

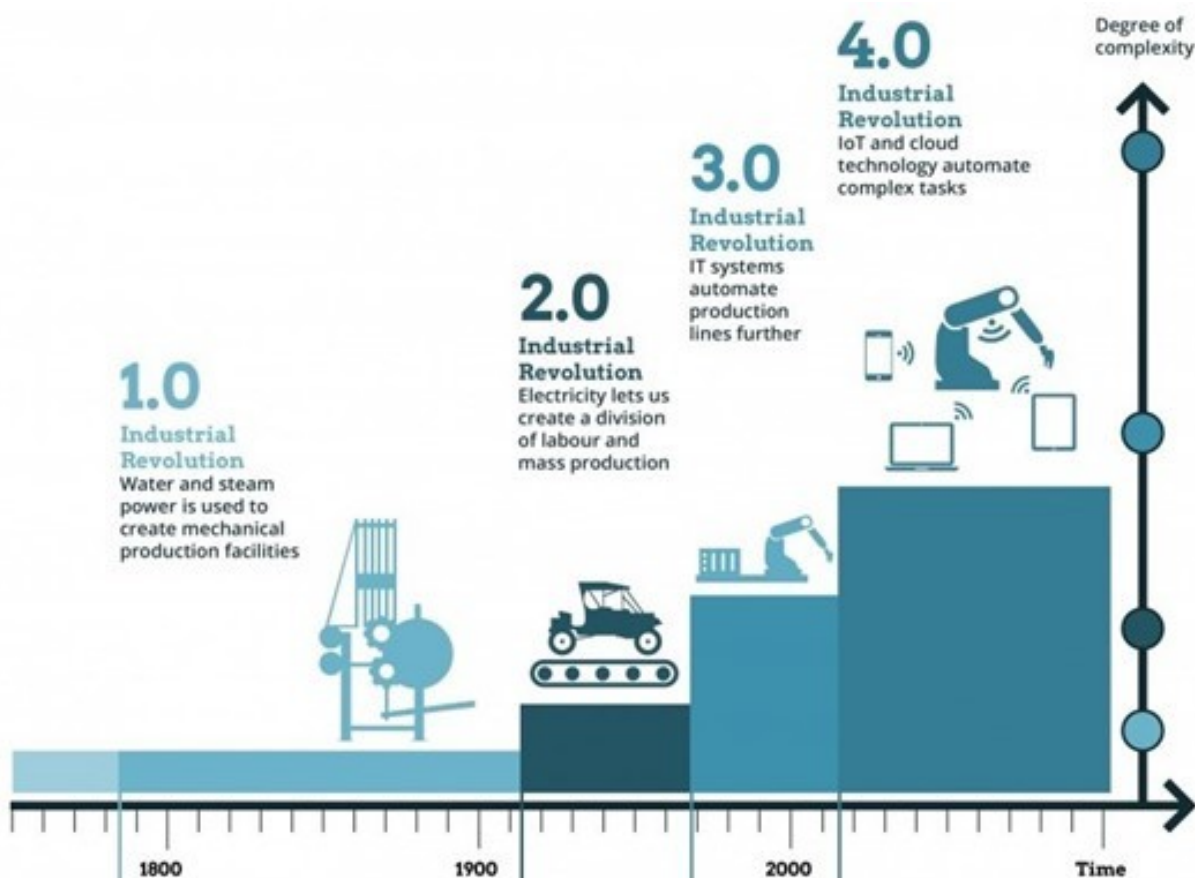


# Digital Transformation Is 'The Closest Thing We'll Come to Space Travel'

By 3C

## Keeping Up with The Revolutions

We live at a transformational point in history. Much like those who lived in the early years of the past 4 centuries, an industrial revolution is taking place and will have fully blossomed in a decade or so. What's so unique about this age though, is that a large group of the population will be the first to experience 2 industrial revolutions and may even live to see 3 such is the rate of technological advancement.



