THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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Foreword

Digital Transformation has emerged as a buzzword in recent years, but it's so much more than just a trendy hashtag. Digital Transformation can serve as a very meaningful way to distinguish your company from its competitors.

But all too often, Digital Transformations fail. In fact, it's estimated that 7 in 10 Digital Transformation projects fail in some way. They fail to accomplish their intended goals. They fail to launch within the expected timeframe or within the allocated budget. Some fail to launch at all. Others launch, but fail to deliver the expected return on investment. A variety of different factors can cause a Digital Transformation project to fail, but the good news is that virtually all of these scenarios are avoidable with the right planning, the right strategy and the right DT development partner.

We've created this e-book to help improve your chances of Digital Transformation success. Inside we explain the different types of Digital Transformation, demonstrate the potential benefits of each, share our proven process, and give you insights on choosing the right technology partner for your Digital Transformation project. But first, the basics.

Digital Transformation has emerged as a buzz word in recent years but many don't have a clear understanding of what a Digital Transformation project actually entails.

At its most basic level, Digital Transformation involves the use of modern digital technology as a mechanism for improving, expanding or overhauling a company's operations.

Digital Transformation development projects can involve any number of well-established technologies and emerging ones too, such as large language models, machine learning and artificial intelligence. These technologies are then implemented as part of a broader solution that may include:

- **Enterprise software development;**
- **Mobile application development;**
- **Web app development;**
- **Cloud data platforms and other cloud solutions;**
- **Software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions; and**
- **Business Process Automation or BPA.**

The benefits of Digital Transformation are many and varied. They can include the following and usually a combination of several.

- **Increasing productivity and profitability.**
- **Improving the speed and efficiency of the business.**
- **Streamlining and automating processes.**
- **Allowing companies to offer new products and services.**
- **Integrating and consolidating enterprise software platforms.**
- **Increasing revenue and client acquisitions.**

In addition to Digital Transformation development services, some companies — including 7T — offer Digital Transformation-as-a-service solutions. Digital Transformation-as-a-service involves the use of technology to solve problems. You begin by identifying inefficiencies and challenges; then, the development team tailors an enterprise software platform, mobile app, cloud platform or other technology to serve as a complete solution to the client's problem.

The most beneficial Digital Transformation projects with the highest return on investment (ROI) tend to be those that are scalable and adaptable. These projects accommodate and allow for continued evolution and growth over the span of months and years. In short, it's a technology that grows and evolves in pace with your organization.

As the name implies, a well-architected Digital Transformation project can be truly transformative for your business, with a significant ROI and a profoundly positive impact on your company's operations. We have a phrase at 7T: "ROI is our Currency," meaning, quite simply, that all Digital Transformation initiatives are ROI driven. A well-thought-out and established ROI is key to a project's success.

What Prompted the Rise of Digital Transformation?

The recent dramatic rise of Digital Transformation can really be traced back to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted countless business leaders to seek out new technologies that would support their operations amidst what was a rapidly-changing business world. Quarantines, social distancing and a growing work-from-home movement forced companies to change the ways in which they did business. The pandemic changed the ways in which customers and clients connected with businesses and vice versa. It also changed the ways in which colleagues communicated and collaborated.

These changes left business leaders scrambling to find new ways to bridge the gaps that were created by the pandemic. Digital Transformation was the solution. In fact, the companies that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic — a time when so many other companies collapsed — were those that invested in Digital Transformation. Most of those companies are not only surviving today; they're thriving. That new technology has allowed them to more rapidly adapt in today's post-pandemic world. Here are a few real-world examples of how Digital Transformation projects have served as a game-changer for companies in a variety of different industries.

- A financial consulting firm deploys a business messaging app to centralize communications and bridge the gaps that have formed as a result of the transition toward remote work and social distancing. Since the messaging mobile app is designed for business usage, it allows for full regulatory compliance and comprehensive data management. What's

more, the messaging app not only lets colleagues connect more effectively; it also features external SMS messaging capabilities that allow the consultants to communicate with clients — all within a single interface. This Digital Transformation project solves problems that arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to addressing pre-existing pain points by facilitating more effective communications with clients.

