AGILEP●INT

Digital Transformation
with the "Safe-Choice" Low-Code Platform

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1. What Is Digital Transformation?

Digital transformation is the evolution of technology usage beyond merely enhancing and supporting traditional work patterns and processes to actually enabling—even catalyzing—innovative, new work patterns and hybrid, cross-functional processes. Digital transformation can be thought of as the final leg of a journey that begins with

- developing a certain level of digital competence within an organization,

- implementing systems that support and enforce status-quo methods,

- and, finally, transcending the status quo by enabling employees to drive innovation throughout an entire ecosystem via tools that empower them to redefine their roles and reinvent on a day to-day basis a company's market leadership.

2. What Makes Digital Transformation Difficult?

To understand the difficulties associated with digital transformation, it's best to consider it within the context of current IT practices. Most organizations have implemented off-the-shelf systems—line-of-business, engagement, data storage, etc.—and trained staff members to use them as vehicles for accomplishing their work-related tasks.
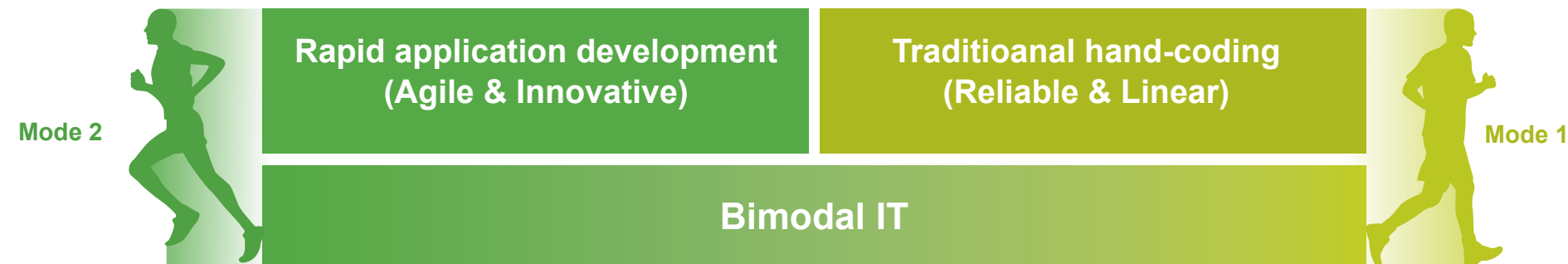
To go a step beyond, IT departments employ software engineers to hand code deeper integrations between systems in an effort to streamline existing processes for departmental groups. But, traditionally speaking, it's all been about enforcing processes that were instituted long before any current employee can recall.

