

# Transforming Telcos:

## Have the Giants Learnt How to Dance?

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# 1 Introduction

## Definitions

Definitions of business transformation vary, but for the purposes of our survey, the term is used to refer to strategic, enterprise-wide change projects that have a profound impact on the organization's capabilities, environment, processes and performance. Correctly planned and implemented, business transformation can have far-reaching implications and benefits for the organization, as well as deliver significant results that are visible on the bottom line. The project types covered by our definition of business transformation are as follows:

- Corporate transactions (such as M&A and divestitures)
- Outsourcing/offshoring
- Strategic changes (such as changes of business model)
- Enterprise-wide technology projects
- Cross-functional improvement programs
- Enterprise-wide organizational restructuring; and
- Value-chain optimization initiatives (such as major supply chain projects)

The need for business transformation in the telecoms sector has never been greater. Faced with ever tougher market conditions, operators are undertaking major transformation projects aimed at creating new revenue streams and radically aligning their cost structures with the competitive environment.

When Capgemini Consulting published its book titled *Transforming the Organisation* in 1995,<sup>1</sup> the key drivers for the transformation of telcos were linked to the post-privatization agenda, the need to build more market-facing organizations, as well as the new regulatory regimes designed to encourage higher levels of competition in this industry. Whereas most of the lessons and frameworks described in the book are still valid today, some of the market factors behind transformation have changed.

Today, one of the most powerful reasons behind transformation projects is the slow down of growth in saturated fixed and mobile markets. Fixed voice revenues in Western Europe, for example, are forecast to decline by an average of 1.3% a year between 2006 and 2010.<sup>2</sup> Fiercer competition, too, is putting operators under increasing pressure to find new sources of profitable growth. Incumbents have been particularly affected by changes in the competitive landscape, with Deutsche Telekom, for example, losing over 1.5m fixed-line subscribers in the first 3 quarters of 2006.<sup>3</sup> Technological shifts, such as the move to IP-based networks, and the emergence of disruptive technologies like WiMax, are additional catalysts for change, which along with convergence, are opening up opportunities for new entrants and threatening established business models.

Business transformation has become an essential strategic response to these market challenges, but change projects are inherently complex to manage. Delivering large-scale transformation involves training and coordinating multiple teams, overcoming employee inertia and managing the resistance that is a common response to change. If these challenges are not managed effectively, there is a risk that the project will be delayed, over budget or fail to achieve its ultimate objectives.

Capgemini Consulting, in collaboration with the Economist Intelligence Unit, decided therefore to conduct a cross-industry survey with the primary aim to assess the critical success factors required to implement transformation projects successfully. We also evaluated the experience of European businesses as they grapple with implementing complex change programs in order to recommend ways in which executives can improve the success rate of transformation initiatives in their organization. We first look at the types of business transformation projects that have become prevalent in the European telecom sector. The report is based on a Capgemini survey of senior executives across Western Europe and a series of in-depth executive interviews.<sup>4</sup>

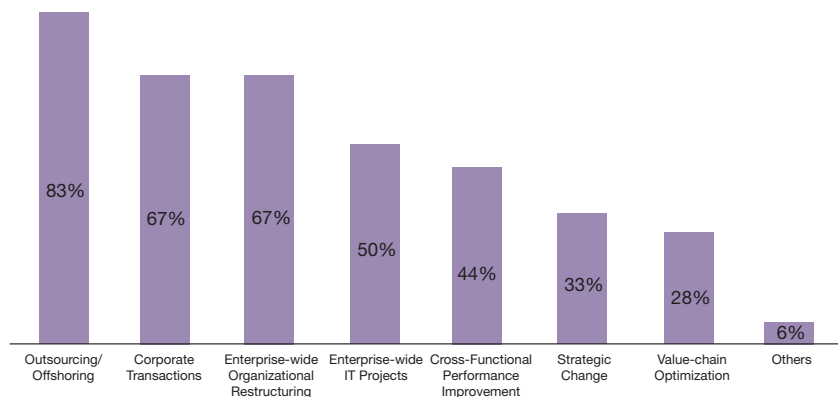
1 Kelly, James and Gouillart, Francis, *Transforming the Organisation*, McGraw Hill inc., 1995. 2 Ovum, "Voice: A Vision of the Future," March 2006. 3 Datamonitor, "DT Profits Tumble as Fixed-Line Losses Continue," November 2006. 4 Capgemini Consulting, Economist Intelligence Unit, "Reinventing the Organization: Trends in Business Transformation," December 2006. The findings used in the article are based on two main strands of research: an online survey of 125 senior executives across 18 industries in Western Europe at businesses with minimum annual revenues of \$500m and direct interviews with 15 senior executives.