If you compare the world of industry 3.0 to the world in industry 4.0, it truly is like living on another planet. What I mean by this, is that our lives will look completely different in just a short period of time. Just look at Digital Assistants, robots, self-driving cars, and even social networks. These were either inconceivable or stuff of science fiction just a couple of decades ago.

The beauty is that in the housing sector, we can utilise all these technologies to live better and grow exponentially. But most importantly, adapt to the digital age. In this post we look at the journey of digital transformation from planning, to implementation and finally to completion, because the expedition from planet 3.0 to planet 4.0 will be the closest we get to space travel.



## Strategy

To successfully land in industry 4.0 we need a plan, a long-term strategy to precisely outline the steps needed to be taken to get there. We need a digital transformation strategy. Much like any space mission it all starts with the asking the following:



Digital transformation is all about transforming your value chain to adapt and thrive in the digital age. Therefore, this is not a department strategy, nor is it a corporate strategy, it's a strategy to completely change your organisation in the eyes of your tenants, your employees, the board and all your stakeholders by adding value through digital offerings.

Let's take an example in social housing of reporting a repair. Digitally transforming this process could look like a chatbot (powered by Artificial intelligence, machine learning and natural language processing) embedded into social media and enabled on digital assistants. This digitally transforms your value chain through better customer service options that add value to your customers through the convenience of just having to say, "hey Alexa, my shower head needs replacing".