• An accounting firm is located in a COVID-19 hotspot where there are strict quarantines and aggressive social distancing measures in place. Now, the firm's employees are working from home, but a Digital Transformation project is required to support this. The accounting firm sought a reliable and secure platform to allow for collaboration and communication with colleagues and clients.

Accountants deal in sensitive data too, which means this Digital Transformation project also had to include a secure cloud data platform, with full data management capabilities. These technologies delivered a solid ROI in large part because they brought continued benefits to the accounting firm in the post-pandemic period.

• A chain of restaurants has been profoundly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with social distancing, quarantines and COVID-related financial challenges leading to a sharp drop-off in business. The restaurants need to change their business model to accommodate in mobile app and

in-app ordering, contact-free food pick-ups, and app-based marketing. The restaurant chain pursues a Digital Transformation project that includes the development of a custom mobile app and an enterprise software platform with a combination of ERP and CRM features to support the company's operations.

Once the new technology is deployed, the restaurant sees an increase in business because it's now equipped to connect with customers more effectively. With the technology it needs to succeed, this restaurant chain saw major benefits from its Digital Transformation — even with the game-changing impacts of COVID-19.

These are just a few examples of how transformative these projects can really be. Digital Transformation can elevate a business to the next level or propel a company over a massive obstacle. In the absence of a world-changing pandemic, Digital Transformation can be the ideal mechanism for expanding a company's business opportunities.

How is Digital Transformation Used for Scaling and Growth?

Digital Transformation is favored for its ability to promote growth and accommodate sustainable business scaling. Business leaders often cite poor scalability as one of the greatest obstacles that stands in the way of a company's advancement. Escaping the stagnancy rut can be very difficult, but Digital Transformation offers a great solution with its ability to promote evolution, up-scaling, growth and advancement.

Here is a look at how different technologies can be leveraged to promote scalability and growth within your organization.

Enterprise Software Platforms

Enterprise software platforms have the potential to generate a significant ROI when they are outfitted with the exact features and functionalities that your organization needs to succeed as it up-scales and expands. With this sort of Digital Transformation development project, your new platform may take the place of several existing software systems and their associated cost and support overhead. An enterprise software system can also be integrated with third-party platforms to achieve automated data flows which are increasingly important as a business grows in scale.

Mobile Applications

A mobile app drives scalability by giving you the power to engage customers or connect and collaborate with colleagues. Today, many — if not the majority — of Digital Transformation projects include a mobile app as an extension of or companion to an enterprise software platform. People live in the mobile space, so smart companies are meeting them there!

Process Automation

With process automation, you can optimize, streamline and automate processes in a way that improves productivity and efficiency, while simultaneously eliminating human error. You can get more done, faster and with greater accuracy which all aligns with improved scalability.

Integrations with other systems is a big part of the BPA or Business Process Automation movement too.

Cloud Platforms

Cloud technology saw a tremendous rise in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic and for good reason: the cloud is highly accessible, infinitely

scalable and very versatile. And there are countless forms of cloud technology to consider as part of your Digital Transformation project, including cloud data storage, cloud-based analytics, and cloud computing, amongst others.

Your imagination is the only limit when it comes to what technologies you can deploy as part of your next Digital Transformation project. With scalability and growth being the primary objective, you must think beyond the company's needs today and consider the broader, long-term picture.

How Does Digital Transformation Give You a Competitive Advantage?

Digital Transformation brings countless benefits, with many of them bringing a competitive advantage — even for companies in the most intensely competitive industries. Let's explore a few of the perks that a business will enjoy as their Digital Transformation projects reach the implementation and deployment phase.

Scalability

Digital Transformation projects tend to have an inherent element of scalability. The actual technologies are typically very scalable. But beyond this, the very act of deploying a new software platform, mobile app, process automation or other technology can support a business and its operations as they up-scale, evolve and grow.

