up to 213% of their annual salary to replace a qualified employee.<sup>17</sup>**

**Without adequate leadership, the risk of an employee quitting is 4 times higher.<sup>17</sup>**

## Appreciation at work can increase:

productivity by almost **40%**.

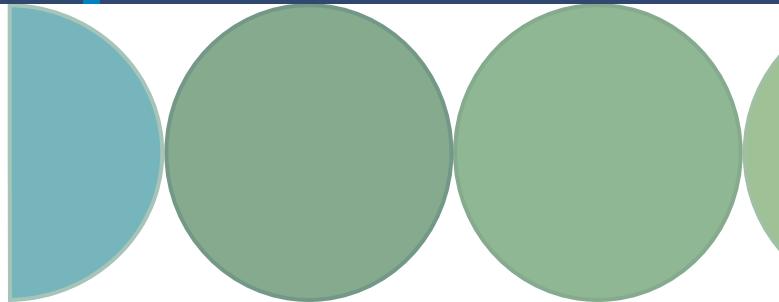
commitment by nearly **90%**.

employee satisfaction and retention by almost **70%**.

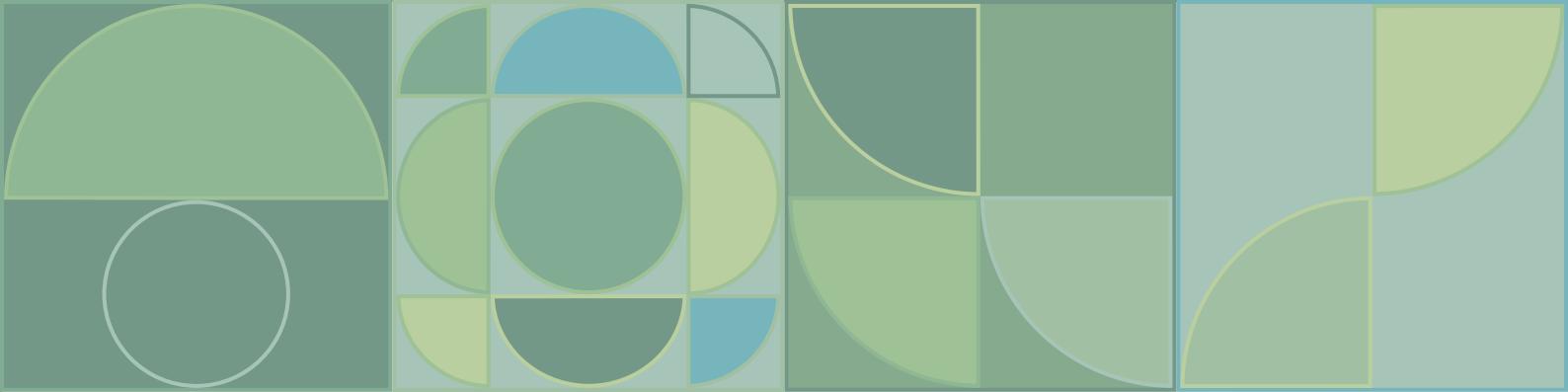
employee loyalty by over **30%**.<sup>18</sup>

### GENERATIONAL SHIFT

The metamorphosis of the working world over the last five years has gone hand in hand with another key development: a shift in generations. On the one hand, more and more people from Gen Z are joining the workforce. On the other hand, the average working lifetime is undergoing change. As people get older, the time they spend in the workforce increases. With the exception of young start-ups, this means that more different generations are working together in companies than ever before.



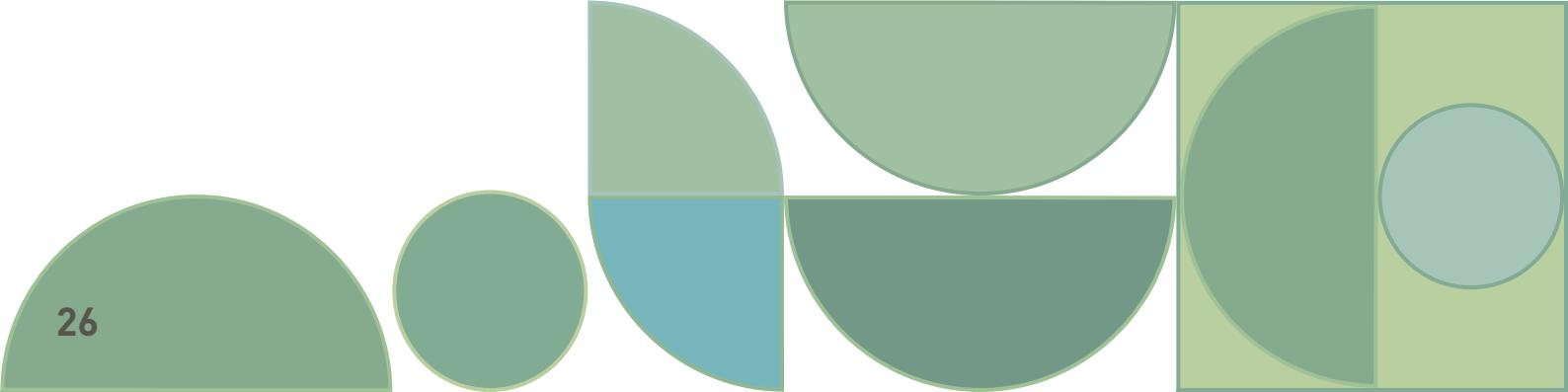
Depending on the company's size and industry, up to five generations may be working under one roof. They differ not only in terms of their age, but also in what motivates them and how they approach tasks.<sup>19</sup>

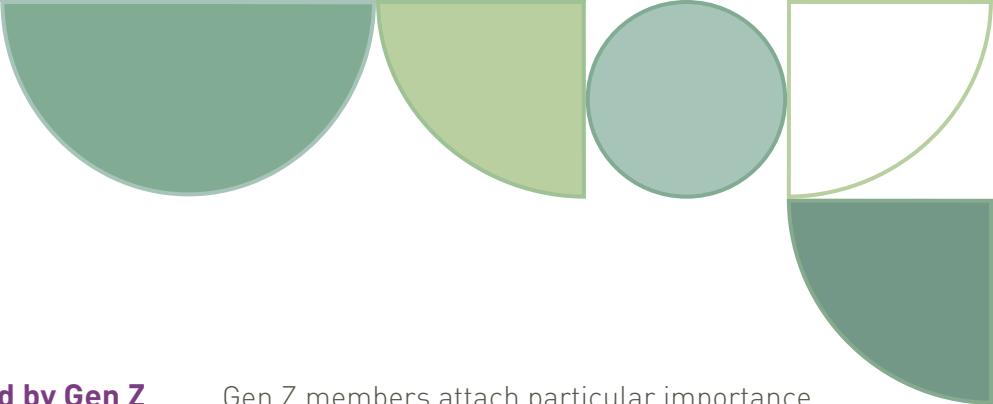


Moreover, a new generation of managers is emerging in the form of millennials (Gen Y, born between 1980 and 1995). They are the first digital natives to have experienced digital metamorphoses in the working world. They were socialised into the world of digitalisation rather than born into it. They also initiated the New Work revolution in the workplace around 20 years ago. More flexibility and freedom, a greater focus on work-life harmony and opportunities for further development – these are achievements that have been significantly driven by millennials in recent years. This puts them closest to Gen Z not only chronologically, but also in terms of values – a generation born

between 1995 and 2012 that reminds companies once again how important a value-based working environment is.<sup>21</sup>

This generation has made an enormous contribution to ensuring more favourable employment conditions and improving work-life harmony as a result. It has clear expectations of potential employers, the ideal working environment and the right corporate culture.<sup>21</sup> This presents companies with several challenges. However, those looking to remain fit for the future need Gen Z members as experts and managers, making it imperative to embrace cultural metamorphoses.





## Expectations and values shared by Gen Z include the following<sup>22</sup>:

- Flexibility
- Mental health support
- Diversity
- Social and environmental equity
- Inclusion

Gen Z members attach particular importance to a job that makes them happy and allows them to develop and realise their potential while also leaving them enough time to enjoy life. Instead of labelling them as lazy or lacking resilience, employers should focus on moving away from negative narratives and stereotypes. This change in sentiment is supported by a recent study conducted among Gen Z members in Germany:

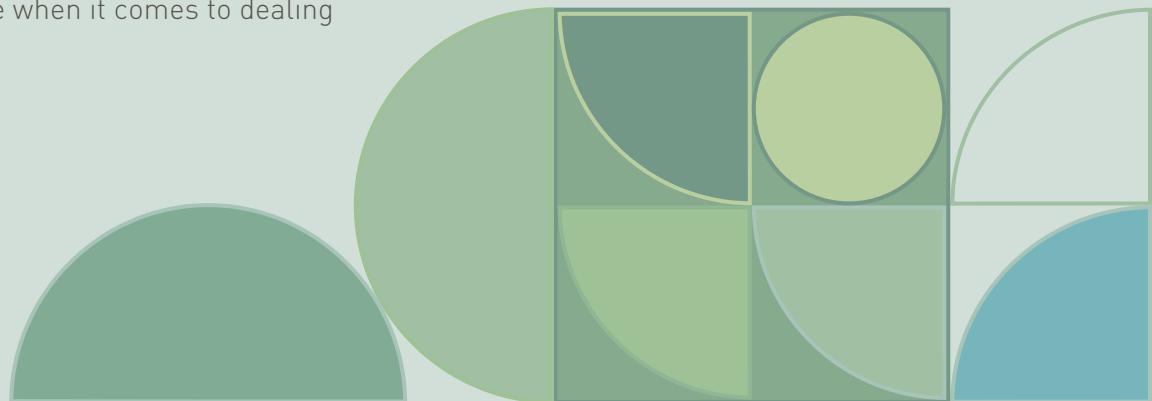
Over **80%** are willing to go the extra mile at work – in the form of overtime or availability outside of working hours.

More than **half** aspire to have a stable career.

Nearly **60%** would stay with the same company for more than ten years if they felt comfortable there.<sup>23</sup>

Overcoming habits is generally difficult for us humans. It makes us feel uncomfortable. However, uncomfortable does not necessarily mean bad – quite the opposite. It is the uncomfortable questions that can lead to reflection, to innovation – and that is exactly what the working world needs: the courage to change. This has not just been the case since Gen Z joined the workforce. Therefore, »We've always done it that way« must not be an excuse when it comes to dealing with employees.

In fact, this mindset is detrimental to business. This is because companies need to meet the expectations of future generations and align them with their own values and goals.



By 2025, Gen Z will:

make up about **27%** of the workforce.<sup>24</sup>

account for around **30%** of gross income in Germany.<sup>25</sup>

The likelihood of companies achieving above-average success increases by **33%** if they have a generationally diverse workforce.<sup>26</sup>

## Companies with a high degree of staff diversity:

- **WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY.**
- **GENERATE MORE SALES.**
- **ARE MORE FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT.**
- **INCREASE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION.**
- **ARE LESS LIKELY TO FACE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES.**
- **STRENGTHEN THEIR IMAGE.**
- **BROADEN THEIR ACCESS TO NEW TARGET AUDIENCES.**
- **IMPROVE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.**
- **BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGES IN SOCIETY.<sup>26</sup>**



# PURPOSE IS ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT

**»To ensure economic success, it is essential to work towards the greater good.«<sup>27</sup>**

Hubert Rhomberg, CEO, Rhomberg Group

- A qualified civil engineer promotes collaboration instead of competition. In addition to his family-run business, he founded a company focusing on sustainable construction and a platform that fosters corporate social responsibility (CSR) through partnerships.<sup>27</sup>
- A start-up founder establishes a successful platform, sells the company behind it after eleven years and donates 90 per cent of his wealth to charity.<sup>28</sup>
- A CEO introduces social commitment as a business model and an integral part of corporate culture, thereby setting new CSR standards.
- A married couple founds a sustainable fashion brand, spearheading the movement towards environmental responsibility in the German textile industry.<sup>29</sup>

## PIONEERING SPIRIT AT HESSNATUR

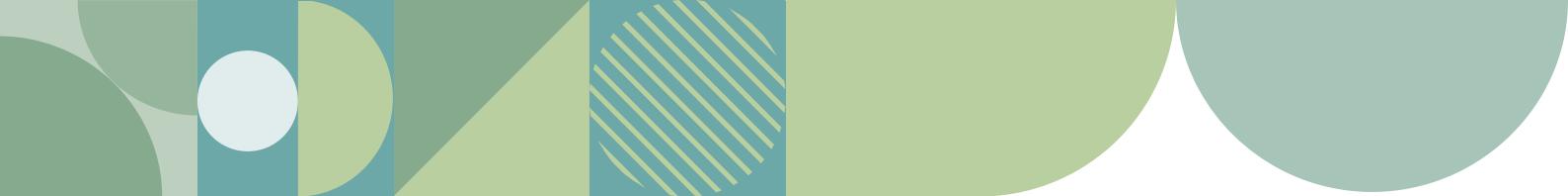
### Heinz and Dorothea Hess

Back in 1976, Heinz and Dorothea Hess came up with the idea of offering fashion made from organic natural fibres, which was revolutionary at the time. In the 1990s, hessnatur became the world's first brand to grow organic cotton.<sup>29</sup> As a co-initiator of the Charter for Sustainable Design, Dorothea Hess worked closely with her husband Heinz to lay the foundation for the brand's success at an early stage.<sup>30</sup> From the very beginning, hessnatur has successfully combined economic efficiency with environmental responsibility. The company is still considered a fair fashion market leader to this day. In 2022, hessnatur received the German Brand Award for, among other things, its highly sustainable production process.

