

This IDC Analyst Connection explores how low-code platforms can help employees in the new normal ramp up quickly on digital transformation, enhancing agility and contributing to their long-term success.

Low-Code Platforms: Driving New Possibilities for Digital Workforce Mobilization

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Questions posed by: PwC

Answers by: Deepan Pathy, Senior Research Manager, Future of Work, IDC Asia/Pacific

Introduction

Organizations post-pandemic have realized the importance of a personalized work environment in helping employees achieve their best at work. IDC's research indicates that employees in organizations with a strong employee experience (EX) are five times more engaged in achieving organizational goals. However, 43% of Asia/Pacific (AP) organizations and 50% of organizations in China have yet to implement initiatives to improve EX and engagement. This shows that many organizations in AP understand the importance of EX and its contribution to business growth, but more needs to be done to strengthen positive EX. Low-code platform's digital architecture, which enables app development, deployment and operation, has the potential to empower employees—enhancing an organization's EX along the way—while meeting organizational digital transformation (DX) objectives.

Low-code platforms promise positive digital transformation outcomes due to features such as on-premise deployment, and easy API integration with external systems and databases. The following questions were posed by PwC to Deepan Pathy, Senior Research Manager, Future of Work at IDC Asia/Pacific, on behalf of organizations exploring low-code as an EX-enhancer and DX-enabler.

Q1. Can hybrid working environments influence agility?

As organizations look to accelerate their DX initiatives, traditional work models are no longer sufficiently nimble, adaptive or scalable.

An inflexible work environment, which can include legacy application platforms, seriously impedes work productivity and employee experience. The challenges of supporting remote and hybrid work environments, plus in-office requirements around workers' safety and compliance, have highlighted the value of agile teams. Low-code platforms support organizations' increasing reliance on software competency, which is necessary for digital agility. They mitigate the shortage of skilled developers and increasing pressure on developers to automate IT. These platforms allow organizations to develop enterprise-grade applications faster, scale applications to meet changed requirements, keep pace with application development cycles and deliver value to the business quickly.

Q2. Are legacy applications holding organizations back from achieving business agility?

Two foundational modalities—the development of new applications and modernizing legacy applications—define the DX efforts of an organization (from an application development perspective). As organizations plan their digitization strategies, legacy applications can act as a headwind that blunts their response to the changing needs of the business.

The pandemic has accentuated the need for digital solutions that can help create better and faster software that accommodates new business demands. These challenges highlight the need to restructure legacy applications to create a simplified and agile architecture while facilitating rapid application development. Legacy applications are generally considered outdated, are incompatible with the latest modern operating systems and typically have been added in a fragmented fashion over the years, thereby creating multiple disconnected systems.

As low-code platforms democratize software development, organizations can easily build new capabilities, including those that do not exist in core applications.

Visual workflow process modeling, combined with modern application development, helps organizations integrate modern development functionalities to legacy applications with minimum disruption, thereby eliminating or significantly reducing technical debt. Apart from highlighting the need to modernize IT, low-code platforms also address the strategic needs of an organization, such as strengthening digital infrastructure, upskilling the digital mindset of employees and, above all, creating scalable and trusted solutions with tools that simplify the development process without complete reliance on IT.

"Organizations need plans that enable them to rapidly adapt as opposed to merely respond. Low-code platforms can be a potential game changer when it comes to business agility."

Q3. How can a low-code platform help to mobilize the digital workforce?

With low-code platforms, organizations need not worry about the technicalities and nuances of software development as they allow non-technical users to increase their contribution to DX initiatives. These platforms that digitally connect workspaces not only allow employees to collaborate via different device types, but also enable them to quickly create apps and task-specific, device-agnostic digital tools for themselves and their teams. There is an increasing demand to accelerate application development and data integration from multiple sources, locations and device types to reduce development time. This in turn has accentuated the need for localized development—to empower local teams and technology to create value that matches business needs.

Low code-platforms also have the potential to level the playing field, when it comes to the diverse markets in AP, by making development simpler, accommodating different program flows based on regional aspects through language support and adapting to local regulatory and compliance requirements. This enables organizations to decentralize their business teams and help their workforce ramp up application development capabilities. According to the *IDC COVID-19 Impact on IT Spending Survey (August 2020)*, around 80% of organizations in AP have developed three apps or more in-house to address needs, driven by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, about 35% of healthcare organizations in AP excluding Japan are expected to leverage low-code/no-code tools in 25-50% of projects in the next 18 months while 17% anticipate using low-code/no-code tools in more than 50% of their projects in the same time frame. *

Organizations with a strong implementation strategy are the ones which would benefit most from a low-code strategy. Liaising with a third-party vendor/service provider can help organizations avoid common pitfalls and follow some best approaches during the application development process such as decommissioning from legacy platforms, obtaining real-time data insights for reporting and using a standardized simple user interface, to ease the training of users and management of business workflows.

Q4. Will low-code technology accelerate digital projects beyond the technical workforce?

Low-code development platforms can offer significant value by enabling a broader universe of resources, empowering non-IT citizen developers to innovate and accelerate process workflows by allowing them to work on **easy-to-use** development tools. While low-code development tools could be used by professional developers for increased agility and speed, the non-technical workforce/citizen developers can bring their insight to the data strategy by clarifying how new uses of existing data can support improved activities at specific points in the process. Business users can also accelerate requirement-gathering by identifying day-to-day opportunities to adopt data fields that could accelerate operational processing and strengthen knowledge-sharing. Low-code tools deliver a self-sufficiency model for business users by minimizing dependency on IT to deliver complex projects. Solutions result in immediate delivery since business users develop and make application changes based on their requirements.

The benefits offered by low-code platforms include simple point-and-click/drag-and-drop configurations and pre-integrated solutions with an organization's data sources. Cloud-based services enable instant deployment of applications to any device type. Easy data visualization with ready-to-use components allows for quick customization, reduced application development and upkeep expenses, faster time-to-market (better agility) and, above all, improves collaboration between IT and business teams.

Low-code platforms can greatly enhance business value and growth if organizations plan their low-code implementation strategy around four key attributes: Enabling agility, maximizing resource efficiency, securing data storage and transmission, and enhanced team collaboration.

About the Analyst



Deepan Pathy, Senior Research Manager, Future of Work

Deepan Pathy is a Senior Research Manager based in IDC India who focuses on developing thought leadership content and reports for the three dimensions of the IDC Future of Work (FoW) framework that includes space, culture and augmentation. He supports custom advisory and go-to-market engagements for FoW, augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR), and mobility projects.

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PwC's Digital Maker, the low-code development platform

PwC is the first professional services firm to create an enterprise-grade low-code development platform, Digital Maker. PwC foresaw the massive potential of low-code as a solution to accelerate digital innovation and future of business language. PwC's Digital Maker empowers companies to improve development agility, business adaptability and encourage citizen-led innovations. digitalstore.pwccn.com.cn Co-create your digital enterprise with PwC's agile applications solutions today.

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