CALL FOR PAPERS

California Management Review (CMR)

Special Section on

Managing Digital Transformation

In Search for New Principles

Guest-Editors:

Carmelo Cennamo, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

Giovanni Battista Dagnino, University of Rome LUMSA, Palermo Campus, Italy

Alberto Di Minin, BRIE – U.C. Berkeley, USA &
Istituto di Management,
Sant'Anna School of Pisa, Italy

Gianvito Lanzolla, Cass Business School, City, University of London, London, UK

The diffusion of digital technologies – e.g., internet of things, cloud computing, blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence – has enabled a notable transformation in firms' boundaries, processes, structures, roles, and interactions. To be sure, this is not just a traditional IT backend process since it affects the organization as a whole, thereby redefining its strategies, entrepreneurial processes, and innovation and governance mechanisms. This permeation has in turn led to the emergence of new ways of organizing firms' value chains and interfirm relationships, which now increasingly occur not in isolation but in so-called digital ecosystems.

The benefits of digital transformation have widely been highlighted in both managerial literature and academic inquiry (e.g., Iansiti and Lakhani 2017; Lanzolla and Frankort, 2016; Pigni et al. 2016; *Economist* 2014; 2017). For instance, a key feature of such systems is their ability to foster *generativity* at the collective level, which is the technology system's "capacity to produce unprompted change driven by large, varied, and uncoordinated audiences" (Zittrain 2006:1980). Furthermore, because individual components connect through "thin-crossing points" (Baldwin and Clark 2000), firms can reduce co-dependence and increase both the reach of inter-firm collaboration and flexibility through non-contractual, collaborative relationships.

Firms and organizations use digital transformation in different ways. Some use it to improve the internal organizing process of innovation and run it more efficiently and effectively (e.g., GE, IBM). Others use it to sharpen the way they connect to and collaborate with consumers, product suppliers, and other firms even if rivals (e.g., BMW, CFA, and Tesla). Others instead leverage digital transformation to build two-sided platforms and remodel their role and impact within entire industries by changing the rules of competition (e.g., Airbnb, Uber, or Amazon).

However, these benefits do not come without challenges and may hide important tradeoffs (Cennamo and Santalo 2015). In particular, digital ecosystems are enabled by digital technologies, and digital technologies compound traditional risks of information systems with new ones including the "illusion of objectivity" and "black-box" decision-making. Thus, how should firms understand and manage the technological risk that is at the very core of a digital ecosystem's infrastructure? In addition, because of the non-contractual nature of interfirm collaborative relationships, digital ecosystem complexity can be sharp, especially when it comes to coordinating innovation activities.

Drawing on various emerging lines of inquiry (e.g., platform/ecosystems, business model innovation, coopetition, and so on), this special section of *California Management Review* aims to unveil the key principles of digital transformation management and underscore how they actually inform the firms' new boundaries, processes, structures, roles, and interactions.
We are interested in studies that clarify how digital transformation affects:

(a) the boundaries, processes, structures and roles of firms' value chain in the industries where they operate, and/or collateral ones;
b) the way firms create and capture value;
c) the way firms cooperate and compete simultaneously;
d) the way firms form and operate partnerships and digital ecosystems;
e) the way firms manage the risks arising from interconnected products and increasing firms' interdependence.

Above we highlighted some of the substantial challenges that arise with the process of digital transformation. The purpose of this special issue is to generate a solid collection of papers that focus on such challenges and shed light on the origin of the best practices to tackle them. We envision a special issue composed of analyses of real cases, conceptual pieces, and empirical studies of successful (or intriguing failures) digital transformations of firms and ecosystems.

This special issue should thus foster additional conversation on this important subject among practitioners and academics alike and ideally bring the topic to the forefront of academic and managerial research. Finally, it should provide material for in-class discussion, as well as catalyze further cross-disciplinary study in this new avenue at the intersection of innovation, strategy, and entrepreneurship.

Within the theme of digital transformation, this call is looking specifically for manuscripts that primarily focus on one (or more) of the following topics:

a. changes in value creation and value capturing strategies though digital transformation
b. cooperation and partnerships in digital ecosystems
c. roles of companies and interconnections in the digital value chain
d. changes in the firm's routines, capabilities and business model triggered by digital technologies
e. industry-wide changes (cross-industry connections/convergence, changes in value chain and industry architecture structure, emergence of new ecosystems etc..) following digital technologies

If you are interested in participating in this discussion, we request that you submit a **full draft of your paper no later than December 30th, 2018** to the attention of the Guest Editors using the following address: cmr@santannapisa.it. The paper should reflect the CMR editorial guidelines. Please include a cover letter explaining: (i) the purpose of your study; (ii) the particular digital management practices addressed in your study; (iii) the context in which you examine your question and draw conclusions (i.e., real names of companies need to be cited unless the contribution is intended to be conceptual); (iv) the relevance of your study for practitioners, academic scholars, and CMR readership. You are welcome to contact any or all of the Guest Editors for further information.

Based on your draft, Guest Editors and CMR Editors will select papers that are most likely to result in first-rate, high-impact submissions. Authors of potentially interesting studies will then receive an official invitation to submit **their paper online through the CMR system no later than January 30th, 2019** to be peer reviewed.

Authors whose papers receive a revise and re-submit will be invited to a special conference organized by the Guest Editors. At this conference, authors will be asked to present their revised paper (first revision). The double-blind, peer-review process will be rigorously performed according to CMR tradition and guidelines.

We anticipate that this issue will be **published in *CMR* sometime between February and May of 2020**.

References

Baldwin C.Y., Clark K.B. 2000. *Design Rules*, Vol. 1: The Power of Modularity. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Cennamo C., Santalo J. 2015. How to avoid platform traps. *Sloan Management Review*, vol. 57: 12-17.

Iansiti M., Lakhani K. 2017. Managing our hub economy. *Harvard Business Review*, September-October issue: 84-92.

Lanzolla and Frankort. "The online shadow of offline signals: which sellers get contacted in online B2B marketplaces?.*Academy of Management Journal*, 59.1 (2016): 207-231

Pigni F., Piccoli G., Watson R. 2016. Digital Data Streams: Creating value from the real-time flow of big data. *California Management Review*, vol. 58(3): 5-25.

The Economist. 2014. *Platforms: Something to stand on*

The Economist. 2017. *A digital future: Financial services and the generation game.*

Zittrain J. 2006. The generative Internet. *Harvard Law Review* 119: 1974–2040.