Numerous other accolades for sustainable business practices followed – as did the »Innovations for Tomorrow Awards«, which were initiated by hessnatur itself. Furthermore, hessnatur knows how to publicise its campaigns online. Over the last three years, the company has significantly professionalised not only its online shop, but also its social media presence, especially on LinkedIn. This pursuit of optimisation is reflected in hessnatur's sales figures – in the financial year 2020/2021, the fashion brand achieved record sales growth of 30 per cent.<sup>31</sup>

»HESSNATUR«  
SUCCESS STORY





**»With the rest of society in mind, I took a moment to reflect on what I really need and what I believe is reasonable to own. I came to the conclusion that ten per cent of what I have is enough.«<sup>32</sup>**

Sebastian Klein, Co-Founder, Blinkist

## ROLE MODELLING AT BLINKIST

**Sebastian Klein**

In 2012, Sebastian Klein founded the start-up Blinkist together with three friends. Within just a few years, the platform, which allows users to access short summaries of non-fiction books without actually reading or buying them, developed into a digital business worth millions.

In 2023, the Australian e-learning company Go1 acquired Blinkist. Shortly afterwards, co-founder Sebastian Klein announced on LinkedIn that he wanted to donate 90 per cent

of his fortune to charity. He also drew attention to the fact that extreme wealth and a concentration of financial power have a detrimental effect on society and climate protection, thereby raising awareness of the importance of CSR.

## 1-1-1 PHILANTHROPY AT SALESFORCE

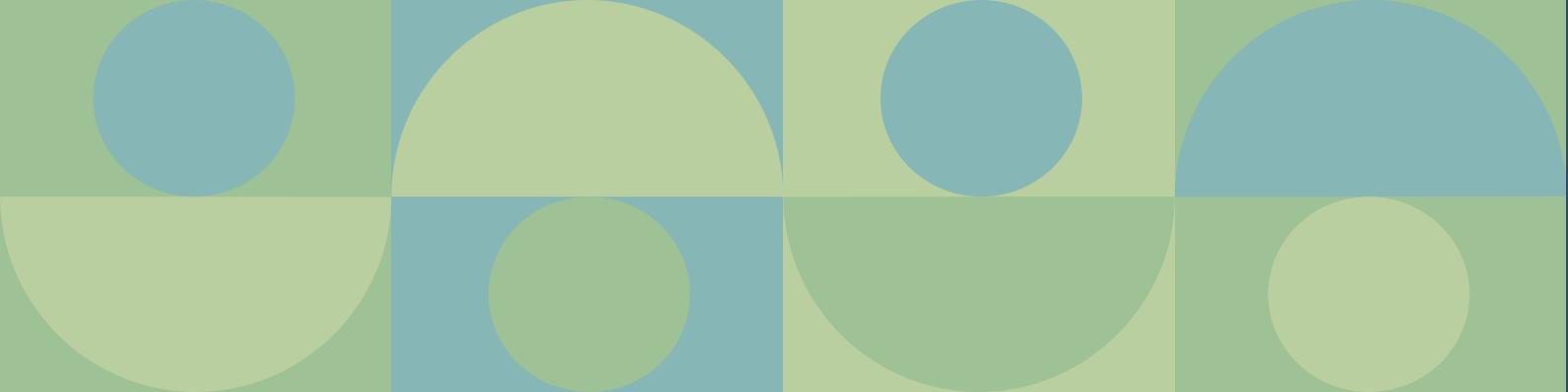
**Marc Benioff**

Committing one per cent. Achieving great things. Since 1999, Salesforce co-founder Marc Benioff has adopted the 1-1-1 model to ensure that society benefits from the company's success. One per cent of Salesforce's equity, one per cent of its product and one per cent of its employees' time are dedicated to charitable organisations and projects. For example, Salesforce employees are given six days of paid leave per year to get involved in a community project of their choice.<sup>33</sup> In line with its 1-1-1 philosophy, Salesforce has donated more than 240 million US dollars, contributed 3.5 million hours of community service and provided product donations for over 39,000 non-profit organisations and educational institutions over the last 25 years.<sup>34</sup>

## COLLABORATION AT RHOMBERG GROUP

**Hubert Rhomberg**

More than 45 companies, institutions, industry associations and foundations are members of the platform »V«. The aim of co-founder Hubert Rhomberg is to bring together stakeholders in order to jointly develop new business models that embrace CSR.<sup>35</sup> Projects on the platform are initiated by employees themselves, for example in the fields of IT security, mobility, co-living and training. The companies provide the necessary budget and grant time off work to employees who want to take part in the projects. Not only do these efforts contribute to the greater good across the Vorarlberg region, but they also help the participating companies move forward – be it through cost savings, increased knowledge or enhanced innovative strength.<sup>27</sup>



## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Heinz and Dorothea Hess, Sebastian Klein, Marc Benioff, Hubert Rhomberg – five founders who have set new standards for what CSR can look like.

»Corporate social responsibility« – the name says it all. In short, CSR encompasses the social, environmental and economic contributions that companies make in order to take responsibility for their impact on society. These include, for example, fair business practices, employee-oriented HR policies, the economical use of natural resources, community engagement and supply chain transparency.

Besides these measures, it is increasingly important to prevent negative effects proactively and consciously – a task that companies can complete more quickly with the help of modern technologies and data-driven business models than without them.

Through their CSR, companies commit to sustainable business practices in the interests of the common good and environmental protection. Some companies are also obliged to disclose their CSR measures. The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) has set out the framework for this type of CSR reporting since mid-2022.

Whether on a voluntary basis or as part of the CSRD – commitment to CSR benefits not only the general public, but also the business itself. After all, CSR is a competitive advantage:

**Two thirds** of all customers are prepared to part with brands without CSR.

**84%** of decision-makers plan to increase their investments in CSR.

**92%** consider CSR to be a key factor contributing to business success. They see potential in the following areas:

**34%** in strengthening their brand

**31%** in increasing productivity

**34%** in acquiring new customers

Around **60%** of employees are prepared to leave a company without any CSR measures.<sup>36</sup>

In the future, successful companies will be those with CEOs such as Hubert Rhomberg, who look beyond the boundaries of their family business and integrate commitment to CSR into their corporate DNA instead of seeing it as a burden.

Examples such as the platform »V« prove that every contribution counts and that every company can find opportunities to get involved – and not only that: It is a business imperative to be mindful of investors, reward customers, inspire employees and help shape society.

It is not about the big bang. It is about commitment – and that starts in the mind. LinkedIn voices like Blinkist co-founder Sebastian Klein will continue to spread this mindset on social media in the coming years. More and more companies, for example hessnatur, will align their business model with purpose – a meaningful focus – from the very beginning, thereby securing a competitive advantage.



Purpose is an important purchasing criterion for more than **half** of Germans.<sup>37</sup>

Nearly **70%** of German consumers want brands to spend less time talking about their purpose and more time acting on it.<sup>38</sup>



Speaking of the big bang: Sam Altman, head of ChatGPT provider OpenAI, uses his »Worldcoin« project to demonstrate what the interplay between digital progress and corporate responsibility can look like. Although Worldcoin is still facing criticism, particularly when it comes to data protection, the idea essentially pursues a commendable goal: security and social justice. Two topics that should not be missing from any CSR strategy.

Together with Alex Blania and Max Novendstern, Altman founded the German-American start-up Tools for Humanity (TFH) back in 2019 with the aim of researching and further developing

technical, legal and commercial opportunities as well as use cases related to digital payment and currency systems.<sup>39</sup> Four years later, just as ChatGPT was booming, Altman and Blania launched Worldcoin. Worldcoin is a cryptocurrency project, a global identification system – probably one of the most exciting technology projects since ChatGPT.<sup>40</sup>

Worldcoin consists of three components:

- World ID – the digital identity
- Worldcoin – the cryptocurrency
- World App – the corresponding cryptowallet<sup>40</sup>

People can register via eye scans using »orbs« – silver-coloured, spherical devices. This technology has been honed for years as the authentication method of the future – it was already being used in the Middle East in 2016. In 2023, these scanners were installed outside of shopping centres and universities. The orbs are produced and maintained by TFH.

Via the iris, the scanner recognises that a unique person is standing in front of the orb. Based on the iris code, the scanner assigns a specific hash value – the basis for proof of identity – on a decentralised blockchain protocol. A World ID generated this way is intended to help distinguish between humans and machines in the age of AI and other technologies. German co-founder Alex Blania explains that World ID will enable Worldcoin users to clearly identify themselves as human beings on the Internet while remaining anonymous.<sup>40</sup>

According to TFH, neither the image nor personal data such as name, date of birth or address are collected during the scan.<sup>41</sup> The idea behind Worldcoin is to lay the foundation for a universal basic income and thus ensure access to and participation in the global economy for all people around the world.<sup>39</sup> As it stands, only half of the world's population has an ID card. With World ID, ten billion people will be able to not only identify themselves, but also verify themselves digitally.<sup>41</sup>

At the beginning of November 2023, World App already had over four million downloads in the app stores of Apple and Google, more than one million active users per month and 22 million transactions.<sup>42</sup>

## DATA-DRIVEN CSR

Using data in a genuinely intelligent way is extremely relevant in the context of CSR. This is because genuinely intelligent use of data brings enormous economic benefits for companies and has a positive impact on climate and environmental protection. From procurement, production and quality management to

logistics – companies that opt for data-driven applications such as process mining, predictive maintenance and machine learning (ML) are able to identify and capitalise on untapped sustainability potential more quickly.

According to experts, **79%** of the targets formulated as part of the Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved more quickly with the help of AI.<sup>43</sup>

By 2024, companies will be able to use AI to:

improve their energy efficiency by **15%**.

cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by **16%**.

reduce waste by **16%**.

achieve **14%** cost savings.<sup>43</sup>

By 2030, the use of AI can accelerate the achievement of climate targets in various industries<sup>43</sup>:

**45%** (consumer goods)

**22%** (automotive)

**32%** (energy)

For almost **90%** of companies, the lack of a data culture is one of the biggest obstacles to using AI for their CSR projects.<sup>44</sup>

### PROCESS MINING AT VODAFONE

AI-powered technologies such as process mining can have a significant business impact – even when it comes to tracking the consumption of resources.<sup>45</sup> Process mining provides a kind of X-ray image of all internal and external processes as well as their dependencies and interrelationships. In just a few seconds, companies gain scalable insights into real processes, including bottlenecks and inefficiencies.<sup>46</sup>

Enriched with specific key figures and data sources related to sustainability, for example emission factors and ratings, companies can not only significantly reduce their process costs, but also continuously measure and optimise their environmental and social impact as well as relevant key performance indicators (KPIs).<sup>45</sup>



Telecommunications provider Vodafone is already using this technology in its procurement, making processes as well as process gaps and discrepancies transparent in next to no time. The result: a 20 per cent reduction in process costs and processes that take 20 per cent less time. In addition, 92 per cent of orders do not have to be reprocessed, as they have been recorded correctly initially.<sup>46</sup>

With the help of process mining, Vodafone's purchasing department can optimise the current status of over 800,000 orders and five million invoices per year – something that also benefits customers and the environment. After all, more efficient delivery routes and a reduced need for computing power – resulting from a lower number of process loops – have a noticeable impact on the telecommunications provider's carbon footprint.



With process mining, companies can:

lower process costs by up to **30%.**<sup>46</sup>

increase conversion rates by up to **20%.**

reduce days sales outstanding (DSO) by up to **80%.**<sup>47</sup>

## GREEN CONCRETE WITH ALCEMY

The quality of concrete is heavily dependent on the natural raw materials it is made from: sand and limestone. For this reason, its composition must constantly be checked and adjusted. To compensate for fluctuations from the start, cement clinker is often mixed in – an extremely climate-damaging material. By adding substitutes that cause significantly fewer emissions, however, the production process becomes more susceptible to errors, more complex and more expensive. The AI software solution developed by the greentech company alcemy helps eliminate this problem. Statistical analyses and ML allow alcemy's customers to continuously monitor production values in real time.<sup>48</sup>

## SMART GRIDS FROM ENVELIO

The energy industry also holds great potential for accelerating environmental CSR measures with the help of AI. Intelligent power grids, for example the smart grids developed by the tech company envelio, make energy exchange more efficient and sustainable by effectively co-ordinating generation and consumption.<sup>49</sup> With the software solution from the Cologne-based greentech spin-off of RWTH Aachen University, technical processes relating to smart energy are up to 20 times faster – at 75 per cent lower costs.

Smart grids use collected sensor data to ensure that the right amount of electricity is available where it is needed.<sup>50</sup>

These intelligent networks consisting of decentralised energy suppliers:

- enable the seamless integration of renewable energy sources into the power grid.
- monitor and optimise energy generation and consumption in real time.
- detect and eliminate overloads and grid disruptions in record time.
- increase reliability.
- promote transparency and effective cost control.
- allow for the creation of energy usage profiles.<sup>49</sup>

Building up AI expertise, embracing New Work, accelerating CSR measures – these are all crucial success factors. Companies that manage to leverage the synergies between them will not only master their own digital metamorphoses in 2024 and beyond, but will also play an active role in shaping the future of the economy and the working world.



