



# UTILITY CEOs: HOW TO TURN DIGITAL PROMISE INTO PRACTICE

Digital transformation in utilities isn't just about technology — it's about business survival and competitive advantage. As decision-makers at the helm, utility CEOs should know what kind of digital initiatives can make a difference in their business to drive efficiency, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth. As industry giants set new standards, utilities that fail to adapt risk losing relevance — those that embrace the right strategies will thrive.

## OVERVIEW

There are two ways for energy and utility businesses to go when it comes to digital transformation (DT): **digital optimization** (digital 'refurbishment' or update) a **full-scale digital transformation** (a fundamental shift in how the market is served, introducing new products, services, or business models.)

We'll address both scenarios. Most importantly, it's always about **aligning with your business goals**.

### FROM THIS MATERIAL, YOU'LL GET TO KNOW:

- Why Digital Transformation Fails in Energy and Utility Companies (For Real);
- Three Key Practices to Overcome Bottlenecks to Digitalisation;
- What Real-Life C-Suites Say about their Digital Practice;
- Key Takeaways on Your Journey to Digital Breakthrough.



# WHY DOES DT FAIL IN MOST BUSINESS CASES OF ENERGY & UTILITY COMPANIES TODAY?

## JUMP INTO THE TABLE

### Legacy of Failed Digital Initiatives ("Scars")

Failed digital projects that promised efficiency gains breed scepticism and resistance. It's difficult to build momentum for new digital transformation efforts.

### Lack of Process Readiness for Digitalisation

Simply digitizing inefficient processes doesn't create value. Many companies fail to streamline and optimize their workflows before applying technology, which limits the impact of digital initiatives.

### Siloed & Tactical Approaches

Instead of a holistic, strategic vision, many companies take a fragmented, short-term approach to digitalisation. This results in isolated projects with limited benefits, rather than enterprise-wide transformation.

### Time Pressures on Tech & Data Teams

IT and data teams are often too busy maintaining outdated systems and fixing traditional problems, leaving little room to focus on transformative digital initiatives.

### Regulatory & Cultural Barriers to Change

Strict regulatory frameworks and risk-averse company cultures often hinder agility and innovation, making it difficult for utilities to adopt new digital tools and processes effectively.

### Poor Data Integration & Management

The lack of high-quality, integrated data across systems and sectors limits digital transformation. Siloed data environments prevent companies from fully leveraging AI and automation.

### Failure to Align AI & Digital Investments with Business Needs

While AI has great potential, companies often invest in it without a clear strategy. Without aligning AI use cases with business objectives, implementations fail to deliver tangible value.

### Limited Cross-Sector Collaboration

Digital transformation in utilities often lacks coordination with other sectors (e.g., transportation, and local government). This limits opportunities for industry-wide efficiency gains and sustainability improvements.

### Lack of Workforce Upskilling & Change Management

Many digital initiatives neglect employee training and change management, leading to low adoption rates and underutilized technology.

### Inadequate Government & Industry-Wide Support

Large-scale transformation requires regulatory support, industry-wide collaboration, and government-backed initiatives. The lack of coordinated efforts slows down progress.

## THREE KEY PRACTICES TO OVERCOME BOTTLENECKS TO DIGITALISATION

### 1. Rebuild Trust & Invest in People

Win the trust of employees. Communicate clearly the benefits of digitalization, address past frustrations, and align new initiatives with employees' needs.

Many digital projects have struggled because teams lacked the necessary knowledge to leverage new technologies effectively. Ensuring employees are equipped with digital skills and data literacy will **accelerate adoption and maximize impact**.

### 2. Optimize Processes Before Digitalizing Them

Companies must rethink their workflows to eliminate unnecessary steps and streamline processes before introducing automation.

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A process-first approach involves **mapping out how information flows within the organization and identifying inefficiencies** BEFORE applying technology solutions.

Think about a DevOps-style approach—an iterative, flexible method for designing and rolling out new systems. Utilities need to rethink traditional governance structures that often slow down innovation.

### 3. Build Industry-Wide Business Cases

Companies often struggle to justify digital investments because their impact isn't always immediate or easily quantifiable. Instead of focusing solely on short-term ROI, utilities should **consider industry-scale business cases** that drive sector-wide benefits.

Many transformative digital opportunities—such as using integrated data sets across different sectors—only become clear once organizations start sharing insights and collaborating.

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## WHAT DO REAL-LIFE C-SUITES SAY ABOUT THEIR DIGITAL PRACTICE?

### 1. Focus on core systems

*«It's important to get your core systems in place so you can really start to pick up the pace...»* states James McLean, chief technology officer at SSEN Transmission.

For this company, core systems are a CRM ecosystem, asset management platforms, and data analytics tools that enable efficient operations, stakeholder engagement, and risk management.

What's yours?

### 2. Building business capacities

*«Digital is a non-functional requirement. It's about building capability»* (based on the Utility Week's report and a group of senior industry leaders.)

We distill in detail what the primary business capacities are to build the foundation for growth in your organisation [here](#).

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**These are:**

- Service-to-cash capacities;
- Increasing operating margins by aligning the CRM with evolving business models;
- Prioritizing a cloud-first strategy with a composable architecture...

Get the whole list [here](#).

**3. Leverage AI in your specific business cases**

Machine learning or deep learning models trained on a company's datasets are essential for effectively applying AI to various use cases.

At MaxBill, for example, we deliver ML predictive models to help identify 'at-risk' contracts to prevent customer attrition or potential debts.

Other use cases of AI in utilities are automating inbound email handling for technical inquiries, utilizing AI-driven assistants in core applications like Outlook and Teams, etc.

If you're in the water industry, AI can help accelerate the process of investigating and understanding the root causes of failures on the water network.

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You need to rethink processes and embed digital practices into daily workflows.

Transformative leadership, such as a CIO championing digital agendas, drives adoption and demonstrates the tangible benefits of digital tools.

If you want your DevOps engineers to expand digital development based on agile methodologies, you need to make sure they possess the crucial skill set. It requires logical thinking, coding expertise, and the ability to structure queries in natural language.

One of the ways to do it is to establish an in-house Digital Academy - just like UK Power Networks did.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

- ✓ Get clarity about the benefits of digital transformation in your organisation.
- ✓ Working on operational problems is about efficiency.
- ✓ It's easier and cheaper to avoid side effects of inefficiencies than it is to deal with lagging behind in the market later.
- ✓ The investment in getting started pays off in cost, cash flow and revenue. Building resilience through digital practice is about productivity.
- ✓ Instead of wasting talent and resources on manual and cumbersome processes, you can engage with meaningful projects to produce value and drive revenue.
- ✓ Fairness and encouragement reduce friction, build trust and enhance innovation.
- ✓ It's tempting to focus on how much you need to improve, but it's helpful to show others how the improvements will help them.
- ✓ Better is always possible, and finding the right tech partner for your digital transformation journey is the next crucial step.



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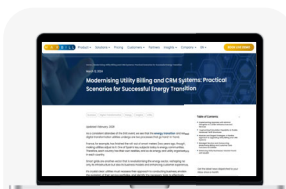
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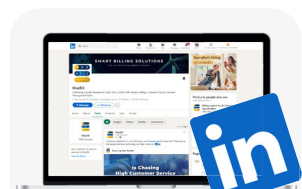
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