For the past couple of decades, or so, that's been the status quo—improving existing patterns and processes with technology. But it's this improvement mechanism that actually creates the chasm between today's status quo and a future where a company's employees become the purveyors of innovation. Put another way, the sheer time and resources necessary to get a new idea built and deployed hobbles a company's ability to transcend institutionally-ingrained old ways, preventing it from ever arriving at a place where its own employees can sustain an evolving, new normal based on a steady stream of ideas, conceived of and implemented in near real time. For any organization that wants to gain or maintain market leadership today, this concept of bottom-up/middle-out/top-down, continuous innovation is no longer optional.
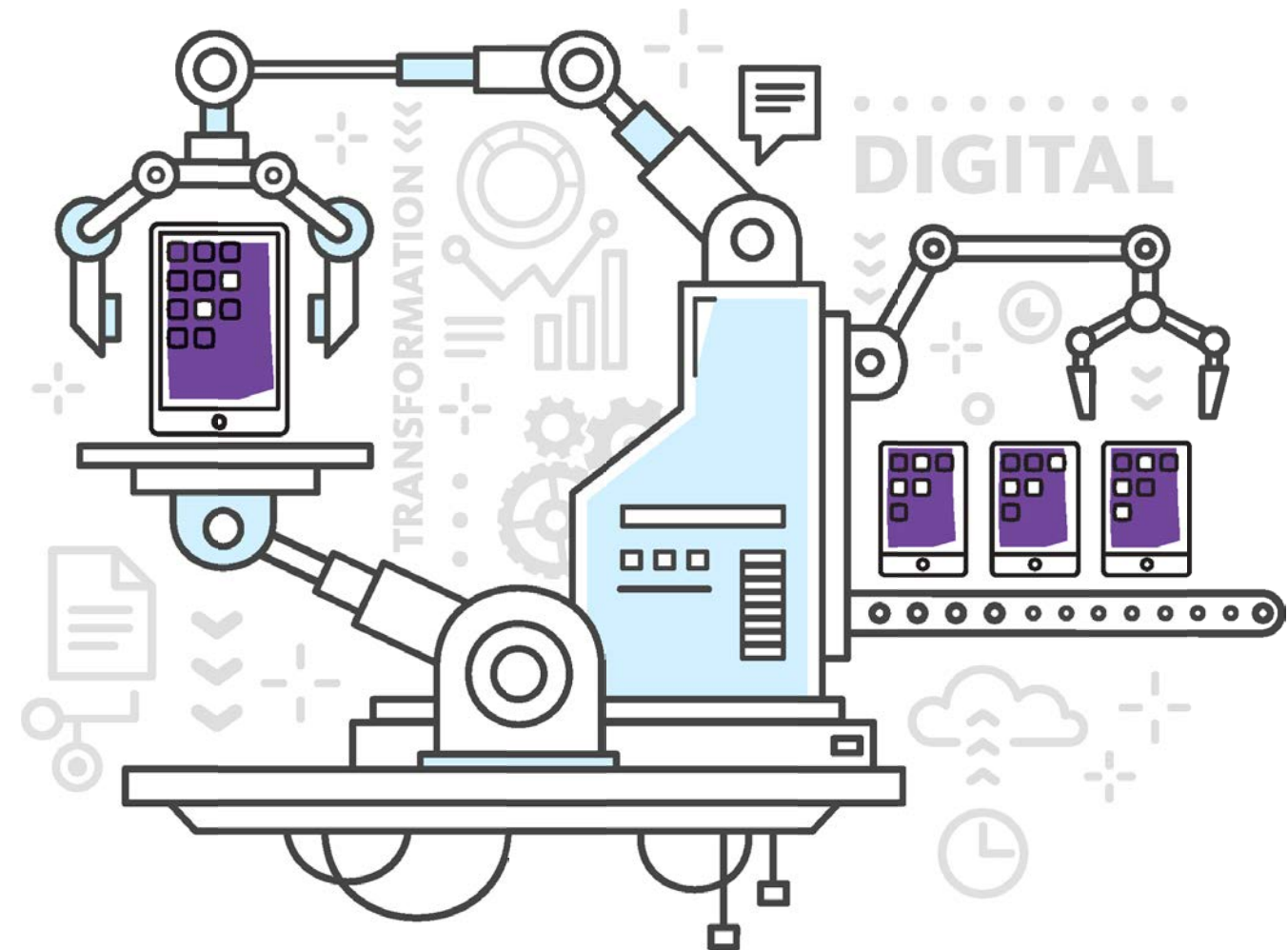
3. A Technological Backbone for Digital Transformation

Mode 2	Rapid application development (Agile & Innovative)	Traditioanal hand-coding (Reliable & Linear)	Mode 1
	Bimodal IT		

Over the past few years, Gartner has been pushing the concept of bi-modal IT, which, in essence, is maintaining traditional hand-coding projects (mode 1) while simultaneously embracing a new kind of rapid application development (mode 2).

In contrast to Mode 1, Mode 2 development is non-hierarchical, highly adaptive to context, innovative, and potentially disruptive. Mode 2 emphasizes speed, agility and short development cycles. With Mode 2, over-planning is the enemy, failing has to be okay, and learning happens along the way. Gartner's answer to mode 2 initiatives is what it calls "high-productivity" development platforms.

- **High-Productivity = Low-Code**

  A term for these platforms that has gained traction lately is "low-code," which was coined by Forrester Research analysts Clay Richardson and John Rymer. **And it's these low-code platforms which carry the implicit promise of catalyzing digital transformation on a broad scale.**

- **The Gist of Low-Code**

  Based on declarative, point-and-click composition environments, low-code platforms dramatically decrease the time it takes to build new apps (up to ten times faster than agile methodologies) while expanding exponentially the pool of qualified app developers to include everyone from novice engineers and hackers to business analysts and even power users. It's these realities that enable, low-code platforms to drive digital transformation, empowering everyone, including the rank-and-file, to become sources of innovation and, in the process, reinvent the company's market leadership over and over again.