## 2 Types of Business Transformation in the European Telecoms Market

The pace of transformation does not appear to have slowed down in the past few years. Business transformation programs have become central to the corporate agenda, and it is now unusual for large companies not to be in the throes of either planning or implementing some form of major change program. Our survey shows that, on average, telecom and technology companies have undertaken seven transformation projects (as characterized in our definition—see page 55) over the past 3 years, and the vast majority predicted that their level of transformative activity would remain the same or increase over the next 3 years.

The most common types of business transformation programs identified in our study were: outsourcing, corporate transactions and organizational restructuring (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Most Common Types of Transformation Projects Undertaken by Telecom and Technology Companies (% of Respondents, 2004–2006)**



Source: Capgemini analysis. Note: Responses = 18.

### Outsourcing/Offshoring

The survey highlighted that most companies had undertaken outsourcing projects in the last couple of years. Many telco business transformations in the 1990s were focused on cost savings through staff reduction and business process reengineering. However, today, telco CEOs are looking at transforming their cost structures by using outsourcing as a way to decompose and simplify their value chain as well as make a large part of their operational costs variable. The most obvious areas where operators are looking at the cost-saving potential of outsourcing are non-core and back-office services such as IT maintenance, HR or finance to enable the organization to focus on a smaller set of key business issues. In late 2006, for example, Vodafone finalized an outsourcing agreement as part of its strategic efficiency program, which will result in most of the operator's IT staff transferring to subcontractors, to deliver annual cost savings of some £170m within 3 to 5 years.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Financial Times*, "Vodafone Cost Cuts Accelerate in Europe," November 2006.

With the increased focus on radically changing their cost structure, telcos are now also outsourcing parts of their operations that were considered untouchable only a few years ago. For instance, some European mobile operators are outsourcing their core network operations and management to equipment vendors. This enables telcos to not only lower costs but also leverage the skills of their suppliers, who are able to deploy the latest technologies as well as hire and train the requisite resources. In February 2007, for example, KPN's German mobile operator E-Plus signed a contract worth an estimated €1.5bn for Alcatel-Lucent to take over the operation and maintenance of E-Plus's network.<sup>6</sup> Other operators to have gone down this route include Telfort, T-Mobile and Orange in the Netherlands.

In their quest for designing much more flexible cost structures, telcos are now also embracing offshoring as an integral part of their transformation. Whereas this phenomenon has been prevalent for many years in the US, European companies have been slower to react. This is radically changing today with large telcos establishing development or contact centers in India, Eastern Europe and North Africa depending on both labor arbitrage and language requirements. British Telecom's \$1bn outsourcing deal with Tech Mahindra in India is a good example of this trend, where the latter will provide business process management and network-centric IT services to BT Global as well as its clients.<sup>7</sup>

### Corporate Transactions

The second most frequent type of transformation projects are corporate transactions such as mergers & acquisitions or divestitures. M&A has become a compelling strategic tool for operators keen to find further growth in the context of saturated domestic markets. European M&A activity in telecom and media increased in 2006, with 745 deals of over €5m, up 22% from 2005.<sup>8</sup>

Markets have begun to consolidate across the region with operators acquiring companies to boost their subscriber base and/or reduce the number of competitors. Telefónica expanded its European footprint into the UK and Germany by adding 25 million subscribers when it acquired O2 for £17bn in 2005. In these cases, post-merger integration obviously puts a high demand on organizational change with synergy realization and restructuring becoming large parts of the transformation agenda.