## OBTAINING AI EXPERTISE IS A TEAM EFFORT

- WHAT STRENGTHS CAN YOUR EMPLOYEES BUILD ON WITH THE HELP OF AI?**
- HOW REGULARLY DOES YOUR COMPANY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEEDBACK?**
- WHAT TRAINING COURSES ARE YOU OFFERING YOUR TEAMS THIS YEAR?**
- ARE YOU ALLOWING SOCIETY TO SHARE IN YOUR SUCCESS?**
- WHICH PARTNERS COULD HELP YOU TAKE YOUR CSR MEASURES TO THE NEXT LEVEL?**

# SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES ARE MASTERS OF CHANGE

BayWa

WÜRTH

hessnatur

FUJIFILM



ESPRIT



Röchling

Angst+Pfister



Netto  
Digital

KWS



ottobock.



axel springer



HEIDELBERG

KRONES

ROSE

Fissler

TROX® TECHNIK  
The art of handling air



TM  
Messe  
Düsseldorf

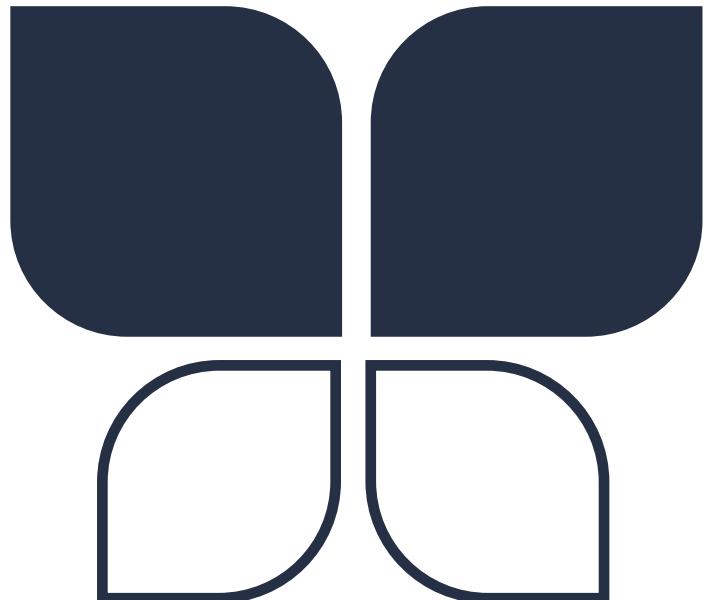
YOU CAN FIND MORE  
SUCCESS STORIES HERE



# FRAMEWORKS PROVIDE CLARITY

A DIGITAL METAMORPHOSIS IS  
ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS STRATEGY.

- If companies are open to change, practice value-based leadership and support working models that embrace generational awareness,
- if skills and job roles are aligned with the requirements resulting from economic evolution and
- if all of this is based on a shared understanding of the company's vision,
- nothing stands in the way of cross-team collaboration using agile frameworks.



Clear objectives, detailed requirements and agile approaches make it easier to work on complex digital projects together. If all employees know what their contribution to the overarching vision is and which tasks they have to complete when and to what extent, the company benefits from greater transparency and more satisfied employees. In addition, project managers can better monitor the achievement of objectives, take into account deadlines and respond to changes more flexibly.

Modern approaches to project management and agile frameworks provide companies with a helpful basis for:

- **clear structures and procedures.**
- **flexible responses to changing requirements.**
- **effective collaboration within and across teams.**
- **transparent project cycles.**
- **adherence to due dates.**
- **timely and regular updates for customers.<sup>51</sup>**

## KNOWING WHAT IS AGILE

What exactly is agility? How can it help overcome hurdles and accelerate project success? According to recent studies, challenges in the implementation of agile projects are due to a lack of knowledge about agile working in 40 per cent of all cases.<sup>51</sup> Agile coaches and clear roles as part of the agile project approach help project teams better understand and apply agile methods and frameworks. This allows them to meet requirements not only in a more structured way, but also with higher quality.

»DIGITAL CONSULTING«  
BEST PRACTICES



## SCRUM AND KANBAN

Agile frameworks offer teams a structure for effectively implementing projects together. Short release cycles, close teamwork, data-driven decisions and target-group-specific measures play a major role here.

According to studies, Scrum and Kanban are the most frequently used methods at 87 and 56 per cent respectively. Kanban is used to visualise workflows and the tasks involved. Teams that work with Scrum can iteratively review the status of projects and continuously improve results.<sup>51</sup>

## AGILE PROJECT APPROACH AT KIPP

HEINRICH KIPP WERK GmbH & Co. KG, a manufacturer of clamping technology, standard elements and operating parts, has opted for the Scrum framework to implement a new online shop based on SAP Commerce Cloud. In contrast to traditional project management using the waterfall model, the company can ensure that a new product component or even a functional product is available at the end of each sprint. This can then be flexibly adapted to current requirements and further developed. The product owner (PO) serves as a link between the stakeholders and the development team, making sure that the current product provides the best possible added value for the company.

The project workflow is understood as a dynamic process and regularly reviewed and optimised in retrospectives.

With the increasing complexity of a digital project, multiple development teams working in parallel are required. The Nexus framework offers a structure that allows up to nine Scrum teams to work on a product at the same time. A shared product backlog and scheduled meetings ensure that the individual Scrum teams know which aspects they are responsible for and how they can contribute to the desired project outcome.<sup>52</sup>

## EXTENSIVE EXPERTISE AT ROSE BIKES

When different teams work together, companies benefit from employees building up their skills in a »T-shaped« way. This means that, in addition to their specialised skills in a particular discipline, they have a broad range of fundamental knowledge in other areas. For example, if employees have the opportunity to spend time in different positions within their company, they can expand their expertise and develop a better understanding of the work done by their colleagues from other departments.<sup>53</sup>

At the German bicycle manufacturer and mail order company ROSE, for example, user experience teams work together with development teams, marketing managers and analysts on an interdisciplinary basis.

This means that the user experience designers not only have an excellent understanding of user behaviour, but also know how to work with the technologies used.<sup>54</sup>

One obstacle to collaboration across teams and locations is often an outdated system landscape. According to a global survey, 42 per cent of all companies are still affected by this – even after the pandemic. Project management tools such as Atlassian Jira and collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, Miro or Atlassian Confluence can help in this regard. If companies want to benefit from hybrid working models in the future, they simply cannot do without a modern toolset for collaborative working.<sup>51</sup>

## MULTI-STREAM PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### SIMULTANEOUS DIGITAL PROJECTS AT COMMETALL MEISTER

When companies plan a new digitalisation project, they often realise that the success of the project depends not only on one system, but also on additional factors such as other tools and strategic measures. For this reason, Conmetall Meister GmbH, which is part of the Würth Group, is tackling several digitalisation projects at the same time. In addition to the originally planned project in the field of product information management (PIM), further innovations regarding e-commerce, customer relationship management (CRM), integration and user experience design (UXD) followed within a short space of time.

The trend towards multi-stream projects is a key to successful digital metamorphoses. This method saves time because – if managed properly – projects are closely interlinked and supported by one and the same service provider. As a company specialising in tools and sanitary ware, Conmetall Meister, for example, is running various projects simultaneously – together with dotSource. With the help of a multi-stream project management framework developed by dotSource, the teams can work together more efficiently and coordinate individual process steps better than in separate projects.

## The basics of agile collaboration are essential for multi-stream projects<sup>55</sup>:

- Define a shared vision and a roadmap containing milestones and goals
- Hold regular meetings to avoid knowledge silos
- Prioritise individual project steps and communicate them transparently
- Set clear responsibilities to better manage projects
- Do not commission too many competing external service providers – ideally work with a full-service agency

## REQUIREMENTS MANAGEMENT

Agile methods help companies accelerate their digital metamorphoses. If this type of project fails, in 31 per cent of cases, it is because requirements and priorities are not clearly defined. It is therefore immensely important that project teams agree on expectations, deadlines and responsibilities before getting started.<sup>51</sup>

With the help of AI, those responsible can formulate requirements even more precisely and thereby ensure that the project runs smoothly.

Companies that use AI for their requirements management:

spend **50%** less time drawing up and modifying requirements.

can create, exchange and edit documents **10 times** faster.

find it up to **80%** easier to trace and analyse requirements.<sup>56</sup>

They achieve this by:

- ANALYSING REQUIREMENTS INTELLIGENTLY.
- MINIMISING RISKS WITH THE HELP OF AI.
- AVOIDING UNDESIRABLE DEVELOPMENTS AND THEREBY REDUCING COSTS.
- ESTIMATING PROJECT EFFORTS MORE ACCURATELY.
- CREATING DATA SETS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS.

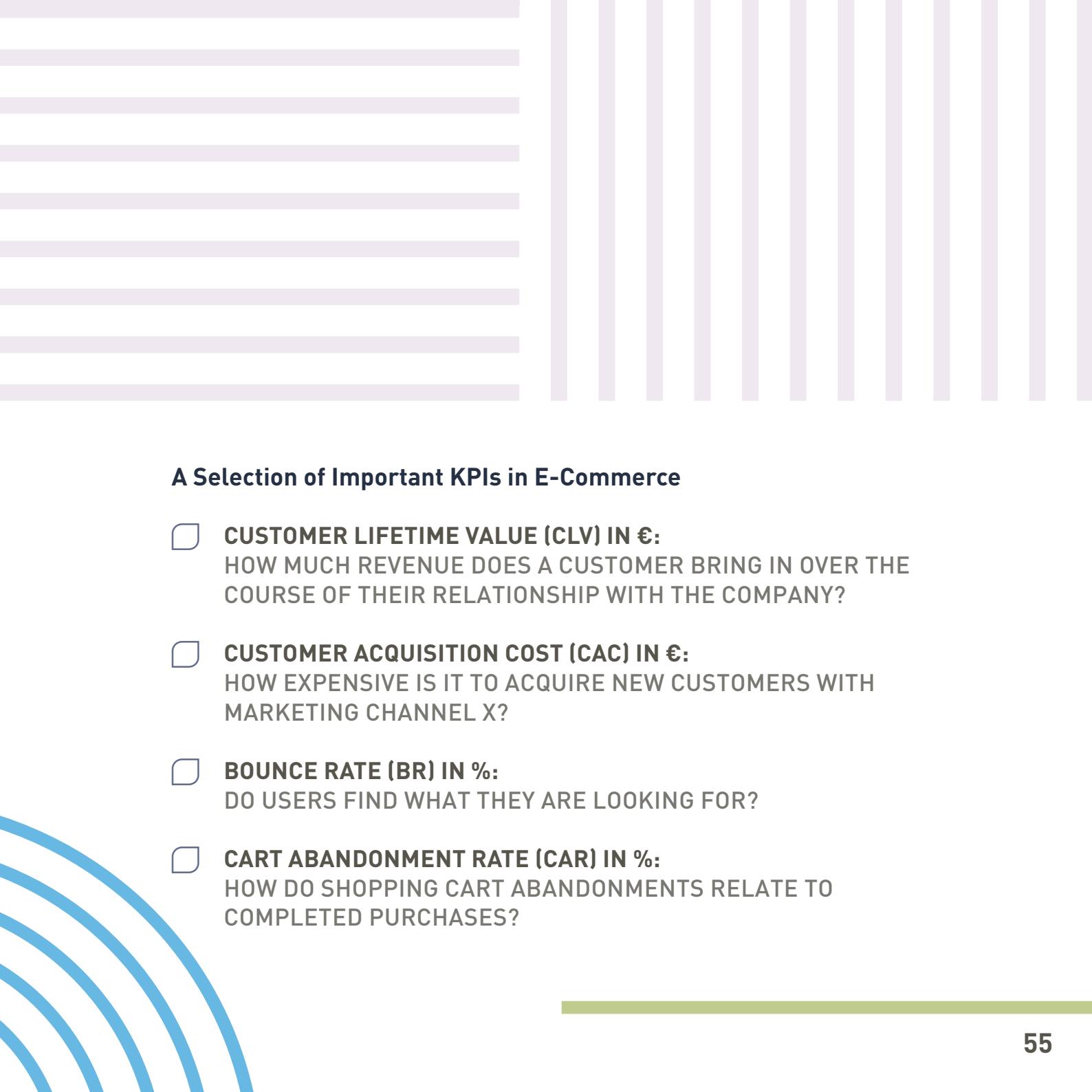
## KPIs AND OKRs

A shared vision and the use of agile methods at an operational level do not guarantee successful digital metamorphoses. Management is required to proactively promote agile collaboration and make the progress towards achieving goals transparent. With the help of jointly defined goals and KPIs, all employees can continuously check the extent to which ongoing measures are actually contributing to strategic business goals or whether they need to be adjusted.

It makes sense to redefine goals for each trimester. On the one hand, this allows project teams to take current market changes into account when defining goals; on the other hand, they will be more motivated if they regularly achieve smaller goals.

The relevance of individual KPIs varies from industry to industry, from company to company and even within the same company. Nevertheless, there are several KPIs that are of great importance in e-commerce in general.<sup>57</sup>





## A Selection of Important KPIs in E-Commerce

- CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE (CLV) IN €:**  
HOW MUCH REVENUE DOES A CUSTOMER BRING IN OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMPANY?
- CUSTOMER ACQUISITION COST (CAC) IN €:**  
HOW EXPENSIVE IS IT TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS WITH MARKETING CHANNEL X?
- BOUNCE RATE (BR) IN %:**  
DO USERS FIND WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR?
- CART ABANDONMENT RATE (CAR) IN %:**  
HOW DO SHOPPING CART ABANDONMENTS RELATE TO COMPLETED PURCHASES?

Over a quarter of all companies worldwide (27 per cent) use objectives and key results (OKRs) to define clear goals and outcomes.<sup>51</sup> Google has taken on a pioneering role here. The technology company established the OKR method just one year after it was founded. This involves individual teams or project groups independently defining OKRs that relate to their area of responsibility and are aligned with overarching business goals.

Google's success speaks in favour of this approach, which actively involves employees in setting goals. Since implementing the OKR method, the technology company has not only grown from 40 to several thousand employees, but has also become the search engine with by far the largest market share.<sup>58</sup>

### **The definition of OKRs means that employees at an operational level:**

- BETTER UNDERSTAND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEIR TASKS CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMPANY'S VISION.**
- ARE MOTIVATED TO WORK, AS THEY CAN HAVE AN ACTIVE SAY IN THE GOALS THEY WANT TO PURSUE.**
- CAN MEASURE SUCCESS INDEPENDENTLY, AS THERE ARE TRANSPARENT INDICATORS FOR THIS.**
- CAN RESPOND TO NEW REQUIREMENTS MORE QUICKLY.<sup>59</sup>**

## Tips for a successful start to using OKRs<sup>57</sup>:

- OBJECTIVES MUST BE FORMULATED AS SPECIFICALLY AND PRECISELY AS POSSIBLE AND ARE IDEALLY A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.
- KEY RESULTS SHOULD BE AS REALISTIC, TIME-BOUND AND MEASURABLE AS POSSIBLE.
- THERE SHOULD BE THREE TO FIVE KEY RESULTS PER OBJECTIVE.
- OKRS MUST BE REVIEWED REGULARLY AND ADJUSTED IF NECESSARY.