Emerging Tech

A Digital Transformation

project provides a wonderful opportunity to leverage new, emerging technologies. Early adopters tend to see a greater ROI when they opt to integrate the latest, greatest tech as part of their Digital Transformation. You'll also see a boost to your company's image when you integrate novel or "showy" technologies into your public-facing platforms, such as a customer portal or mobile app.

Phased Development

Some Digital Transformation projects have a vast scope, with a development timeframe that can span many months or even years. Fortunately, Digital Transformations are well-suited to phased development, which also works well for companies that have budget constraints. Some businesses find it easier to spread the payments over time as each phase is completed versus paying a single, large sum at once.

Improved Processes

Business process automations — also known as BPAs — are a common form of Digital Transformation and for good reason.

Process automation leads to greater productivity, improved accuracy and a reduction in human error. When you automate processes, you can simultaneously offload tasks from a staff member's to-do list, freeing them to focus on higher-level projects. The very act of preparing for a process automation project also provides an opportunity to examine and revamp your workflows and process flows in a way that boosts efficiency even further.

Data-driven Decisions

When a Digital Transformation project involves data management and data governance, one of the benefits typically includes the ability to leverage your company's data more effectively. Data-driven decision-making gives you a competitive advantage because you're developing strategies and basing important business decisions upon objective, solid facts instead of projections or guesstimates.

Better Business Agility

Enterprise technology gives you the ability to improve your agility and adaptability in even the most competitive business niches. When you work with a Digital Transformation developer that takes a problem-solving approach — that is, using technology to address pain points and solve problems — you can up your game, while also responding to external changes in the marketplace and within your industry.

Improved Collaboration Capabilities

Collaboration is key to success in today's competitive business world, so companies that pursue technology that facilitates collaboration will see a major boost in productivity and profitability. Digital Transformation has been the key to facilitating collaboration in a post-pandemic world, where social distancing and the work-from-home movement has created major barriers that can only be overcome with technology.

What is the Process for a Digital Transformation Project?

The Digital Transformation process is similar to the process that you would use for any development project, with the exception of scope and scale. Many Digital Transformation projects involve the creation of multiple platforms and a significant portion are multi-phased projects. The stages of a Digital Transformation project are as follows.

Stage 1 – Discovery

The discovery stage of Digital Transformation project is perhaps the most important, as it entails a comprehensive, in-depth examination of a client's processes, needs and strategic objectives. Common questions explored in the discovery process include:

- **Who is the client and what does the company / organization do?**
- **What are the client's key challenges or pain points?**
- **How can these challenges or pain points be addressed with a Digital Transformation development project?**
- **What features and functionalities does the client want to include in their software platform, mobile app or other technology?**
- **Who are the primary users for this new technology?**
- **What software, apps and other technology is the client currently using?**
- **What platforms does the client intend to keep using?**
- **Will integrations be required for these platforms?**
- **What is the expected ROI represented in actual bottomline dollars?**

These are some of the key questions that will be discussed during the discovery phase of your Digital Transformation project. Discovery is an extremely collaborative process that requires a great deal of client involvement. It's important that you, the client, have the ability to fully

participate in the discovery process. Otherwise, it may be best to postpone the project because its potential for success will be impeded.

Stage 2 – Innovation

The development of a Digital Transformation innovation strategy is the second stage of the process, with the strategy encompassing everything from the technologies that will be used in your project, to the UI/UX design and the creation of the project's business requirements document or BDR — key documentation that will guide your Digital Transformation project from start to finish.

The business requirements document expands upon the information that you explore in the discovery phase, detailing all business requirements, project scope, features and functionalities, user profiles and user stories, UI/UX design aspects and technical specifications, amongst other things. These requirement docs provide your Digital Transformation development team with the guidance they need to turn

your ideas into a digital reality, so it's essential that you take the time to complete these documents by providing as much detail as possible.

Stage 3 - Development

Development is the third phase of the Digital Transformation development process and it's a stage that can span weeks, months or even years depending upon the size and scope of your project. The exact development methodology will vary depending upon your development team's preferences and the types of technology that they're creating. For example, a team that uses agile development methodology will work in a series of sprints. Each sprint is a period of development where the team works to achieve a specific development goal within a set timeframe.