In the constant quest to boost top-line growth, European operators are also building up their presence in fast-growing emerging markets. In 2006 Vodafone, for example, spent around £3.3bn on stakes in Turkey, Africa, Egypt and Eastern Europe,<sup>9</sup> and acquired India's Hutchison Essar for \$11bn in 2007. In addition to the cultural challenges of such expansion, this growing trend for globalization is driving a new set of transformational needs for telcos as it requires them to adapt their organizations, harmonize business practices and leverage economies of scale.

Moreover, with the large amount of investment money available on the financial markets, private equity funds are now playing a larger role in the telecom space, adding to the pressure to change for some senior executives in telecoms.

### Organizational Restructuring

Enterprise-wide organizational restructuring is another form of business transformation that is increasingly commonplace in telecom companies. This involves designing new organizational models as well as operational restructuring to increase customer integration, improve efficiency and reduce costs. In the past few years most operators have used a combination of both to improve their operations.

6 Datamonitor, "E-Plus Deal Highlights Network Outsourcing Boom," March 2007. 7 Computer Business Review Online, "Tech Mahindra Signs \$1bn BT Deal," 22 December 2006. 8 Ion Equity, "2006 European TMT M&A Sector Review," January 2007. 9 Independent, "City Worried Vodafone May Overpay for Indian Foothold," December 2006.

As a business transformation tool, organization design has to be used sparingly as, if not properly implemented, it often leads to dysfunctional behaviors, turning the focus of the company inwards to the detriment of its customers. Successful companies that are using organizational design as part of their transformation know that the “boxes and wires” are only an approximation of the way the organization will develop and operate in the future. Organizational design is the framework within which goals, measures, rewards and teams will develop organically to solve client problems in an effective manner. Today, the integration of fixed and mobile operations and the globalization of businesses through acquisitions are two examples of drivers of organizational redesign for telecom companies.

The second aspect of organizational restructuring has to do with business simplification. Key examples are automation of processes such as service activation, and self service e-care. Generally these have important social and workforce implications. Incumbent operators, in particular, have embarked on major restructuring in response to the increased level of competition and the need to radically adjust their cost structures to the reality of market pricing today. For example, Deutsche Telekom is reportedly aiming to reduce its workforce by 32,000 employees between 2005 and 2008, mainly from its fixed-line division,<sup>10</sup> while France Telecom plans to reduce its headcount by 17,000 through natural attrition by 2009.<sup>11</sup> Telefónica, KPN, TeliaSonera and Swisscom have all initiated similar projects in the last 2 years in an effort to restructure their organizations and become leaner.

In summary, business transformation has become a key element in how telecom operators are seeking cost efficiencies as well as revenue growth. Change programs can be risky to implement, however, and in the next section we identify the critical success factors required for transformation programs to succeed.