## KPIs AND OKRs – A PERFECT MATCH<sup>60</sup>

### KPIs:

- are constant.
- measure performance.
- are mainly retrospective.
- are specified using a top-down approach.
- are designed to identify optimisation potential.

### OKRs:

- are adjusted iteratively.
- measure progress.
- are mainly focused on the future.
- are defined together (bottom-up and top-down approach).
- are designed to promote transparency and a clear focus.

## KPI-DRIVEN OPTIMISATION ON YOUTUBE

The world-famous video portal YouTube wants to increase the amount of time individual users spend watching videos. To achieve this, the company defines key results that should help reach the overarching goal.

If the goal is to increase the average duration of views, the following milestones could contribute to attaining it<sup>61</sup>:

- Increase the total duration of views by 10 hours per week
- 10 videos in the top 3 of YouTube searches
- 7 new subscribers per week

This shows that it makes perfect sense to use both methods of measurement in a complementary way. On the one hand, specified KPIs can serve as a basis for defining OKRs. On the other hand, the progress towards achieving goals can be measured precisely and adjustments can be made if necessary.

Only **half** of all companies that say they work in an agile way actually apply agile methods throughout the entire organisation.<sup>51</sup>

Companies that have successfully introduced agile methods can implement changes and make decisions up to **10 times** faster than less agile organisations.<sup>62</sup>

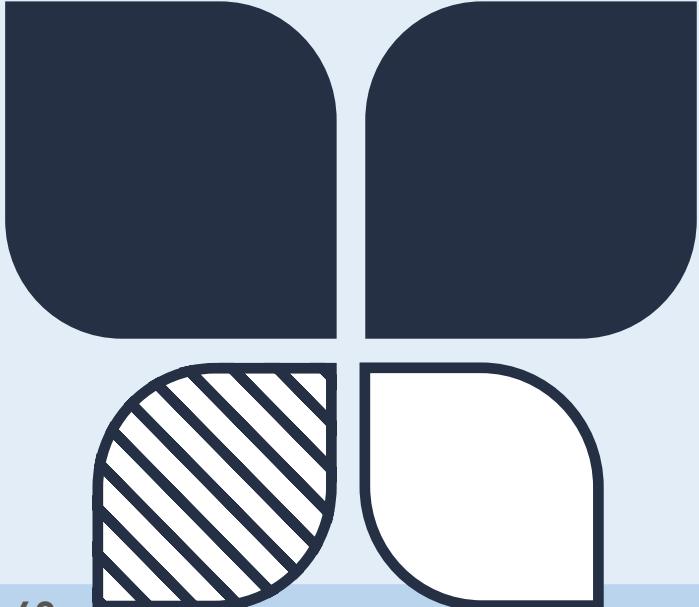
**83%** of companies are convinced that OKRs have a positive impact on their organisation.<sup>63</sup>



- ARE YOUR TEAMS AWARE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPANY'S VISION?
- ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES AWARE OF THEIR ROLE IN PROJECTS?
- CAN YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR DIGITAL PROJECTS BASED ON KPIs?

# TECHNOLOGY SETS STANDARDS

**DIGITAL METAMORPHOSES RELY  
ON AGILE DEVELOPMENT.**



Processes have changed – a gradual migration, a data transfer that takes place via application programming interfaces (APIs), an advanced coding mindset such as DevSecOps, the intelligent use of modern technologies like AI and design tokens. All of these can help create a stable and agile foundation that makes it possible to realise strategic projects in the first place.

According to forecasts, companies with a stable technical basis will be able to reduce their downtime by **80%** by 2025.<sup>64</sup>

Experts estimate the return on investment (ROI) of a stable infrastructure to be **1.8 times** the amount spent.<sup>65</sup>

## PHASED MIGRATION

Outdated systems and system versions often fail to meet growing requirements. What is even worse is that they pose a security risk. At this point, it is highly advisable to carry out a migration project.<sup>66</sup> However, simply replacing existing systems with a completely new solution is risky and destabilising.

This is where the strangler pattern approach comes in very handy – by gradually replacing individual elements according to carefully defined priorities, risks are reduced. This ensures that all applications run smoothly on the new system and that sensitive data remains secure at all times.

»MIGRATION IN E-BUSINESS«  
WHITE PAPER



### **Benefits of phased migration<sup>67</sup>:**

- **SECURE DATA MIGRATION**
- **SHORTER TIME TO MARKET**
- **EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION BY A PROJECT TEAM**
- **SUCCESSFUL MIGRATION OF INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONALITIES**

## **FROM DEVOPS TO DEVSECOPS**

To benefit from technological innovations and respond to changing customer requirements as quickly as possible, agile coding methods are required. However, the need to create code at an ever-increasing pace and use it more flexibly makes the whole process more prone to errors. This can also result in security risks.

In this context, the DevOps approach promises quality assurance without any loss of agility. It aims to intensify and optimise collaboration between development teams (Dev) and operational IT teams (Ops). The more advanced DevSecOps approach follows the »shift left« principle to integrate security (Sec) measures

from the end of the development cycle into all phases. Besides quality checks and performance evaluations, conducting security tests at an earlier stage ensures that risks are identified as soon as possible and can be eliminated at a lower cost.<sup>68</sup>

**Companies that closely link development, security and operational processes benefit from the following<sup>69</sup>:**

- **EARLY DETECTION OF BUGS AND SECURITY VULNERABILITIES**
- **LOWER DEVELOPMENT COSTS**
- **HIGH-QUALITY CODE**
- **FASTER TIME TO MARKET**
- **EASIER COMPLIANCE WITH SECURITY STANDARDS**
- **BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEV, SEC AND OPS (DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY AND OPERATIONAL TEAMS)**
- **INCREASED EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION THROUGH CROSS-TEAM COLLABORATION**

Software testing accounts for around **30%** of the total development effort, making it a key starting point for improvements.<sup>70</sup>

**74%** of IT managers conduct security tests at an earlier stage of the development process or plan to do so in the next three years.<sup>71</sup>

More than **half** of all companies have already been benefitting from DevOps and DevSecOps methods in 2023.<sup>71</sup>

## AI IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

Writing code and testing it for its functionality over multiple cycles are two very different but equally important aspects of the software development process. Over the years, there has been a notable increase in the use of AI for writing code. Nowadays, AI also provides support in quality management during testing and review cycles.

This is because ML applications can identify potential errors in both the code and test set-ups using patterns. Not only are errors highlighted, but they can also be automatically fixed right away.<sup>70</sup>

AI-powered reviews support development teams in:

- **IDENTIFYING ERRORS MORE QUICKLY.**
- **BETTER UNDERSTANDING TEST COVERAGE.**
- **PINPOINTING HIGH-RISK AREAS.**
- **HANDLING THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF SOFTWARE TESTS.**
- **ACHIEVING SHORT DEPLOYMENT CYCLES.<sup>72</sup>**

From 2022 to 2023, the use of AI and ML for code review increased by **11 %**.<sup>71</sup>

## API-FIRST ARCHITECTURES

What kind of smart interface management in the back end of an e-commerce system ensures the seamless, consistent and personalised user journey that everyone is talking about? The key term here is API. APIs are no longer just used to link services together. Rather, they enable companies to flexibly expand their system landscape and ensure smooth data transfer between different system landscape components.<sup>73</sup>

APIs also create the basis for the seamless integration of AI technologies into existing corporate infrastructures and applications. With Azure Cognitive Services, Microsoft even provides separate APIs and software development kits (SDKs) to simplify the development of intelligent applications.<sup>74</sup>



**When developing a new application, companies should ask themselves the following questions<sup>75</sup>:**

- HOW SHOULD THE API BEHAVE?**
- WHAT REQUIREMENTS DOES THE API NEED TO MEET?**
- HOW CAN A SMART INTEGRATION STRATEGY OPTIMISE THE E-COMMERCE EXPERIENCE?**

Only **half** of all commerce capabilities are integrated as API-centric software-as-a-service features.<sup>73</sup>

## CLOUD COMPUTING

Nine out of ten companies store and process data in the cloud. Approximately eleven per cent of these even opt for »cloud only« hosting.<sup>76</sup>

### **Companies that host data in the cloud aim to achieve the following goals<sup>76</sup>:**

- Reduced costs (64%)
- Lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (63%)
- Enhanced IT security (57%)

Cloud solutions offer additional benefits: New services can be provided without significant extra effort, different data sources can be seamlessly integrated and compliance with DevSecOps principles is made easier.

### **CLOUD AND AI – AN INSEPARABLE DUO**

In the context of the AI revolution, cloud solutions are becoming increasingly crucial to digital success.

This is because of the extensive requirements that need to be met when using modern AI tools. In-house data centres simply do not have the necessary IT resources. For this reason, cloud service providers offer AI as a service (AlaaS), giving companies the opportunity to access pre-built AI algorithms, models and tools. These specific AI services are summarised in a separate dashboard and are only charged according to actual consumption.<sup>77</sup>

**Companies that successfully implement AlaaS benefit from the following<sup>78</sup>:**

- Reduced risk during implementation
- Lower investment
- Enhanced flexibility
- Better scalability
- Continuous further development by the operator

**This enables them to:**

- increase their process effectiveness by up to 60%.
- save time and reduce costs by up to 20%.
- increase forecast accuracy by up to 90%.
- reduce error susceptibility by up to 98%.<sup>79</sup>

Today, decisions are made based on data analytics rather than gut instinct. The trend in cloud-based analytics tools is clearly moving towards all-in-one solutions. New products such as Microsoft Fabric support companies in managing not only data, but also processes efficiently and securely in the cloud. The cloud solution combines various services that process data in real time and visualise business results.<sup>80</sup> One of these integrated tools is Microsoft Power BI. Data lake tools such as Lakehouse are also involved, promising completely new dimensions in the fields of data science, real-time analytics and business intelligence (BI).

Another tech trend that combines cloud computing and AI contributes to compliance management. In a security operations centre (SOC),

relevant AI features are integrated directly into the cloud environment to ensure that data is processed only within this system and is never shared with third-party providers.

This approach is adopted by BlueVoyant Modern SOC, which interacts with Microsoft's cloud environment. Companies that use this service can significantly raise their compliance levels by processing security-relevant data, with the added convenience of GDPR-compliant cloud storage.<sup>81</sup>



## **Companies that use Microsoft Fabric can:**

- **PROVIDE DATA AUTOMATICALLY.**
- **CONNECT DATA SOURCES SEAMLESSLY.**
- **MONITOR PROJECT PROGRESS EASILY.**
- **CREATE CLEAR REPORTS.<sup>82</sup>**

### **BACKEND FOR FRONTEND PATTERN**

Given the large number and variety of digital devices that are used to access websites, there is an increasing need to correctly recognise devices and optimise content delivery accordingly. This is because the technical requirements such as screen size and input options differ considerably – just think of a small Samsung smartphone that can be folded in half compared to an

Apple TV that is designed to offer razor-sharp images on a 32-inch screen. How well a website optimises its content for different devices determines the extent to which users consume the digital offerings.<sup>83</sup>

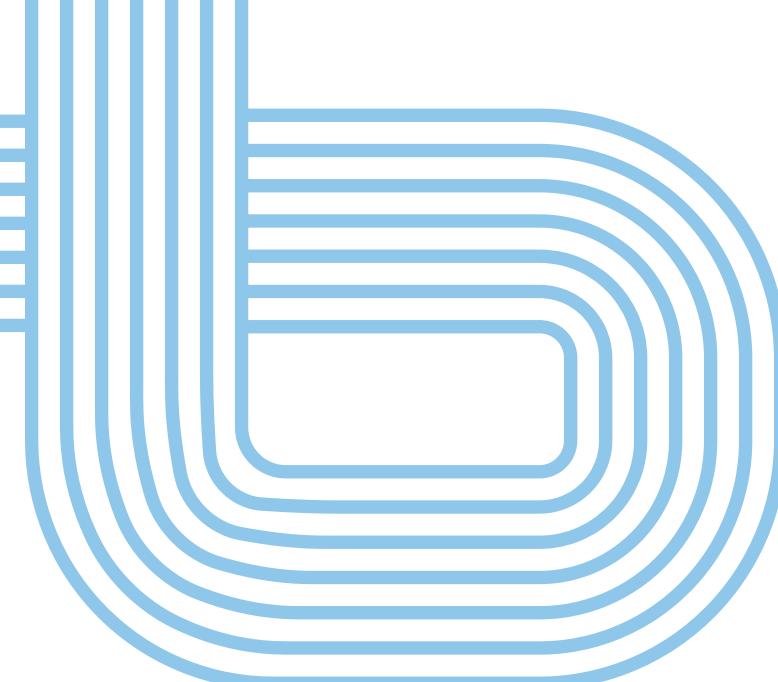
The previous architectural approach of developing a back end for multiple front ends (generic API) lacks flexibility.<sup>84</sup> After all, not all information from the back end is needed to present digital offerings on various devices. A backend for frontend (BFF) pattern acts as an additional layer between the back end and front end. It only brings together the relevant data and features from different tools such as content management or e-commerce systems.

This information is then transformed for services to be displayed to users in an optimised format – a process that involves a wide range of user interfaces.

The fair fashion pioneer hessnatur has successfully embraced this approach, allowing the company's front-end teams to work much more efficiently and independently. Additionally, the optimised data transformation and storage has a positive impact on the costs associated with data processing and the performance of the online shop.