The development stage will include the creation of wireframes and beta versions of your new enterprise software platform or mobile app. Your team members may

also be asked to participate in user testing, which is designed to identify bugs and root out inefficiencies or flaws in the platform's UI/UX. This way, any issues can be resolved prior to deployment.

Stage 4: Implementation and Deployment

The next stage of the Digital Transformation process is implementation and deployment. In the implementation stage, third-party integrations previously established with the new technology "installed" and readied for deployment. This is also the time when employee training sessions should be held so everyone is prepared and ready to make the most of this new technology when deployment day arrives.

A change management initiative is also essential to ensuring that your project sees a high user adoption rate right out of the starting gate. Humans are naturally resistant to change and even with comprehensive training programs, you should expect to encounter a bit of reluctance in the realm of user adoption. Employees must know what to expect. They must understand why you're implementing these changes and why this Digital Transformation project is so important.

A well-architected change management program will adsress these points, keeping morale levels high and confusion levels low. You cannot simply pull the rug out from under staff by "shutting off" the legacy systems when you deploy your new technology. transition from start to finish by setting

expectations and guiding staff along the way so the rollout goes smoothly.

The actual deployment or launch is when the new plattform is "turned on" and put into use. This rollout can occur across the entire company all at once, or it may be deployed in phases over several days or weeks.

Stage 5 - Analytics and Support

Your Digital Transformation project will be the source of lots of useful data. Ideally, that data should be captured and integrated into an analytics and data visualization platform that allows you to make the most of this data for business decisions, strategy development and your constant improvement process or CIP. As with all technology, regular updates and maintenance will keep your platform operating at peak performance levels while also generating maximum ROI. Today's modern technology is never a one-and-done sort of project, continual improvements are essential for success and continued ROI. On average, a business should allocate a sum equal to 15% to 20% of the total Digital Transformation project budget to cover the cost of annual maintenance and update costs.

Operating systems, hardware, parallel platforms and integrated technologies are constantly being updated and improved; your Digital Transformation technology must be regularly maintained in order to keep pace and work effectively. But beyond this, you can analyze user behavior patterns and other

data to identify opportunities for improvement on your platform(s). Maintenance, updates and improvements will stand at the core of your Digital Transformation constant improvement program, so be sure to consider this in your long term budgets and strategies.

Finding the Ideal Digital Transformation Partner

Each Digital Transformation project is unique and every developer has their own unique process. For this reason, it's important that you communicate with your development team so you know exactly what to expect and you're aware of your precise role. This will elevate your chances of success, while maximizing ROI for your Digital Transformation project.

There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all Digital Transformation partner. Finding the ideal partner — and there is emphasis on the word "partner" — can take time so you should not expect to find the perfect match right out of the starting gate.

As you begin your search for a Digital Transformation developer, look for someone who is ready to enter into a real collaborative partnership. This dynamic should extend beyond a "service provider" role. Service providers tend to focus on writing code at top speed, with little desire for any engagement beyond the bare minimum. You may get a lower price quote from this sort of developer, but you'll usually get what you pay for in terms of quality and overall customer experience.

The following are a few key questions to ask as you consider DT developers for your project.

- **Have you worked with clients in my industry before?**
- **Can I speak to clients who've worked with you on similar projects?**
- **What can I expect in terms of process if we move forward?**

- **How often will we have touchpoint meetings to review progress, provide feedback and discuss other issues related to the project?**
- **Who is involved in these touchpoint meetings from your side?**
- **Who will we need to involve in touchpoint meetings from our organization?**
- **Do you offer related services such as data migration and user training?**