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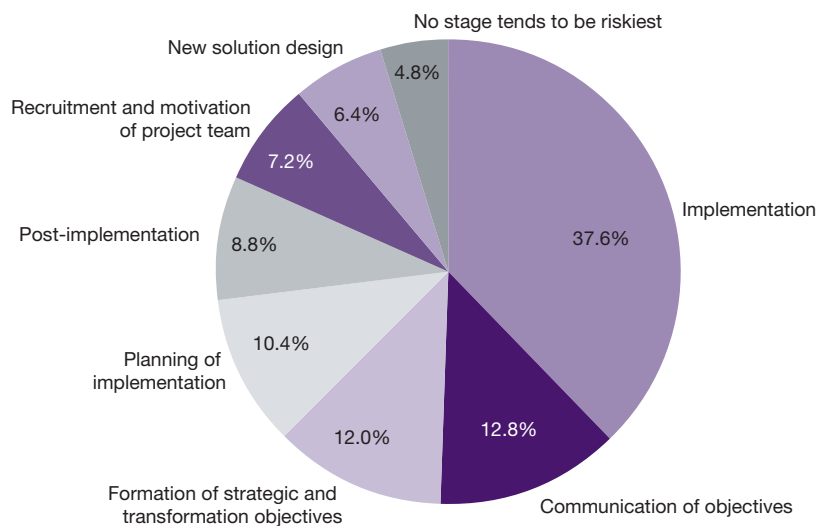
<sup>10</sup> Global Insight, “Deutsche Telekom Denies Further Cuts,” March 2007. <sup>11</sup> Agence France Presse, “European Telecoms Giants Grapple with New World,” 14 February 2007.

# 3 Critical Success Factors for Business Transformation Projects

“On average, telecom and technology companies have undertaken seven transformation projects over the past 3 years.”

Every transformation project consists of three key stages: identification of a need for change; formulation of the project’s objectives; and implementation of the project plan. The most challenging phase of a transformation project is the implementation stage with survey respondents regarding it as by far the riskiest phase (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Stages of a Business Transformation Project Where the Risks of Failure are High (% of Respondents)**



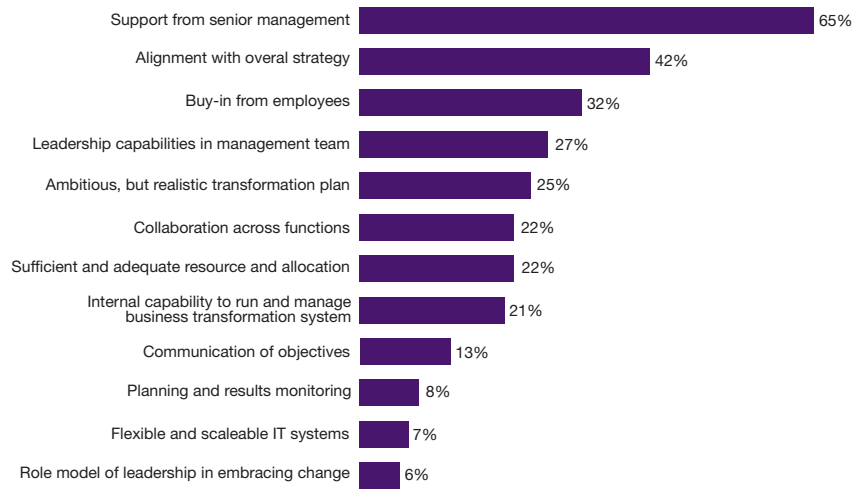
Source: Capgemini analysis.

When our survey respondents were asked to identify the key factors that will ensure success in business transformation projects, three clear leaders emerged: “support from senior management;” “alignment with overall strategy” and “buy-in from employees” (see Figure 3). In this section we examine the critical success factors that determine whether a transformation project will be implemented successfully as well as looking at how respondents measured the success of their transformation programs.

### Support from Senior Management

Support from senior management was judged to be by far the most important factor behind successful transformation projects. And for long-term success, the second most important was judged to be “having executives in the company who champion business transformation.” The need for having the entire senior management team aligned and actively supporting the transformation objectives was seen as critical by the majority of respondents.

**Figure 3: Principal Factors That Contribute to Successful Business Transformation Projects (% of Respondents)**



Source: Capgemini analysis.

In terms of leadership capabilities, our interviewees agree that there is a difference between leadership skills and management skills. Management has traditionally been a question of monitoring and supervising staff. Leadership, on the other hand, is about inspiring employees to reach a positive outcome, rather than pushing them away from a negative one. The European Leadership Centre, a consortium of academic experts on leadership, suggests that the most effective leaders today are those that lead “from the back.” leaders who actively empower their staff to take risks, set ambitious targets, provide them with the tools to achieve those targets and let them get on with the job.