4. The Dangers of Low-Code Adoption

In a January, 2016 Forrester Vendor Landscape report on the low-code space, Richardson and Rymer referred to the "fractured, fertile terrain of low-code application platforms."

At the time of the report, Forrester was tracking more than forty low-code vendors, and, at that point, none had really emerged as market leaders.

Today, a half dozen or so vendors (including AgilePoint) have begun to distance themselves from the pack, but the chance of choosing the wrong platform and vendor still looms large. And given the stakes for most organizations, choosing the wrong low-code platform just can't happen.

5. A Safe Low-Code Alternative for Today and Beyond

Job one, then, is to make the safe choice, decide on a platform from a market-tested vendor that will provide all the necessary functionality needed today, and which won't run out of headroom in the future, no matter how big your digital vision might be. Any of the big five low-code platforms is a pretty safe choice for today's needs. But, in consideration of an uncertain, future IT landscape, it could be argued that the really safe choice is AgilePoint NX, which includes architectural characteristics that will enable it to stand the test of time; today's investment in AgilePoint NX won't have to be scrapped a few years down the road because of unforeseen technical or business requirements.

• Responsive Software Assets

Virtually all low-code platforms utilize a declarative approach to composing application models. But for most, the model is a static rendition of an app that must be converted to low-level code, a process which "bakes" in features and functionality.

In contrast, AgilePoint NX utilizes a true, model-driven architecture, meaning that as the model is composed, underlying code is modified on the fly. This approach results in apps that have responsive characteristics, meaning they can actually adapt at run time to changing conditions.

This capability may seem esoteric, now, but with digital business on the horizon and the IoT becoming reality, the need for these responsive applications that can self adapt to constantly changing technical and business requirements will be a virtual necessity a few years down the road. And AgilePoint NX may be the only platform that provides it.

- **aPaaS**

  AgilePoint is more than just a low-code platform (designed for on-premises usage), and it's more than just a low-code PaaS (designed to be consumed as a cloud service). Rather, AgilePoint NX is a low-code Application Platform as a Service (aPaas), enabling you to build and deploy multi-tenant apps on a SaaS subscription basis. Even if you need a low-code platform for internal usage, the concept of establishing departments as tenants is powerful. Firewalls exist between groups, facilitating a high level of security, and rights and privileges management can be extended to individual tenants.

  In fact, AgilePoint's aPaaS architecture is one of its major distinguishing features, and a primary reason why forward looking management teams consider it to be the only truly safe choice.

- **Scalability**

  AgilePoint NX utilizes a stateless, standalone process engine. Rather than hold a running process in memory throughout execution—which could last weeks, months, or longer—AgilePoint NX loads the process only when it's needed and then jettisons it just a few milliseconds later. This feature dramatically limits CPU usage and makes NX almost infinitely scalable.

  Furthermore, AgilePoint NX allows you to establish a single, enterprise-accessible codebase and then distribute data storage throughout your various departments. The alternative—replicating the codebase for each data storage instance—is antithetical to scalability.