A true Digital Transformation partner takes a collaborative view to development, working hand-in-hand with the client to understand more than just your project specs and requirements. They'll get to know your business, your business strategy, your challenges and pain points and your goals for the future. That's exactly what we do here at 7T and our company leaders even perform site visits in an effort to gain a complete understanding of a client's operations, processes and future strategic objectives. We view each Digital Transformation project as an opportunity for collaboration and engagement, with the client involved in the process from day one through deployment and beyond.
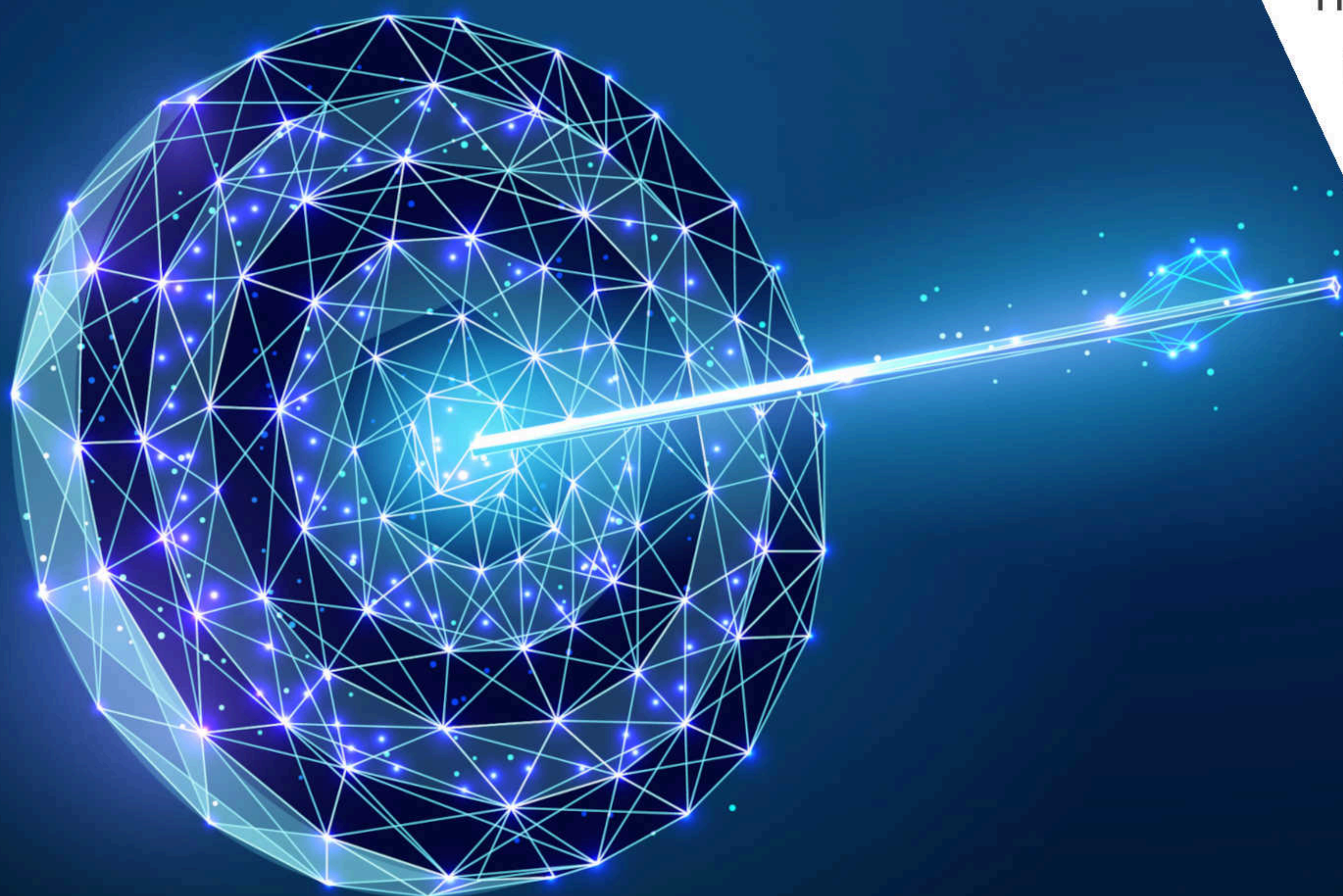
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