### **Alignment with Overall Strategy**

One of the most important success factors in business transformation is to clearly demonstrate the strategic purpose of the change demanded from the organization. This can only be achieved through continuously referring to the goals and the future state of the organization.

CEOs and their management teams must therefore set a vision and a direction for the business that provides a context, a rationale and a clear explanation for the work that lies ahead. This vision must be reiterated continuously up and down the organization and throughout the life of the program.

The sense of vision is often lost during the implementation stages of transformation projects as the day-to-day problems become overwhelming. In addition, the project teams tasked to implement the change are often functional experts who do not have the skills or do not spend enough time “selling” the transformation vision to lower tier staff in the organization.

The importance of communicating a meaningful vision to all levels of the organization is paramount. Successful transformations have clearly defined communication streams of work dedicated to this activity with strong involvement from senior management for the duration of the program.

### **Buy-in from Employees**

Successful implementation of large-scale change depends on the commitment of all the employees affected by the project and its absence can jeopardize the whole exercise. Indeed, our survey found that the second most common reason for



project failure was “non-acceptance or non-adoption by employees.” A key underlying reason for resistance among all employees, including managers, is a lack of awareness of the business need for change. Effective communication of goals will ensure that everyone understands why transformation is necessary and ultimately beneficial.

Employee buy-in can be challenging to achieve because resistance is a natural human response to change. Staff resistance can result in missed deadlines and substandard implementation of the project’s initiatives. These problems can consequently increase the project’s costs and reduce its benefits, or even lead to the abandonment of the entire program. A large European operator, for example, recently faced a major setback in the implementation of its enterprise-wide restructuring plan when staff representatives voted against transferring a large number of employees to a new unit.

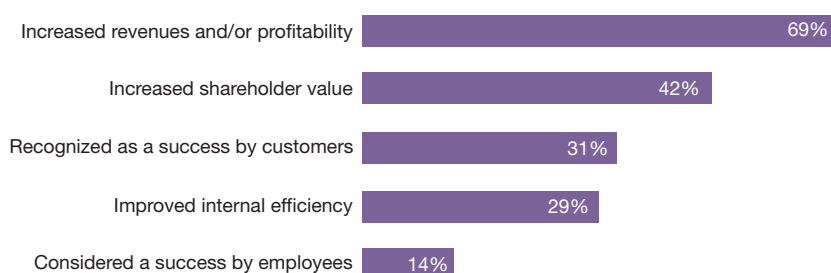
Resistance to change was also an issue for the CEO of a European incumbent who wanted to implement a large-scale cost reduction plan. The CEO had struggled to win support for the project from his business unit managers. Capgemini helped the CEO to bring about a turnaround in attitude through the use of collaborative workshops. By getting all the key decision makers in the same room, looking at the gloomy macro picture together and providing an open forum for debate, the workshops resulted in a significant change of mindset. Thanks to the commitment of the managers, the resulting transformation plan delivered significant financial benefits ahead of schedule.

Targeted training and incentive schemes can also help to win employee commitment. As part of its NeXT transformation plan, France Telecom reinforced its staff incentive program and increased its employee training efforts by 25%.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, British Telecom awarded eligible employees shares with an overall value of around £22 million in recognition of their contribution to the company’s transformation and growth.<sup>13</sup>

### Measures of Success

It is critical to use appropriate indicators to measure the extent to which a transformation project is successful because these measurements can have a major influence on the way in which a project is implemented. The three success measures ranked most important by our respondents were “increased revenues/profitability;” “increased shareholder value;” and “recognized as a success by customers” (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Key Measures of Success for Business Transformation Projects (% of Respondents)**



Source: Capgemini analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Company press release, June 2005.

