

## How to Prepare Leadership and Change Management in the Digital Area (Case Study at Gojek Indonesia)

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### ABSTRACT

*The expansion of digital technologies has profoundly altered how organizations function, make decisions, and deliver value. As digital transformation becomes a defining characteristic of modern business environments, leaders must be equipped to guide their organizations through continuous change while maintaining stability and effectiveness. This article examines how leadership preparation and structured change management can support organizations in adapting to digital disruption. Using a qualitative synthesis of academic literature and a contextual case study from Gojek Indonesia, the study reviews theories related to digital leadership, organizational readiness, and formal change frameworks. Recent studies highlight that digital leadership and transformation are deeply interlinked, and that leadership behavior strongly shapes organizational agility and innovation capacity. The findings indicate that successful digital transformation depends on leaders' ability to foster adaptable mindsets, encourage collaboration, and support cultures willing to experiment and learn. Beyond technology deployment, digital change requires clear communication, capacity development, and alignment across all levels of the organization. The implications emphasize the need for strategic leadership development, competency strengthening, and deliberate interventions to ensure long-term resilience in the digital era.*

**Keywords:** digital leadership, transformation, change management, organizational culture

### Introduction

Digital innovation has accelerated rapidly, reshaping competition and compelling organizations to reconsider how they operate. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotic automation, advanced analytics, and cloud ecosystems offer opportunities for efficiency but also disrupt conventional workflows and long-standing cultural norms. Although the benefits of digital transformation are widely recognized, many organizations struggle to realize expected outcomes. Recent reviews show that a large proportion of digital initiatives underperform or fail, often due to an underestimation of organizational and human factors rather than purely technical issues (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022).

Leaders are expected to communicate direction effectively, mobilize teams, and support employees as they navigate uncertainty. When these capabilities are lacking, digital initiatives often fall short of their intended goals. Resistance to change, siloed mindsets, and gaps in digital literacy can hinder progress. Empirical studies in education, public sector, and business contexts confirm that digital leadership, change readiness, and culture are critical determinants of successful transformation (Al-Farshuti, 2024; Kumar, 2023; Wijaya, 2025). As a result, preparing leaders who can manage disruption with adaptability and clarity is essential. This article explores the leadership competencies and change management strategies necessary for organizations to transition smoothly into the digital age, supported by a real case from Gojek—one of Indonesia's prominent digital platform companies that has undergone a rapid and large-scale digital growth trajectory.

### **Theoretical Framework And Hypothesis**

Leadership in digital contexts is closely aligned with concepts found in transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes creativity, empowerment, and the ability to inspire change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Digital environments require leaders to extend these abilities by incorporating digital awareness, data-driven decision-making, and comfort with rapid innovation. Scholars refer to this combination as digital leadership, stressing that technical familiarity must be complemented by interpersonal competence (Avolio et al., 2001; Westerman et al., 2014). More recent literature finds that digital-oriented leadership plays a central role in orchestrating organizational transformation by strengthening digital vision, facilitating collaboration, and aligning structures and culture with strategic goals (Darmawan, 2024; Oktapiani, 2025).

Change management frameworks remain highly relevant in supporting digital transformation. Kotter's (1996) Eight-Step Model highlights steps such as establishing urgency, forming guiding coalitions, articulating clear visions, and embedding new practices into the organizational culture. Meanwhile, Lewin's (1947) three-stage model—unfreeze, change, and refreeze—explains the psychological transitions individuals experience when adopting new behaviors. Contemporary empirical research reinforces the view that digital transformation and organizational change are inseparable, and that adaptable, participative approaches to change are needed to handle the pace and ambiguity of digitalization (Kumar, 2023; Hanelt et al., 2021). Studies also argue that digital leadership directly influences business model innovation and the ability of organizations to reconfigure processes and capabilities across the enterprise (Alakaş et al., 2024).

Studies on digital maturity show that organizations succeed when technology adoption is paired with shifts in mindset, culture, and leadership practices (Westerman et al., 2014; Kraus et al., 2022). Based on these theoretical foundations, this article suggests that leaders who build digital competence and apply structured change frameworks are more likely to facilitate sustainable digital transformation. The working proposition is that leadership readiness, digital capability, and proactive change management jointly predict the effectiveness of digital initiatives across different organizational contexts.

## Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative literature review that integrates insights from journal articles, books, and conceptual papers on digital transformation, leadership behavior, and organizational change. Purposive sampling was used to select sources that specifically address leadership competencies and structured change processes relevant to digital contexts. Priority was given to recent empirical and conceptual work published after 2020 to capture the latest developments and post-pandemic dynamics in digital transformation (e.g., Hanelt et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022; Al-Farshuti, 2024; Wijaya, 2025). The selected literature was examined through thematic content analysis to identify recurring ideas, theoretical linkages, and best practices. This research approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between leadership readiness and digital change effectiveness, including both global perspectives and the Indonesian experience through the Gojek case.