### **Benefits of BFF patterns<sup>85</sup>:**

- IMPROVED USER EXPERIENCE THANKS TO OPTIMISED CONTENT**
- FASTER IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL PROJECTS THROUGH PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT**
- OPTIMISED DATA TRANSFER AND LOWER SERVER LOAD**
- MORE FLEXIBLE CUSTOMISATION WITHOUT COMPROMISING BACK-END SERVICES**



## FOUNDATION MODELS AS A FLEXIBLE BASIS FOR AI

Whether AI contributes to a company's success depends largely on its flexibility. AI models should be reusable. This means that it should not be necessary to generate a new, independent data set for each use case. In this context, foundation models serve as the basis for AI systems.<sup>86</sup>

These models have two capabilities – self-supervised learning and transfer learning.

**Self-supervised learning** enables neural networks to independently identify correlations based on the data provided.<sup>87</sup>

**Transfer learning** involves fine-tuning an existing model so that it can apply information it has learned from previous scenarios to similar situations. This allows marketing managers, for example, to automatically create suitable images for texts or generate adequate image descriptions.<sup>88</sup>

## DESIGN TOKENS

Not only do flexible solutions determine how quickly a company can respond to changes in its system landscape, but they are also increasingly relevant to cross-team collaboration.

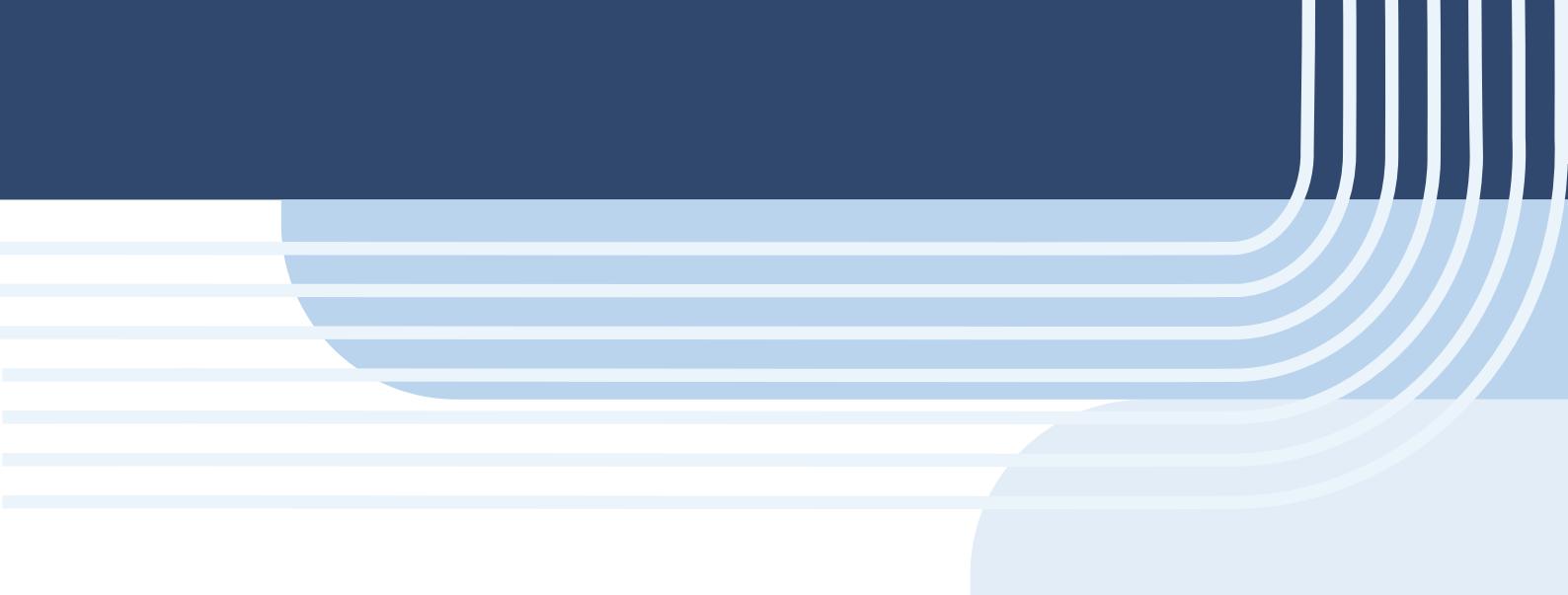
Seamless digital customer experiences require close collaboration between development and design teams. For this reason, design tokens are being implemented more and more frequently. These tokens centrally store values for various properties such as colour, spacing and animation times, which can then be used

consistently across different designs, products and platforms. Instead of static values, tokens are used for certain styles.

For example, if designers want to adjust the colour contrast due to poor legibility, they can simply modify the design token. This change is then implemented simultaneously on all platforms.<sup>89</sup>

### Benefits of AI foundation models and design tokens<sup>90</sup>:

- **FASTER CUSTOMISATION OF INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS**
- **BETTER SCALABILITY TO MEET INCREASING REQUIREMENTS**
- **GUARANTEED IMPROVEMENT THROUGH CONTROLLED UPDATES**
- **LOWER RISK OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENT FAILURE**



## SUSTAINABLE CODING

Every line of code has its own ecological footprint. With the increase in digitalisation, this footprint continues to expand from individual servers to users' various devices. Companies that integrate green coding methods into their software development process and use systems efficiently can not only save both electricity and costs in the long run, but also reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### METHODS FOR SUSTAINABLE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT<sup>91</sup>:

- Avoid redundant code
- Identify and close unused applications
- Establish structured data storage
- Implement accessible UXD

Up to **120** million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions can be saved by 2030 through more conscious digitalisation practices.<sup>92</sup>

Companies that seek to play an active role in shaping the future of the economy must always be ready for the next stage of development. A solid technical basis allows them to stay on top of things despite the increasing complexity of systems, making it possible to develop, customise and launch solutions quickly – to a high standard of quality and with as few resources as possible.



- HOW EASILY AND SECURELY CAN YOU EXPAND YOUR SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE WITH NEW SOLUTIONS?**
- AT WHAT STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT CYCLE DO YOU CONDUCT TESTS?**
- IS YOUR SYSTEM LANDSCAPE READY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW AI TOOLS?**
- ARE YOUR TECH COMPONENTS REUSABLE?**
- HOW CAN YOUR COMPANY CUT CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?**

# TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES STRONG PARTNERS

## TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS



Microsoft  
Partner

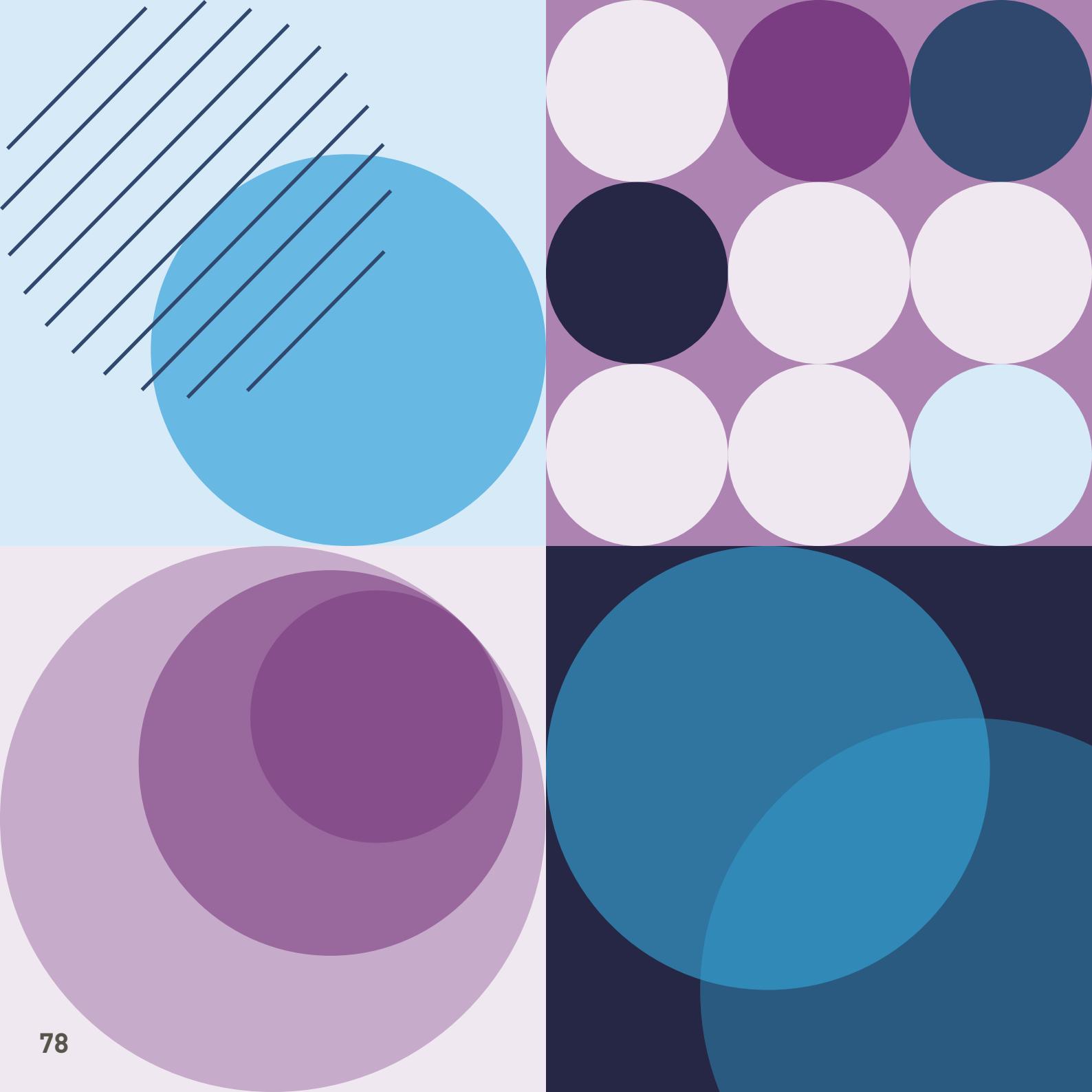


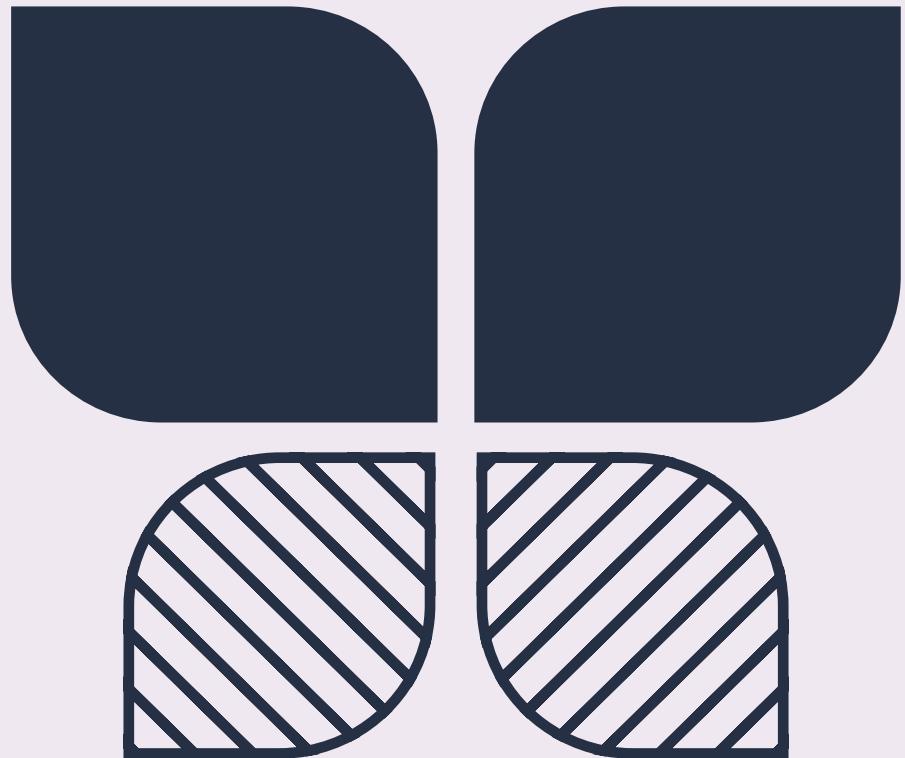
## NETWORKS AND ASSOCIATIONS



## EDUCATION PARTNERS







**E-COMMERCE IS  
TRANSFORMING  
COMMERCE TRENDS CONNECT DIGITAL EXPERIENCES.**

The opportunities presented by digital solutions and tools are continuously and rapidly developing – and not only that, customer expectations are also changing. In most cases, these two aspects are complementary to each other, dependent on one another or sequential. As highlighted before, a company's success depends on its mindset. However, it is essential that companies adapt their product and service portfolios to the changing consumer behaviour of their target audience.

The success of a company's digital customer relationships can be determined by three benchmarks: How **seamlessly**, **consistently** and **personalised** is the digital portfolio delivered to the target audience?

But how exactly are the adjectives seamless, consistent and personalised defined in the context of digital business? Moreover, why is the digitalisation of e-commerce still the key discipline in 2024?

