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## Digital transformation: Separating the average from the exceptional in 2021

*Article by Shaune Jordaan, CEO Hoorah Digital*

After a year like 2020, “predicting” anything about the future should probably come with a large disclaimer! In business though, this past year certainly separated the leaders from those merely paying lip service to trendy terms like agile, flexible, pivot and - the now cringeworthy “new normal”.

Yes, 2020 was tough. But the optimists among us realised early on that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns should be viewed as the ultimate opportunity to accelerate the transformation to digital. Increasingly, a digital strategy is becoming the only strategy. The impact of the coronavirus has also influenced just about every single one of our expectations around what is digitally possible, with our recent learnings prompting us to think very differently about our strategic planning for 2021 and beyond. And it's very exciting.

### **Data is (still) all the rage**

Data remains a top priority in nearly every type of organisation. Importantly, it's not a trend as much as an element that is fundamental to a future-focused approach to doing business, no matter the industry. The efficient application of relevant data forms the bedrock of efficiency.

Applying the right kind of data, as with technology in general, has the potential to streamline operational efficiencies, and strengthen the quality of decision making. When it comes to creative in marketing, and advertising in particular, data takes the guesswork out of the equation. Rather than speculating about what a client needs or wants, or relying on the creative director's “intuition”, data provides measurable insights into actual customer behaviour and preferences.

As such, data allows for connection and personalisation. It's critical that brands understand that data lies at the heart of online immersion. Despite all the buzz, data is simply information – about your clients, your products, your services ... down to the smallest details. But that information, or data, is super powerful. It is also the resource that will set the average apart from the exceptional in years to come.

Simply, data is information about people. And with people spending more time online than ever before, brands and businesses can leverage this unique opportunity to gather valuable information that will help them connect with their customers in new, relevant and very exciting ways.

## High five

The impact of 5G is set to dramatically change the way we have experienced internet speed to date. Expected to be at least 100 times faster than 4G, the shift can be likened to the difference between a dial-up modem and fibre. Entertainment and communication will evolve to a point where engagement happens in real time. As the roll-out of 5G continues, the boundaries of what's possible with online experiences - from entertainment to shopping, working, learning and more - will be pushed beyond what we can currently imagine.

## Video still victorious

Video killed the radio star a long time ago, but in 2021 it will likely continue obliterating everything in its wake. Online video consumption shows no sign of slowing down as “people become accustomed to having endless high-quality videos on tap”, according to this [report](#). We're likely to see even more brands moving spend to video production and advertising.

We're in the golden age of video and the best is yet to come. Businesses will do well in 2021 to make video a key part of their advertising and marketing strategy.

## Into the future ... and beyond

Business survival in the 2020s and beyond is contingent on truly embracing and adopting a digital-first approach. This starts with elevating the strategic importance of the digital function within an organisation to much more than a nice-to-have. It should, rather, be an integral part of a systemic approach to business growth and performance enhancement.

Business leaders need to stay current with technology, data, creativity and its endless possibilities. Too many are operating in silos, when what is needed is seamless, integrated solutions across not only marketing and advertising channels, but the entire business. We don't know what we don't know, which is why it is crucial for business leaders to commit to staying relevant by prioritising digital transformation. Remember too that digital transformation is not limited to the tools and the technology, but references an holistic approach to business leadership that values innovation, solutions and a future-forward ethos.

Business of the future will have to be fully prepared for the digitally-savvy customer, who expects brand communication to be personal, relevant, interesting and available - where, when and how they want it.

If there's one thing that needs to be a strategic priority in 2021, it's planning to remain relevant in the context of rapidly-changing local and global demands



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Digital Transformation