## Results And Discussion

The analysis reveals that leadership readiness significantly influences the success of digital transformation. Leaders who demonstrate adaptability, transparent communication, and an openness to innovation tend to guide their organizations more effectively through change. These behaviors align with transformational leadership theory, which describes leaders as influential figures who inspire others to pursue collective goals and embrace new ways of working (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Recent empirical studies confirm that digital leadership capability and organizational agility are important predictors of successful transformation outcomes, especially when combined with supportive cultures and effective knowledge management practices (Alakaş et al., 2024; Darmawan, 2024).

Research on digital transformation and organizational change further shows that change initiatives succeed when they are treated as ongoing, iterative processes rather than one-time projects (Kumar, 2023). Leaders must continuously monitor change readiness, address concerns, and adapt strategies based on feedback. In educational and public sector settings, for instance, effective digital leaders have been found to enhance infrastructure, training, and stakeholder engagement, which in turn accelerates digital adoption (Al-Farshuti, 2024; Wijaya, 2025). These findings echo the core messages of Kotter's and Lewin's frameworks, but highlight the additional complexity created by the speed and scope of digital technologies.

Kotter's change model provides a practical framework for navigating digital transformation. Organizations that establish strong urgency and develop cross-functional coalitions experience more cohesive and well-supported change efforts. By contrast, those that skip early foundational steps often encounter resistance or inconsistent adoption of digital tools. Similarly, Lewin's model underscores the emotional and behavioral preparation required before individuals can fully embrace new technologies and work practices. Contemporary studies emphasize that transformation fatigue, stress, and

uncertainty must be managed through transparent communication, supportive leadership, and realistic pacing of change (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022).

Gojek represents a compelling example of leadership and change management in the digital era. Initially a small call-center-based motorcycle taxi service, Gojek evolved into a multi-service digital platform powered by mobile technology, data analytics, and algorithm-driven matching of drivers, customers, and merchants. Its rapid growth required not only technological innovation but also strong leadership and deliberate change management.

Studies on Gojek highlight how transformational leadership has contributed to fostering an inclusive and collaborative organizational culture that supports innovation and high performance among driver-partners and employees (Asmawati, 2025). Leadership communication at Gojek has also been found to play a crucial role in encouraging cross-functional collaboration and enabling experimentation with new digital services (Dewi, 2025). These elements resonate with transformational leadership principles, where leaders articulate a clear vision, model desired behaviors, and empower individuals to contribute to change.

Key leadership-driven change elements in the Gojek case include:

1. **Establishing Strong Urgency** — Gojek's leadership recognized early that Indonesia's urban mobility and service gaps required scalable digital solutions and positioned the company as a first mover in the on-demand platform space.
2. **Building a Digital-Ready Workforce** — The company invested heavily in engineering talent, product management, and data science capabilities, while continuously refining its platform based on user data.
3. **Cultural Transformation** — Gojek cultivated a culture of experimentation and learning, encouraging teams to test new ideas and iterate quickly, accepting that not all experiments would succeed.
4. **Ecosystem-Based Thinking** — Leadership expanded the platform into payments (GoPay), logistics, food delivery, and financial services, demonstrating strategic agility and the ability to manage interdependent changes across multiple business lines.
5. **Inclusive Change Management** — Gojek provided training, communication, and digital onboarding for driver-partners and merchants, helping them adapt to app-based systems, performance metrics, and new service features (Asmawati, 2025; Dewi, 2025).

This case supports the argument that digital transformation succeeds when leaders combine vision, adaptability, and structured change processes. It illustrates how leadership readiness can drive national-scale digital evolution and offers a concrete benchmark for other organizations seeking to build platform-based or ecosystem-based digital strategies.

### **Conclusion, Implications, Suggestions, And Limitations**

The study concludes that preparing leaders and applying structured change management practices are essential components of successful digital transformation.

Effective leaders must combine digital literacy with strong interpersonal skills, communication clarity, and the ability to motivate employees through periods of uncertainty. They also need to recognize that transformation is a continuous journey, requiring systematic monitoring of change readiness and attention to emerging risks and fatigue.

Organizations are encouraged to invest in leadership development programs that integrate digital competencies, strengthen employees' digital skills, and adopt structured frameworks that support the implementation of change. Practical implications include conducting regular digital readiness assessments, establishing cross-functional change teams, and embedding learning mechanisms into daily work processes. Insights from recent empirical studies suggest that organizations which align strategy, culture, and digital capabilities tend to experience higher levels of innovation and performance (Alakaş et al., 2024; Darmawan, 2024; Wijaya, 2025).

However, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and the absence of empirical fieldwork or quantitative testing. Future research can expand on these findings by examining industry-specific digital transformation cases using mixed-method approaches, comparing different cultural and regulatory contexts, and exploring how small and medium-sized enterprises can adopt digital leadership practices with more limited resources.

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