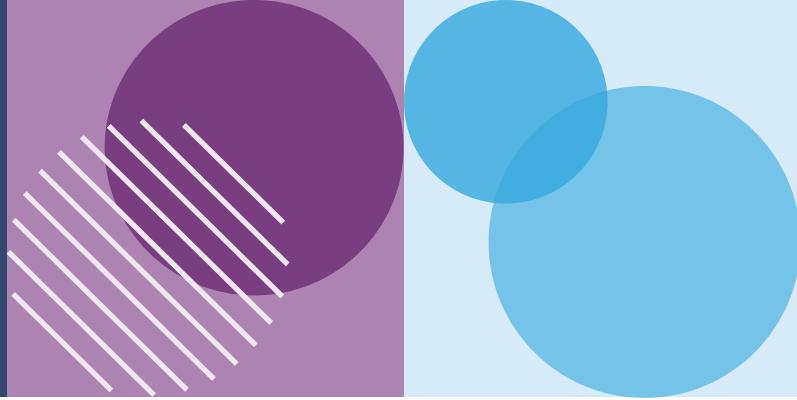
From 2023 to 2027, the global e-commerce market is predicted to grow by almost **54%** (2.1 trillion euros).<sup>94</sup>

In 2023, **89.4** billion euros were generated via B2C e-commerce in Germany.<sup>95</sup>

From 2023 to 2027, the number of customers in the German e-commerce market is predicted to increase by **1.7** million.<sup>96</sup>



»VILLEROY & BOCH«  
SUCCESS STORY



## SEAMLESSNESS

An online shop, a marketplace presence, a mobile app, a progressive web app and social commerce – digital sales channels are constantly changing as well. In recent years, there has been massive growth not only in the number of sales channels, but also in their sales potential. Companies can use this development to their advantage to increase sales by:

- using a CRM tool in addition to an e-commerce system to manage customer data correctly and strengthen customer loyalty.
- providing a consistent design and a coherent brand message across all channels.
- ensuring seamless transition among channels through cross-channel features.

## CUSTOMER LOYALTY AT VILLEROY & BOCH

Villeroy & Boch, a ceramics and porcelain manufacturer renowned throughout Europe, boosts the loyalty of its target audience via a modern customer club. Members can collect points and track individual purchases in their customer account – regardless of whether they shop online or in store. The Villeroy & Boch team can then use this information to send them personalised e-mails with content tailored to their preferences, for example a specific type of home décor. This omnichannel approach ensures that customers redeem their points and always return to Villeroy & Boch for subsequent purchases.<sup>97</sup>

For **59%** of consumers, being able to shop on mobile is a decisive factor in whether they buy from a particular brand.<sup>98</sup>

Omnichannel customers shop almost **twice** as much as single-channel customers.<sup>99</sup>

## CONSISTENCY

With a uniform brand identity, companies can ensure that users perceive and appreciate a consistent cross-channel experience. This includes a cohesive approach as well as a recognisable design that is optimised for all channels. Users can navigate through a website more easily if they are familiar with its structure and design.

Returning customers even expect the digital product and service portfolio of a particular brand to be presented in a familiar way on all platforms.<sup>100</sup>

To truly ensure this, companies need:

- comprehensive knowledge of their target audience.
- a consistent design concept with a style guide.
- interdisciplinary development and design teams.
- modern technology and design approaches with easily customisable components such as design tokens and a BFF architecture.
- a responsive and adaptive design for customisation across all channels.<sup>101</sup>

## PASSION FOR MEDIA AT DIVIBIB

With a professional redesign and a functional overhaul to take its existing platform to the next level, the online library lending service divibib aims to meet user requirements in terms of a seamless experience. What is fascinating is that divibib does not sell individual products, but rather increases the accessibility of digital media for the tens of thousands of fans of public libraries. To make education and entertainment as user-friendly as possible, divibib initially opted for user analytics. The company ensured that user requirements were fully considered

when creating the new design concept. In addition, divibib developed its own app and optimised it for various operating systems and e-readers. This app allows users to borrow online magazines, e-books and audio books.<sup>102</sup>

**75%** of users expect a consistent user experience across all channels.<sup>103</sup>

For **94%** of users, the design is crucial to their first impression of a website.<sup>104</sup>

More than **half** of customers would not recommend a company with an unoptimised mobile view and slow load times.<sup>105</sup>

## PERSONALISATION

The more a company knows about the target audience for its products and services, the better it can respond to changing expectations and master digital metamorphoses.<sup>106</sup> Personalised content, landing pages, banners and product recommendations make customers feel understood by a company. With the help of analytics tools, AI and ML, companies can carefully evaluate their customers' online behaviour.<sup>107</sup>

Companies that address their target audience individually benefit from:

- **a 70% increase in brand loyalty.**
- **doubled conversion rates.**
- **up to 40% larger orders.**<sup>108</sup>

## INTEREST-BASED CONTENT AT SPAX

The screw manufacturer SPAX International GmbH & Co. KG developed a concept that allows personalised content to be displayed on its website. With the help of Adobe Target, returning users can be recognised and categorised into segments based on their click behaviour. Depending on whether customers are interested in construction using wood or concrete, they are addressed individually with the corresponding products and content. This means that B2B customers receive the information they need quickly without having to click through multiple subpages and product detail pages.<sup>109</sup>



»SPAX«  
SUCCESS STORY

**71%** of consumers expect personalised content. **76%** are frustrated when it is missing.<sup>110</sup>

Almost **half** of consumers claim they would purchase from a different company if a brand did not offer personalised experiences.<sup>111</sup>

**85%** of companies believe that they offer personalised experiences.  
Only **60%** of users confirm this.<sup>111</sup>



WHICH CHANNELS DOES YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE USE?



DO YOUR CHANNELS FOLLOW A CONSISTENT APPROACH?



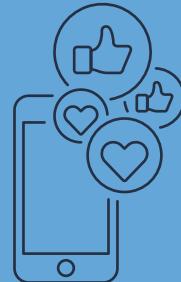
DO YOU MEET YOUR CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS?

# DIGITAL EXPERTISE ACROSS ALL CHANNELS



## Digital.Business.Talk.

Digital business ready for your ears – trends, analyses, industry knowledge, technology insights and, most importantly, everything straight forward. Digital.Business.Talk. keeps podcast listeners in the know, whether they are on the road, in the office or at home – they can always get the information they need.



## Social Media

On our social media channels Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn and TikTok, we keep our community up to date on worthwhile events as well as successful projects and provide insights into our daily business. On LinkedIn alone, we share insights with more than 5,000 followers on a daily basis.



## YouTube Channel

On our YouTube channel, you can get insights into dotSource projects and events. In addition, our digital experts at »dotSource Research« and »noBot is perfect« explain the basics of digital customer relationships in easy-to-understand videos.





## Webinars

Whether it is digital strategies, New Work or system selection – our webinars offer the opportunity to get information on digital trends, build up industry knowledge and gain insights into current software solutions.



## Handelskraft Blog

Handelskraft.de is one of the leading German e-commerce and digital marketing blogs. Since 2007, we have been reporting on trends and developments in digital business on a daily basis. We share our insights and ideas with over 7,000 feed readers.



## Handelskraft Conference

Digital business is full of trends. Since 2016, attendees of the Handelskraft Conference have been discussing how companies can turn these trends into innovations. In spectacular locations, there is plenty of room for dialogue on real challenges and proven solutions, providing the opportunity to make new contacts and gain valuable inspiration for your business.



## Research

Clear. Easy to understand. Practical. Our publications such as trend books, white papers, success stories, cheat sheets as well as our »Best Practices« format provide insights into the most important digital topics, analyse trends and share knowledge about successful digital projects that we have carried out with our clients.



## B2C/B – THE SMALL, SUBTLE DIFFERENCE

Regardless of whether they are shopping for business or personal needs, consumers have similar requirements. With new opportunities e-commerce has to offer, expectations are growing in both B2B and B2C. As a result, the option of being able to purchase goods at any time via preferred channels and receive personalised content is also becoming increasingly important among B2B customers.

Although the boundaries between B2B and B2C e-commerce continue to blur, fundamental differences between the two still exist, which stakeholders in B2B e-commerce must take into account when creating and implementing digital strategies.<sup>112</sup>

**B2B companies that offer their customers a good omnichannel experience can grow their market share by up to 10% annually.<sup>113</sup>**

**For more than half of B2B customers, the shopping experience is the most important factor in determining their brand loyalty.<sup>113</sup>**

## MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING CUSTOMERS

Unlike in B2C, customers in B2B are usually a group of people rather than a single person. When a B2B customer purchases a complex product, it is not a single consumer who gets to decide, but often six to ten stakeholders who are authorised to make decisions. These usually gather information about the product independently and in advance. This means that providing all decision-makers with relevant information at an early stage of the purchasing process is even more crucial in B2B than in B2C.<sup>114</sup>

After all, B2B e-commerce thrives on business with existing customers. If a company is satisfied with a product, it is highly likely to place a repeat order with its trusted supplier. B2B companies can benefit from this edge in loyalty by offering their customers digitally managed loyalty programmes for recurring orders. The scheduled delivery of regularly required goods enables purchasing departments to save time and make better use of staff resources in the purchasing process. This leads to loyal customers and ensures consistent income for B2B companies.<sup>115</sup>



## SYSTEMATIC CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AT ELTAKO

Digital metamorphoses in B2B require a holistic digital strategy that still promotes personal contact. The foundation for this is properly managed and centrally available customer data. Eltako, a building systems manufacturer renowned throughout Europe, implemented Salesforce's marketing automation tool called »Marketing Cloud Account Engagement« and seamlessly integrated it with its CRM system. By closely connecting the two Salesforce systems, Eltako ensured that all information on individual customers is stored centrally and that its customer approach is consistent. Furthermore, the connection to Microsoft Outlook enables Eltako's sales team to easily arrange appointments with customers.

With the additionally integrated business card scanner, employees can save new customer contacts more quickly and automatically transfer them to Salesforce. This efficient data management makes it easier to provide personalised customer support and address customers with relevant content – and it fosters the expertise required to be able to use AI features in the future.<sup>116</sup>

## PRODUCT RANGE AND INFORMATION AT TROX

Product portfolios and ordering processes in B2B are diverse and much more complex than those in B2C.<sup>117</sup>

TROX is a globally leading manufacturer of ventilation and air conditioning systems and has customers from a wide range of industries, which have very different system requirements. For this reason, TROX developed a product configurator that offers the option of customising systems via an intuitively designed user interface (UI). It directly shows which elements belong together and automatically creates a corresponding shopping cart. With this feature, the industrial company ensures that its customers receive the best and, above all, highly personalised digital advice.

»TROX«  
SUCCESS STORY



## PRICING

In B2B e-commerce, prices are often not fixed, but rather influenced by various factors.

These include:

- the duration of customer relationships.
- the volume of shopping carts.
- annual order quantities.
- the industry customers are active in.

That is why it is important for B2B companies to have different, sometimes customised price lists that are geared towards the needs of customers and enable individual enquiries. However, as these cannot be easily implemented in e-commerce systems due to their complexity, pricing needs to be outsourced to the cloud via microservices. For example, SAP's »Variant Configuration and Pricing« service can be used to calculate individual prices quickly and effectively – without being dependent on an e-commerce system.<sup>118</sup>



»SAP«  
BEST PRACTICES

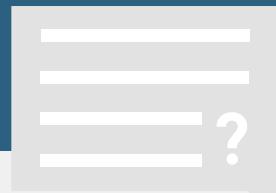
## CUSTOMER-SPECIFIC PRICING AT KAHLA PORCELAIN

By implementing Salesforce B2B Commerce, the porcelain manufacturer from Thuringia has improved not only its internal processes such as the translation of content elements, but also the purchasing process for its customers. Once logged in, business customers benefit from features such as bulk pricing and consideration of special tax regulations.<sup>119</sup>

This makes it clear that customer-specific pricing in B2B is not a new trend, but a characteristic of this sales channel. That being said, it is becoming easier and easier to make these complex calculations available digitally, manage them intelligently and link them to traditional e-commerce processes via interfaces.

In the coming years, the B2B e-commerce market is expected to grow by almost **19%** annually.<sup>120</sup>

In B2B, e-commerce is considered to be the most effective sales channel by **35%** of respondents, followed by in-person sales (26%), video conferences (12%), e-mail (10%) and phone (8%).<sup>113</sup>



- WHICH SERVICES CAN HELP YOU RETAIN YOUR B2B CUSTOMERS?**
- IS ALL YOUR CUSTOMER INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY INTERCONNECTED?**
- DOES YOUR ONLINE SHOP MEET INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS?**

»KAHLA PORCELAIN«  
SUCCESS STORY



# INTELLIGENT TRENDS FOR DIGITAL METAMORPHOSES

Everything is constantly changing: markets, technologies, consumer demands. Companies that adapt to ongoing changes and actively drive their own digital metamorphoses with intelligent solutions will prevail in the long run.

There is no doubt that AI is currently the driving force behind technological progress. But when is AI really involved? How can it help companies move forward and how is AI itself changing?

AI-powered software may not be able to replace a smart strategy, but by using intelligent solutions, companies can:

- **significantly accelerate internal processes.**
- **use existing data even more effectively.**
- **launch products faster and in an appealing way.**

**ARE YOU ALREADY USING AI TO CHANGE YOUR INDUSTRY? OR ARE YOU STILL SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS FIELD?**



## IF YOU SEEK, YOU SHALL FIND.

With the increasing popularity of AI, the way in which people search for information is also changing. Thanks to new tools and disciplines, companies can ensure that their products and services remain visible online and that customers receive immediate responses to their queries.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) helps companies rank at the top of search results for relevant user queries. **Generative AI optimisation** (GAIO) works in a very similar way for user queries sent to AI chatbots. Taking numerous sources into account, these tools provide recommendations that are as relevant as possible. In contrast to SEO, where backlinks determine visibility, companies need a high number of brand mentions for GAIO, i.e. mentions of their brand in relevant sources featuring high-quality content.<sup>121</sup>

When it comes to product searches, consumers also expect to find what they are looking for as quickly as possible. As a result, more and more companies are opting for technologies that ensure better product discovery.