Increased profit is the ultimate goal of any business transformation project, and it is easy to see how it can be applied as a success criterion to projects such as major outsourcing initiatives of enterprise-wide technology upgrades, which should generate immediate, quantifiable efficiencies upon completion.

However, financial objectives are not always sufficient in themselves. The bottom-line impact of, say, strategic changes or mergers and acquisitions can be difficult to calculate, especially in the short term. Furthermore, a transformation plan with the primary ambition of increasing shareholder value is unlikely to resonate with lower tier employees who may not even own shares and so will not see themselves featured in the vision. For these reasons, financial goals should not be the only criteria by which a project's performance is judged.

Rather than focusing only on financial numbers, a balanced scorecard approach can help to take into account the impact on customers and employees when evaluating the performance of a transformation project. Vodafone UK, for example, partnered with Capgemini to improve the customer experience and back-office efficiency of its Enterprise Business Unit.<sup>14</sup> The project was judged a success not only because it generated quantified financial benefits, but also because it delivered tangible improvements in the unit's employee and customer satisfaction scores.

#### **Tips for Successful Business Transformation**

- Remember that business transformation is not a one-off exercise—it is essential to continuously scan the external business environment and assess the need for business transformation on an ongoing basis.
- Ensure that everyone in the organization understands the objectives of business transformation and what it means for them. It is the role of the chief executive to provide the necessary context and rationale.
- Remember that implementation is the riskiest stage of a business transformation project, so it is important to direct attention and energy here—not just to the setting of objectives. Executives who initiate business transformation projects should not expect to take a back seat during implementation. They should continue to play an active role for the duration of the project.
- When determining the success of business transformation, it is important to look beyond the financials and consider the impact on shareholders, employees and, above all, customers.
- Ensure that you have strong communicators on a business transformation team who can promote the project and motivate employees. It is not enough to select only “functional experts.”
- Promote a culture in the organization that eschews bureaucratic processes in favor of more agile decision-making and create an environment in which employees feel empowered to take initiative and share knowledge.
- Ensure that the organization has a flexible structure that means projects can be scaled up or scaled down as the need dictates. This requires the development of people who can manage change, are good at multi-tasking and can be rotated from one project to another without losing focus.

13 HRM Guide, “£22m Share Bonus for BT Staff,” 21 August 2006. 14 Vodafone UK & Capgemini UK, Project 21, 2006.

## 4 Mastering the Art of Implementation: Are We Making Progress?

Reflecting on over 10 years of business transformation experience, it is clear to us that telecom companies have made significant progress in both designing large transformation programs and understanding the factors that are critical to their success. From our research, however, two main areas require continuous attention to enable telcos to successfully achieve the next phases of transformation: the need to embed pervasive leadership into transformation program implementation and the need to enhance transformation skills within the DNA of the organization.

### **Need for Pervasive Leadership**

As in so many areas of business, it is far easier to plan a transformation project than to make it work. A common shortcoming of many companies is that they spend too long setting objectives and not enough time and resources on the implementation stage. Consider, for example, one operator who spent nearly a year planning for its transformation through multiple strategic studies and senior executive retreats before it felt ready to launch into the implementation proper. At that stage the business, carried by an improving market, started to perform better and the CEO became reluctant to commit to more than a handful of people to support the implementation of his transformation plan (“We must not disrupt the day-to-day operations,” “We have a business to run,” etc.). The result was predictable: The people tasked to support the transformation could not maintain the momentum and perform their day jobs so the program faded away within 6 months.

If they are to make business transformation successful, however, senior executives will need to see their role as broader than just setting strategy. Making accurate diagnoses, identifying root causes of problems, tracking progress on a regular basis, designing corrective actions and ensuring everyone shares a commitment to the project are all examples of what CEOs do to implement successful transformations. As a CFO of a major broadcaster concluded, “When CEOs shunt transformation to others for implementation and deployment, that is often where such projects go wrong.”