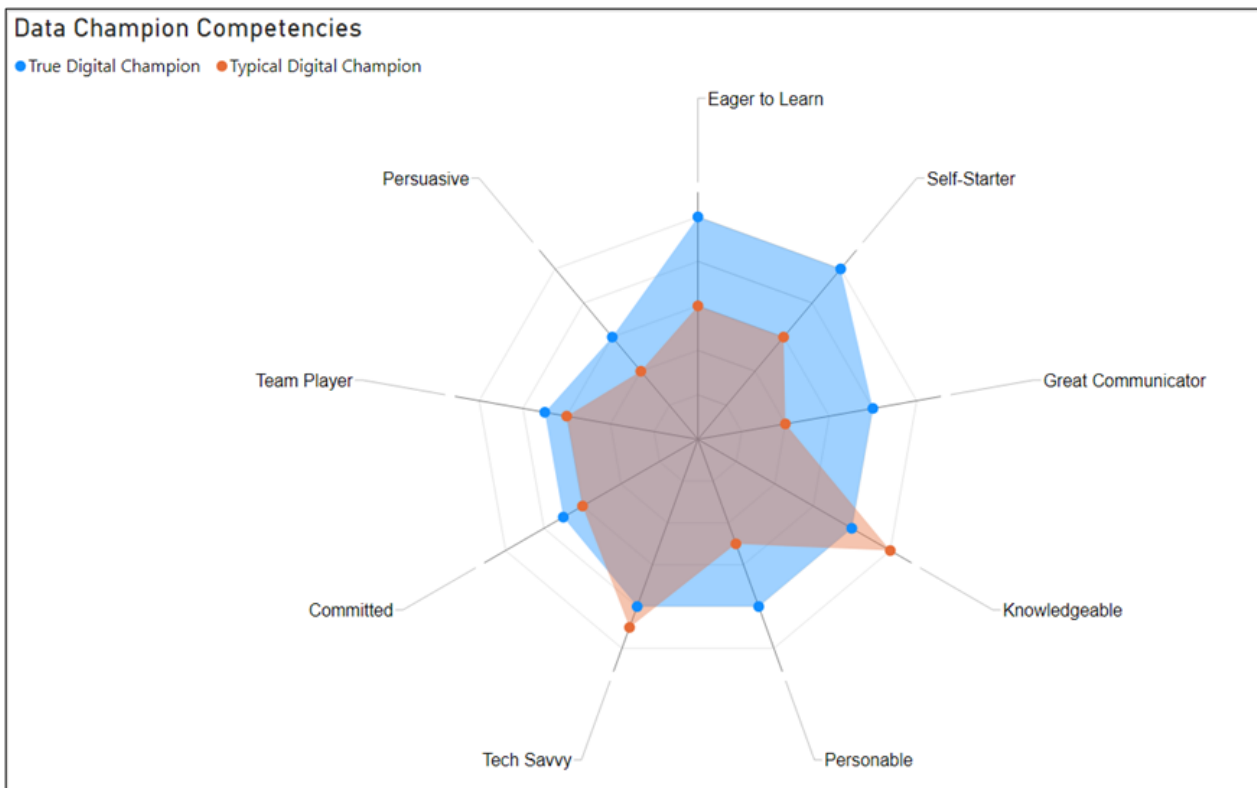


## Astronauts

Now that you have the vision, it's time to start turning it into reality. You would have almost certainly outlined cultural change as one of the biggest barriers stopping you from achieving your objectives and that's because cultural change is the biggest barrier to digital transformation.

For millennia, humans had to change and adapt to new environments and threats to evolve into the species we are today. Now, we change the world around us to adapt to our needs which has meant humans have become averse to change. But as an organisation, we must understand that we need to adapt to our changing customer needs in order to survive. To do this, digital champions are essential, they are your astronauts. Those individuals will drive you to new worlds with the whole team around them.

Below is a competency guide for an outstanding digital champion. They don't necessarily have to be the most knowledgeable or tech-savvy, but they must be eager to learn, a self-starter, and able to communicate and excite others on your transformational journey.



But the selection process isn't as obvious as it may seem. Having experience talking to staff members at a range of housing associations, digital champions have been a bit hit-or-miss. The key to success, is understanding that being a digital champion is not an individual sport. They are the early adopters of change, there to influence and excite others about what's to come, in order to build an ever-growing community of digital champions where more and more employees accept and celebrate digital transformation. Eventually, by the time you land in industry 4.0, your whole team should be digital champions.





## Journey

Digital transformation takes mass commitment, which means your strategy needs to be super robust and agreed with all staff. Because the example we gave about chatbots is digital transformation, but it's one part of the jigsaw for the customer service department, which is then one part of an even bigger jigsaw for the whole organisation. This is where small acts of transformation can get lost in the noise of business as usual, and the big picture can be forgotten, resulting in departments becoming siloed from solely focussing on their small pieces of the jigsaw. Therefore, people can easily return to old ways of working because there is no direction. This is, again, why digital champions are so important, they are your stewards of change that conduct all in the right direction.

To do this they need a clearly outlined map of how to get from one planet to another. That's where your roadmap is essential. Without a roadmap, you're just floating around in space hoping to hit planet industry 4.0. Your roadmap is the heart of your strategy. Conveying how you are going to get where you want to be and identifying the obstacles in place. It needs to be as detailed as possible, of course it may not turn out as planned, but without a plan it may not turn out at all. Additionally, all barriers need to have assessments and contingency plans in place as, inevitably, there will be the classic "Houston we have a problem" moment when something hits the fan.





## Landing

So now you've planned your route, selected your astronauts, built your spaceship, and have successfully completed your journey to planet industry 4.0. The only thing left to do is well... it all again for industry 5.0. Digital transformation is a continuous process that should be embedded into your organisational culture. Everyone should want to do things better and, due to the age we live in, the way to do things better is through technology.

Often, the social housing sector is labelled as behind the curve regarding technology, relying on legacy systems to attempt to perform modern day tasks. When this fails, frustration arises from having to do manual tasks that shouldn't have to be done in this day and age.

Therefore, there is a real opportunity right now to leapfrog that curve through digital transformation. As, if you act now, you will be ahead of the curve for when industry 5.0 hits, setting up your organisation for the future of housing.

Oh, and PS, once you've landed on planet industry 4.0, there's no coming back!