»HEIDELBERGER  
DRUCKMASCHINEN AG«  
SUCCESS STORY

The industrial company Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG, for example, has improved the relevance of search results for its users by implementing ML. In addition to product data, the integrated search tool takes into account a wide range of customer data such as order histories, wish lists and invoices, thereby ensuring a personalised user experience. Furthermore, the company has optimised the usability of the search tool on all devices, enabling seamless and consistent shopping experiences.<sup>106</sup>

Extensive and properly managed product information is vital for refining search results using the filter function. It also determines whether customers end up buying a product.<sup>122</sup>



## AUTOMATED PRODUCT TEXTS AT LAMPENWELT

For many companies, PIM solutions and master data management (MDM) tools are an integral part of the system landscape. The award-winning online shop Lampenwelt.de, for example, uses a PIM system. The implemented software solution from Stibo Systems creates a solid data basis for further technological development: the connection of ChatGPT to the PIM system. With generative AI, Lampenwelt employees can automatically create product texts using defined prompts, as ChatGPT entries are called.

These prompts can be customised as required. For example, it is possible to define essential product attributes that must be included in the product description.<sup>123</sup>

When centrally managed and enriched, product information provides a foundation for creating high-quality and engaging print products. With a print feature, companies can also automate the creation of print materials for marketing and sales purposes.<sup>124</sup>



## Companies that use AI in PIM and MDM:

- **CREATE AI-POWERED PRODUCT TEXTS.**
- **TRANSLATE PRODUCT TEXTS AUTOMATICALLY.**
- **CLASSIFY PRODUCTS AUTOMATICALLY.**
- **MAKE MORE RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS AS PART OF THE CHECKOUT PROCESS.**
- **ACCELERATE IMAGE EDITING WORKFLOWS.**
- **ENRICH IMAGE METADATA AND TAGS WHILE MINIMISING ERRORS.**
- **PROVIDE IMAGE SUGGESTIONS AUTOMATICALLY.<sup>125</sup>**

Not only does AI ensure that products are found, but it also helps identify counterfeits and avoid losses in revenue. The German sporting goods manufacturer PUMA uses the AI-based platform Red Points to scan marketplaces, social media platforms, websites and search engines for counterfeit brand products and fake online shops that offer supposedly authentic PUMA products at very favourable prices. By doing so, 760,000 counterfeit items with a total value of over 500 million US dollars have already been detected.<sup>126</sup>

**79 %** of users leave a website if they do not quickly find what they are looking for.<sup>127</sup>

## PERSONALISED USER EXPERIENCES THROUGH INTELLIGENT CRM

### OPTIMISED CUSTOMER SERVICE AT ROSSIGNOL

Marketing automation tools support a targeted customer approach across various channels. The French winter sporting goods manufacturer Rossignol improved its personalised customer approach by implementing Marketing GPT. The generative AI tool from Salesforce combines AI with existing data in Rossignol's CRM system. This helps the company tailor services such as individual training programmes even more specifically to each customer.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, the focus on customers is strengthened using AI technologies. This enables sales teams to predict which customers are likely to bring in more revenue and which customers are likely to turn away. With this information, sales managers can use their resources more effectively and boost sales even further.<sup>129</sup>

**71 %** of marketing managers believe that the implementation of AI will allow them to focus more strongly on strategic tasks.<sup>130</sup>



»MARKETING AUTOMATION«  
WHITE PAPER

## Marketing teams that use AI can:

- **SEGMENT THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE MORE QUICKLY.**
- **IMPROVE TARGETING THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS.**
- **SEND PERSONALISED E-MAILS BASED ON REAL CLICK AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR.**
- **CREATE ASSETS FOR MULTI-CHANNEL CAMPAIGNS MORE EASILY.**
- **IMPROVE THEIR MARKETING RETURN ON INVESTMENT (MROI).<sup>131</sup>**

## RETAILTAINMENT

Experts have long been speculating about the extent to which augmented reality (AR) could be a disruptor for further digital metamorphoses in e-commerce. It remains to be seen whether Apple's long-awaited AR glasses will fall in line with the revolutionary effects other products from the digital giant have had on the market. What is certain is that this type of technology offers a wide range of options for creating

memorable cross-channel shopping experiences. Whether trying on make-up virtually at the airport with travel retailer Dufry or testing wall paints via Dulux's Visualizer app – the trend is moving towards combining retail and entertainment. The moderate success of the metaverse, however, highlights the importance of remaining close to the needs of customers in the retailtainment sector.<sup>132</sup>

## EYE-LEVEL COMMUNICATION ON THE VIDEO COMMERCE PLATFORM NTWRK

The celebrities featured in the weekly live sessions on the US-American video commerce platform NTWRK are popular among consumers. Using the influence of famous people to promote a brand message is nothing new in itself. However, bringing them into consumers' everyday lives with products that they themselves have helped design combines celebrity appeal with teleshopping to create a promising retailtainment strategy. Users of the platform

can interact with the celebrities and get their questions answered. This has a memorable impact, engages the users and strengthens their connection to the brand and product. For NTWRK, being close to celebrities and interacting with them are key factors in boosting sales, enhancing the platform's image and strengthening customer loyalty.<sup>133</sup>

### RETAILTAINMENT MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO:

- **CREATE INTERACTIVE ONLINE EXPERIENCES.**
- **INCREASE THE TIME USERS SPEND ON A WEBSITE.**
- **BOOST SALES.**
- **REDUCE RETURN RATES SIGNIFICANTLY.**
- **RETAIN CUSTOMERS IN THE LONG RUN.**
- **MAINTAIN A STRONG MARKET POSITION.**<sup>134</sup>



## DATA, DATA AND EVEN MORE DATA

Whether it is a personalised customer approach, efficient product or customer data management, AI or ML – companies need a solid data basis to harness the potential of digital business in every single metamorphosis. With modern BI solutions, all employees are able to quickly access the data required for their daily work. This makes it possible to fine-tune corporate strategies and plan next steps in a data-driven manner. Sophisticated analyses replace vague gut feelings. As part of this process, BI software can be connected to internal project management tools such as Atlassian Jira and systems with a focus on customers, for example a marketing automation solution.

## DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING AT KWS

KWS is one of the world's largest seed producers. The company uses Microsoft Power BI to collect and process data from its e-commerce, CRM and marketing automation systems. Depending on the department, various analyses are carried out, detailed reports are created to address specific issues and data-driven decisions are made. These help the company avoid overproduction and minimise its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – a clear win-win situation for KWS, as sustainability is one of the key factors contributing to the company's success. KWS also reinvests a significant share of its profits in research to make its production processes more economically and environmentally sustainable.<sup>135</sup>

## THE FUTURE OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Several factors are making tracking increasingly difficult, which also affects the quantity and quality of available user data:

- Various restrictions in browsers, for example Safari's Intelligent Tracking Prevention (ITP)
- Increased use of ad blockers
- Strict regulations regarding the use of consent banners

If companies use cookies to store user data, they are legally obliged to provide this information to visitors when they access the website. Consent banners allow users to specify which data is to be stored. Moreover, it is legally required that non-essential cookies can easily be rejected.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, only 24 per cent of users agree to the placement of cookies in the first place.<sup>137</sup>

## HYBRID TRACKING AT HANSGROHE

Despite these low acceptance rates, companies still have the opportunity to gain insights into user behaviour via anonymised data. Accordingly, the trend is moving towards a hybrid tracking model. Hansgrohe, the world's leading manufacturer of sanitary products, tracks user data via this approach. If users refuse to consent to tracking, Hansgrohe opts for cookieless tracking by means of the fingerprint method, which only stores general information: What time zone and language are set on the user's device? What operating system is installed? However, no personal data is collected. The resulting conversions serve Hansgrohe as a basis for optimising online shop features and marketing campaigns.<sup>138</sup>

### Benefits of cookieless tracking<sup>139</sup>:

- Legally compliant tracking without consent
- Reduced data losses and distortions
- Improved user experience by eliminating cookie banners
- Less dependence on cookie and browser restrictions

One method that involves the use of cookies and consent banners is server-side tracking. This allows companies to circumvent browser restrictions. Data is collected directly on the company's server and not in the user's browser.

In contrast to cookieless tracking, companies can use the collected data to accurately visualise the customer journey and thus ensure effective performance measurement.

### Benefits of server-side tracking<sup>140</sup>:

- No interference from ad and script blockers
- Consistent data quantity and quality
- Longer lifetime of cookies
- Efficient use of advertising budgets
- Better data sovereignty and control



**69%** of users state that they value personalisation if they have explicitly consented to data processing.<sup>111</sup>

## SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Produce only what is needed. Provide information that is actually relevant. Deliver to the right place at the right time. Supply chains can be optimised in numerous ways. If companies take the advice above to heart, they can not only avoid high costs, but also reduce their environmental impact by using intelligent solutions.

### DEMAND SENSING AT ARLA

For companies in the food industry, it is particularly important to forecast demand for products as accurately as possible in order to be able to flexibly respond to changes. The dairy cooperative Arla works with SAP Integrated Business Planning for Supply Chain, an intelligent demand sensing solution. Up-to-date and automated demand forecasts help the company optimise its use of resources. Not only do more precise forecasts ensure greater sustainability throughout the entire supply chain process, but they also improve customer service.<sup>141</sup>

## INTELLIGENT SIZING TOOLS

Detailed product descriptions, accurate information on availability and additional sizing services – many different aspects need to come together to convert interested prospects into customers.<sup>142</sup>

### DATA SCIENCE AT ZALANDO

The fashion retailer Zalando has put together a dedicated sizing team that is responsible for reducing return rates caused by clothing and shoes ordered in the wrong size. Data scientists, software engineers and business developers work together to enrich product descriptions as well as 2D and 3D scanners with data and optimise them. Interested customers can, for example, determine their exact body measurements using photos of themselves. Based on these, users then receive personalised size recommendations, allowing them to quickly find the right fit. Throughout the entire process, Zalando handles customer data very sensitively. The photos are stored exclusively on the user's device.<sup>143</sup>

Sizing and AI tools ensure that companies recommend the right clothing size to their customers in up to **97%** of cases.<sup>144</sup>

More than **70%** of clothes ordered online are returned because they are either too big or too small.<sup>145</sup>

### SMART LOGISTICS

Small consignment sizes, a rising number of partial deliveries from branches and increasingly complex requirements, for example next-day delivery, make the last mile a particularly time-consuming and expensive endeavour for companies. Using digital tools and working in close collaboration with logistics service providers may not fully eliminate this challenge, but it can help companies make the optimisation of delivery processes an integral part of their digital metamorphosis.

### FULL-SERVICE SUPPORT AT ENVASES

Besides setting up an online shop, Envases, a metal packaging manufacturer based in southern Germany, has outsourced its shop management, logistics processes and marketing activities. All processes and communication with the logistics service provider GSL Gesellschaft für Service und Logistik in Mitteldeutschland mbH are managed exclusively by the digital agency dotSource. This significantly reduces the need for communication between individual departments and ensures that adjustments and further developments can be implemented more quickly.<sup>146</sup>

According to a study conducted by IFH Cologne, **20%** of online customers are dissatisfied with the delivery process.<sup>147</sup>

The last mile can account for up to **50%** of total supply chain costs.<sup>148</sup>

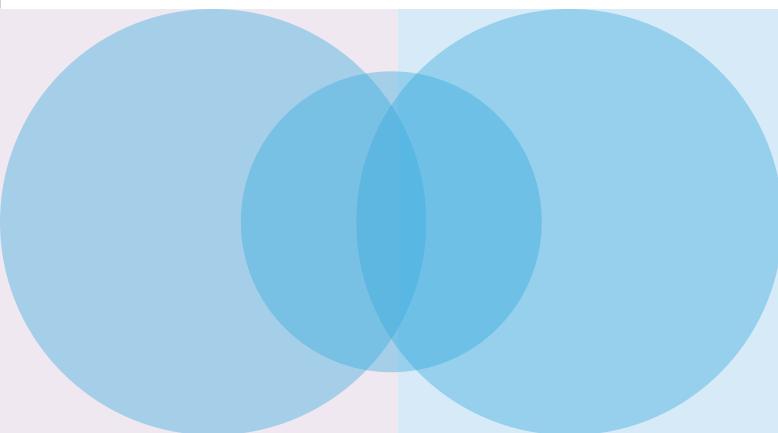
### GREEN LOGISTICS AT CONTINENTAL

The green logistics trend is all about more efficient and sustainable logistics processes. Green vehicle routing is a major topic for the automotive supplier and tyre manufacturer Continental. The company optimises its internal logistics processes with the help of AI.<sup>149</sup> However, this is not the only area where Continental uses its autonomous mobile robots (AMRs) – these highly manoeuvrable machines have also been added to the company's product portfolio. If required, they can even be connected to Continental's intelligent fleet management software solution. The AMRs are only 1.45 metres long, but can transport loads of

up to 1.2 tonnes at a speed of two metres per second.<sup>150</sup> This ensures faster loading and unloading. Investing in this field is a smart move by Continental – not just with regard to the optimisation of internal logistics processes. After all, the industry is well aware of the need for enhanced efficiency, both on an economic and environmental level.