### **Enhancing Transformation Skills**

Ultimately, the success of a transformation project depends on the flexibility of the people involved. Companies need people with diverse skillsets who are good at multi-tasking and can be moved between business units rapidly and frequently with no loss of focus. This type of flexibility results in quicker, deeper implementation of transformation projects with less resistance to change.

Companies need to proactively enhance the transformation skills of their employees by introducing training, and incentive and promotion structures geared to “project-oriented” people who can work effectively through change. British Telecom, for example, launched a major training program for its 7,000 internal IT staff as part of its transformation from a traditional telecoms service provider to a supplier of converged ICT services.<sup>15</sup> The operator introduced 90-day cycles for projects to introduce greater flexibility and increase employees’ exposure to change. Staff are regularly taken off project work and put “on the bench,” where

<sup>15</sup> IT Training, “BT Exact – Brave New World,” July 2006.

they receive further training between assignments. The result is a workforce that has the skills to adapt swiftly to evolving business requirements.

Our survey found that some companies keep their transformational skills fresh by moving managers from one role to another. In practical terms, this could mean a horizontal move for someone senior who has been in the same role for a long time and may therefore be against change, or that a manager with no project-leadership experience could be given his or her own pilot project. Several of our telecom and technology clients have been asking Capgemini to structure formal “Transformation Universities” designed to instill the basic mechanics and methods of transformation in both their senior executives as well as their key operational managers.

Too often the belief is that transformation and change skills can only be learned at the coal face. Whereas fast learners who are able to deal with uncertainty can rapidly go up the transformation learning curve, the truth is that many managers will drown under the complexity of transformation and need to be trained and supported with the proper tools and methodology for coping with change under uncertainty. Spreading the good practices of transformation can indeed be conducive to alleviating the resistance to organizational change.

So, have the giants learned how to dance? The answer is not totally clear; while 86% of the respondents in our survey agreed that business transformation has become a central way of working, only 30% claimed that their organization was equipped to excel at transformation! Although business transformation has become central to the way in which telecom companies conduct their operations, it is rarely a natural capability for the individuals who are tasked with planning and implementing these projects. Business transformation programs are inherently complex, and the fear of change can create a powerful state of inertia, deterring executives from making robust decisions and creating a culture of mistrust among those employees who are affected by the change. As a result, successful business transformation requires strong leadership, clearly stated objectives that are understood by everyone involved or impacted by the project and a strong focus on the implementation stage.

As European telecoms companies continue to grapple with the challenges of slowing revenue growth, increasing competition, and convergence, the need for business transformation is likely to remain high on the corporate agenda. While change will remain a constant challenge in the years ahead, the mechanics of business transformation are likely to evolve, with a move away from individual projects that have a beginning and end towards an environment of constant change.

### About the Telecom, Media & Entertainment (TME) Lab

Telecom & Media Insights is published by the TME Strategy Lab, a global network of strategy consultants dedicated to generating content-rich insights into the telecom and media industries. The Lab conducts in-depth strategic research and analysis to generate leading-edge points of view on crucial industry topics that stimulate new ideas and help drive innovation for its clients.

Lab activities include:

- Research points of views on emerging industry trends: The Lab develops indepth strategic research reports on emerging industry issues that are relatively under-explored, but have significant implications for players. The Lab conducts these studies independently or in collaboration with external partners.
- Monitor key developments in the telecom and media market: The Lab closely monitors key developments relating to selected industry topical issues. This research is updated quarterly and generates data and insight-rich reports on the selected industry topics.
- Bespoke research and analysis: The Lab delivers highly value-added strategic research and analysis projects to clients, addressing crucial issues relating to their business.

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Capgemini, one of the world's foremost providers of Consulting, Technology and Outsourcing services, has a unique way of working with its clients, called the Collaborative Business Experience.

Backed by over three decades of industry and service experience, the Collaborative Business Experience is designed to help our clients achieve better, faster, more sustainable results through seamless access to our network of world-leading technology partners and

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