



a seemingly insurmountable hurdle. As a first task, the change of the central IT would be listed on the digitalisation list. An aggravating factor is the purchase of different IT systems during company acquisitions. These might be sufficient for the current tasks at individual branches, but they cause major problems while depicting comprehensive, generalised processes. Often, isolated, rural company locations are simply the obstacle to a central network due to a weak digital connection.

### Fearing change

Employees from all levels fear new processes, production methods and findings that can be derived from new data. They see it as threats to their jobs or they fear that the loss of expertise that seemingly goes hand in hand with it reduces their value in the company. These fears are a bar to change and pose a threat to successful project implementation. Without the support of know-how carriers, projects with such high change potential can hardly be sensibly realised.

### Further developing IT

For the central IT department, an inevitable development is imminent: from a 'bothersome' cost centre to a fixed part of the value chain. It needs to participate in developing new business models and in contributing to value creation. The IT departments' human resources are, however, usually not geared towards supporting

such complex processes. There is a lack of experts that are qualified to meet the contentual and technical challenges of digitalisation and that comprise economic and technical know-how to enhance old business models or to develop entirely new ones. In summary, it can be said that comprehensive in-house changes, as well as additional know-how, is needed for such projects. At the same time, a competent change management is needed to involve employees in the change and thus, to secure their motivation and commitment.

### The solution?

First of all, a clear strategy with a big picture is needed. A comprehensive solution with a focus on holistic digitalisation seems inappropriate due to the mentioned obstacles. But, even with step-by-step procedure, vision and strategy for digitalisation are indispensable.

The second decisive factor is workforce training and the expansion of project teams through experienced advisors. Many tasks need know-how in areas in which little or no expert knowledge is found within a company. Workforce strengthening, know-how development and partial consultation of experienced specialists thus seem sensible.

The third factor is the identification of lighthouse projects that convince sceptics

within a company and that keep stakeholders happy. The measure that brings about the largest possible benefit and has the best chance of success needs to be identified. When one starts with such projects, one achieves the stakeholders' acceptance of the strategy. This simplifies change management and secures financing and continuation.

The fourth factor is project division into individual projects, so-called loops. Controlling and measuring these is easier and thus, secures the overall project's success. Mistakes become 'lessons learned' and improve the follow-up project as well as market changes can be considered.

### Conclusion

The challenges are diverse and complex. Grown company structures and systems are often difficult to transform into a digital process. The enormous complexity of a 'large digitalisation project' often leads into dead ends, success often comes later and the risk of stakeholders dropping out early is great. Creating a clear digitalisation strategy, identifying exemplary projects, dividing projects into learning loops and strengthening internal and external know-how not only make digitalisation manageable – it turns into a future opportunity for companies. The first step? Starting!

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