## RETURNS MANAGEMENT

The returns process holds great potential for reducing costs and minimising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The simplicity of the returns process plays a crucial role in determining how satisfied customers are with their shopping experience. If customer expectations are not met in this regard, the entire experience may be remembered as a negative one.<sup>142</sup>



## BENEFITS OF INTELLIGENT RETURNS MANAGEMENT<sup>151</sup>:

- Positive customer experience
- Increased sales through additional information
- Lower costs throughout the entire process and no drop in the value of goods
- Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

**40%** of customers will cancel their online purchase and switch to a competitor if the returns process is too complicated.<sup>142</sup>

On average, a return costs retailers **€15.18** (€7.93 processing costs and €7.25 drop in value), plus the costs of shipping the goods back and forth.<sup>151</sup>



## USER RESEARCH

Modern strategies, efficient tools and appealing designs must be in line with the expectations of the target audience. Through various methods, user research ensures that companies better understand which services and features users really need and which ones create genuine excitement. To achieve this, user experience designers identify specific use cases, i.e. scenarios and situations that involve users interacting with a company's digital offerings, and proceed to make the necessary improvements.<sup>152</sup>

### User research in four steps<sup>152</sup>:

1. Collect available data and assess the current state
2. Identify use cases for the digital offerings by means of quantitative methods
3. Define these use cases in detail and optimise the customer journey based on clearly outlined measures
4. Create a roadmap containing milestones and KPIs

## A/B TESTING AT DILDOKING

Companies that know their customers well and offer them what they like can double their conversion rates. An online shop that has been successful in doing this is the platform for adult products Dildoking.de – the Berlin-based company used A/B tests to carefully analyse how the headers on the homepage and individual product category pages should be designed to cater to different target audiences and ensure that these customer segments are addressed in a personalised way. This involved deploying various versions of the header on the live system and evaluating the results using personalisation tools.<sup>153</sup>



## A/B TESTING AT MYAGRAR

A completely different industry, but the same recipe for success – myAGRAR.de, one of the leading online shops for agricultural products, also optimised its portfolio with the help of A/B testing. As a result, the company based in northern Germany benefits from a:

**65%** higher conversion rate on product detail pages.

**35%** increase in the shopping cart conversion rate.<sup>154</sup>

When examining user behaviour, it is essential to conduct tests regularly for ongoing optimisation. After all, only those who optimise create added value that is truly relevant to users. This in turn ensures:

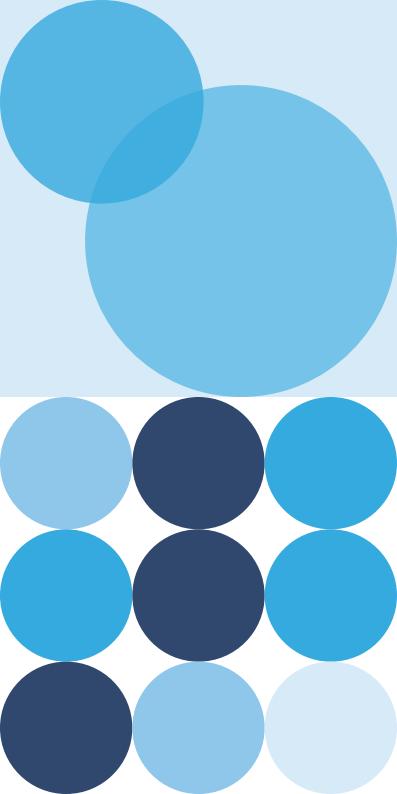
- efficient internal and external processes.
- relevant products and services.
- data-driven decisions regarding new adjustments.
- high conversion rates.
- enhanced customer loyalty.
- better assessment and prompt implementation of new ideas.
- a corporate culture that is open to innovation.<sup>155</sup>

**70%** of customers will abandon their shopping cart if they have a bad user experience.<sup>156</sup>

# FROM E-COMMERCE TO E-BUSINESS WITH A DXP

»E-commerce« has long been used as the collective term for everything companies do as part of their digital metamorphoses. However, even in this context, it is essential to take on a metaperspective and understand that digital metamorphoses in 2024 involve more than just pure e-commerce. More than just an online shop. More than just websites or social media channels with a »buy now« button. In fact, digital experiences take place everywhere. This includes all platforms where people – be it customers, employees or business partners – inter-

act with brands and digital solutions. They take place where data-driven offerings, high-quality content and exceptional services determine whether a purchase is made or whether a business relationship is initiated. It is precisely there, in the sweet spot between user expectations, business needs and technological progress, that adaptability and technological expertise are required. For success in e-business. A business whose growth is driven primarily, but not exclusively, by e-commerce.



Instead of embracing digitalisation for the sake of it, it is important to identify the disciplines that are actually crucial to your digital metamorphoses – this could include:

- UPDATING TO A NEW E-COMMERCE SYSTEM.**
- INTEGRATING CONTENT MANAGEMENT, CRM, MARKETING AUTOMATION, PIM AND MDM TOOLS.**
- DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING STRATEGIES.**
- INTRODUCING USER RESEARCH AND OTHER UXD METHODS.**
- INVESTING IN A MODERN BRAND EXPERIENCE.**
- IMPLEMENTING BI SOLUTIONS.**





The way companies design a DXP is as unique as their system landscape, their goals and their vision.

Nevertheless, every DXP should be capable of providing seamless, consistent and personalised user experiences. DXPs have their roots in content management and e-commerce, so companies need to tailor all digital touchpoints contextually and according to individual needs to be able to orchestrate them centrally. From a purely technical standpoint, the modular architecture of DXPs helps achieve this. However, it is also necessary for companies to take on a metaperspective when planning their digital metamorphoses in order to bring them up to the latest standards in multi-stream projects. This is important for all DXP users – from employees to customers.

Whether it is the classic combination of content and commerce, the integration of data-driven multi-channel marketing with modern design features or the development of a BI platform – a DXP is an integral part of the entire user lifetime journey and goes beyond the functional scope of a conventional CMS.

Regardless of which modules make up a DXP, it offers companies the following benefits:

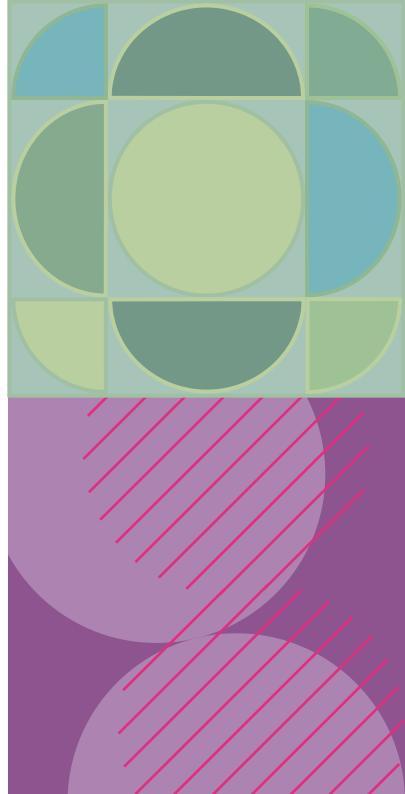
- **Efficient data analytics**
- **Improved customer experience**
- **Higher conversion rates**
- **Accelerated multi-site management**
- **Increased scalability**
- **Enhanced brand image**

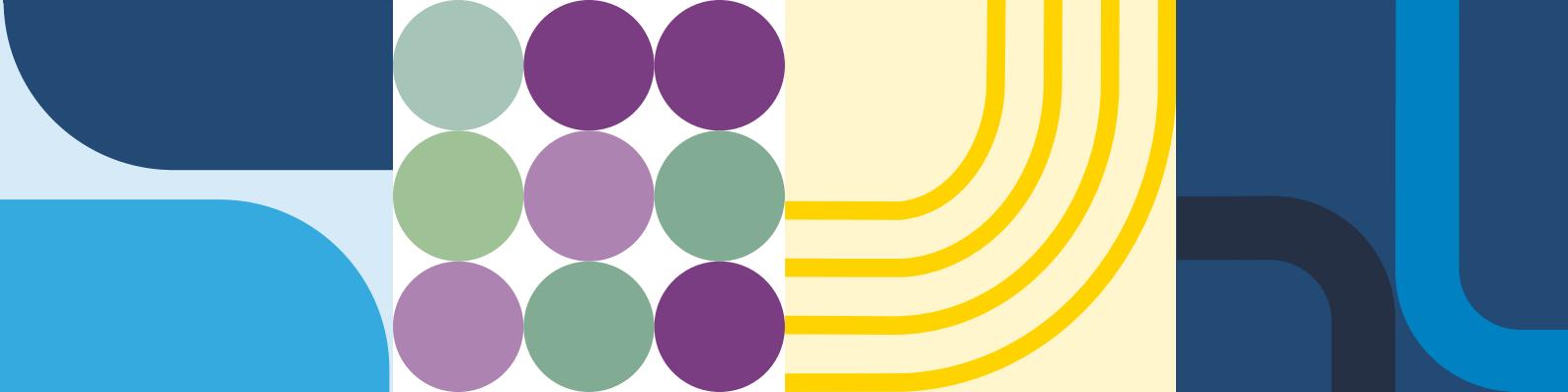
According to Gartner, DXPs can deliver an ROI of up to **242%** over a three-year period.<sup>157</sup>

- CAN YOU FURTHER IMPROVE DIGITAL EXPERIENCES WITH AI?
- HOW ENTERTAINING ARE YOUR DIGITAL OFFERINGS?
- HOW VIABLE IS YOUR DATA STRATEGY GOING FORWARD?
- ARE LOGISTICS PROCESSES PART OF YOUR CHANGE MANAGEMENT?
- DO YOU KNOW WHICH DIGITAL DISCIPLINES CAN BENEFIT YOUR E-BUSINESS?

# INTERACTION WITH AI DEFINES SUCCESS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THRIVES. REAL INTELLIGENCE TRIUMPHS.





Agile, versatile and resourceful – butterflies are among the most valuable bioindicators of a healthy ecosystem.

Openness to change, interaction with AI and parallel project streams for modular architectures – these in turn are indicators of innovative businesses. In this regard, a lot has changed in a very short period of time. Before the revival of AI in 2023, it was clear where users got the information they need quickly and conveniently, where they found the largest selection of products as well as where they networked and exchanged ideas with people all over the world: search engine, marketplace and social media giants such as Google, Amazon and Facebook that acted as the intermediaries between brands and customers.

However, the AI revolution has paved the way for a power shift and for new opportunities – for companies of all sizes and from all industries.

Those who succeed in promoting real intelligence through digital metamorphoses – in other words, driving forward efficient human-computer interaction – will effectively become less and less dependent on traditional intermediaries in the form of a few giant corporations.

Companies that are not afraid of disruption will be successful in the future. These include those businesses that plan changes gradually and with professional support. Those that harness real intelligence to evolve from being AI-ready to AI-competent. Those that are always adaptable and open to change. They will be the ones taking on the roles of mediators, consultants and distributors, which until now have only been reserved for the big giants. This is because they use technology as an effective tool and as a powerful assistant for their employees – for the people they have encouraged to innovate, enabling and even inspiring them to embark on digital metamorphoses.

# DIGITAL SUCCESS FROM THE FIRST IDEA –



Develop perspectives  
with digital consulting



Select solutions  
with requirements analysis  
and assessment



Optimise processes  
in a data-driven way  
AI & Automation



Design brands  
in a user-centred way  
UX & Brand Design



Increase  
reach measurably  
Digital Marketing



Distribute  
content automatically  
Content Management



Create user experiences  
in a personalised way  
Marketing Automation



# DOTSOURCE'S INTEGRAL PROJECT APPROACH

Implement digital projects  
with agile principles



Manage digital business  
with scalable platforms and  
cloud services



Expand knowledge  
with Digital Business School

QUIREMENTS  
FOCUS



Increase sales  
across all channels  
E-Commerce



Manage customer  
relationships digitally  
CRM, Sales & Service



Manage  
data centrally  
PIM, MDM & DAM



Connect systems  
seamlessly  
Platform Integration



Use data  
intelligently  
Data-Driven Business  
with BI

DOTSOURCE  
SERVICES



# ABOUT dotSource®

## **dotSource transforms companies into digital champions.**

dotSource has been developing and implementing scalable digital products for marketing, sales and services since 2006. Specialised consulting and development teams rely on a highly integrated combination of strategy consulting and technology selection – from branding, concept creation, UX design and conversion optimisation to operation in the cloud. Whether it is e-commerce and content platforms, customer relationship and product data management or digital marketing and business intelligence: dotSource solutions are user-oriented, targeted and data-driven.

When it comes to collaboration, dotSource relies on New Work, integral planning and agile methodologies such as Scrum and design thinking. More than 500 digital natives see themselves as partners of their clients, taking

into account individual requirements and living up to the dotSource vision of »Digital Success Right from the Start«. Companies like ESPRIT, hessnatur, Ottobock, TEAG, KWS, BayWa, Axel Springer, C.H.Beck, Würth and Netto Digital trust in this expertise.

On the agency's own blog [Handelskraft.com](http://Handelskraft.com), in the annual Trend Book and at the Handelskraft Conference, dotSource networks industry knowledge and provides insights into current opportunities and developments of digital brand management. Digital Business School, which was launched together with Steinbeis Technology Group in 2015, comprehensively prepares professionals and executives for the entrepreneurial challenges of the digital world.

dotSource has established itself as one of the leading digital agencies in German-speaking Europe and is now one of the top 10 most successful companies in the industry.

# ABOUT HANDELSKRAFT

What started as a spontaneous idea in 2007 quickly developed into one of the strongest corporate blogs in the DACH region. While our first articles were mainly about e-commerce and online marketing, we have spent the last few years building up comprehensive industry knowledge, getting new bloggers on board and expanding as well as professionalising the line-up of our daily articles.

Since 2013, the Handelskraft brand has included the print and web publication Handelskraft Trend Book. Since 2016, we have brought digital business experts onto the stage of the Handelskraft Conference – and since 2017, we have brought them behind the microphones of our »Handelskraft Digital.Business.Talk.« podcast. From 2024, we will also be honouring digital companies that make a tangible contribution to the economy, environment and society with the Handelskraft Award.

The digital world is hybrid and agile: New technologies replace yesterday's hype, user behaviour and thus the expectations regarding digital experiences change anew with every digital advancement. Digging into this sweet spot – the intersection of user needs and trends, customer experience and technology, business goals and added value – and showing Handelskraft fans and newbies how to turn it into sustainable innovations – that is what makes Handelskraft unique and worth reading and listening to.

The Handelskraft blog, trend book, conference, podcast and award are closely linked. For the content of our channels, we keep an eye on the developments in the digital industry throughout the year, conduct in-depth research, challenge each other and fine-tune articles, trend book chapters, conference agendas as well as award and podcast topics down to the last detail.

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