- **Reliability**

  Because AgilePoint NX holds processes in memory for only a few milliseconds at a time, the chances of a system outage affecting long-running processes is almost non-existent. In other words, you'll never end up with a bunch of orphaned sub-processes because a server crashed.
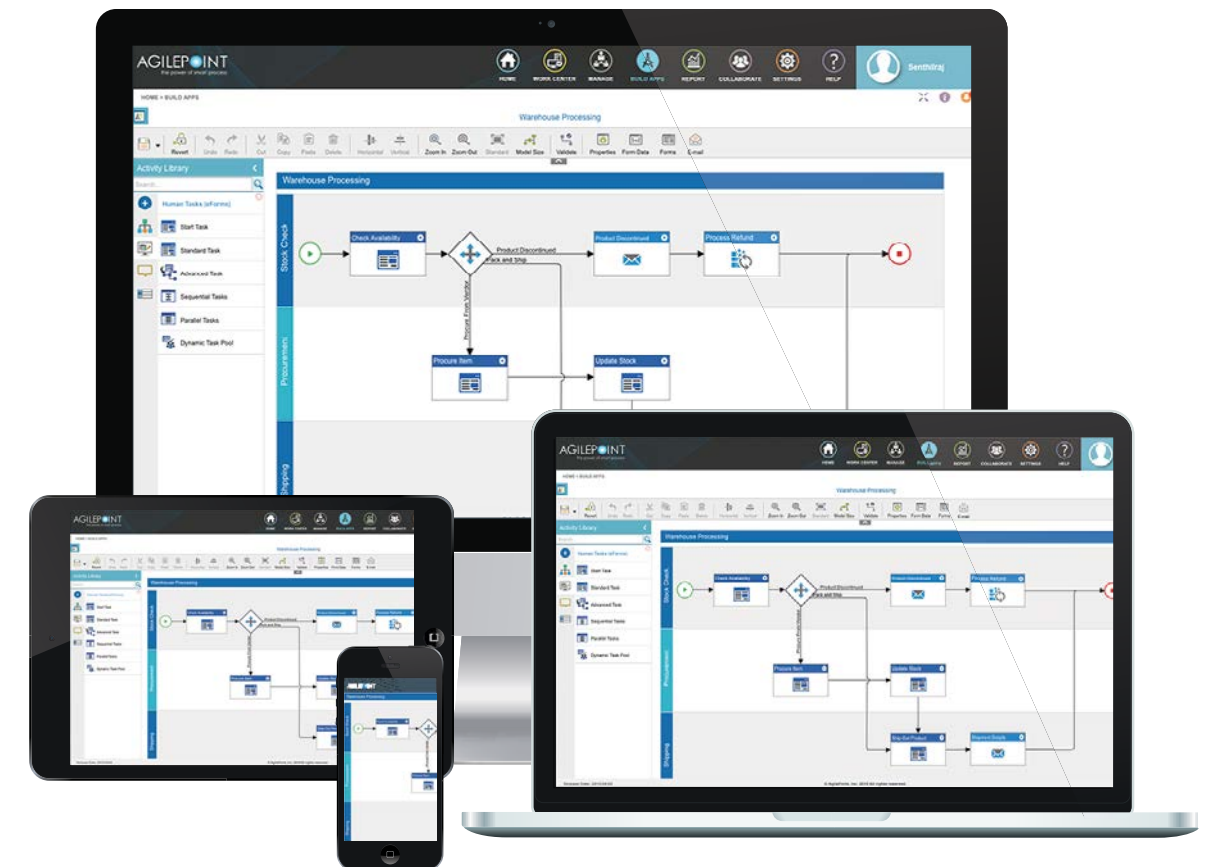
• Extensibility

Low-code platforms get their name from the fact that you can build lots of types of sophisticated applications without ever writing a line of code. And while AgilePoint NX has a deep library of connectors/adaptors and pre-defined activities, there's always the chance that you may need to integrate with an unsupported system or create additional activities. When such circumstances arise, AgilePoint NX allows you to extend functionality via industry standard technologies, such as Microsoft's .NET framework and HTML5/JavaScript.

• BPM roots

For any organization that wants a low-code platform capable of handling complex, interdepartmental, long-running processes, choosing a platform with a strong BPM heritage is pretty important. AgilePoint NX, a multi-year occupant of Gartner's BPMS/iBPMS Magic Quadrants, has such a heritage. Going far beyond workflow development, AgilePoint NX supports process modeling, automation, deployment, and refinement. Likewise, AgilePoint NX enables mid-execution process modifications and updates and includes a cadre of system diagnostic capabilities.

Unlike other elite BPMs, however, AgilePoint NX utilizes a decidedly low-code approach to licensing, providing a wide range of options that allow you to get in with low upfront investment and little long-term commitment. Put another way, you don't have to pay for value until you actually receive it. That's the safe way to embark on a low-code initiative.

• Market Longevity

To ensure that you don't buy from a here-today, gone-tomorrow vendor, it's best to choose one with a proven track record. AgilePoint was founded more than thirteen years ago as a BPM-suite vendor and has more than 1,400 installations around the globe, many of which are now converting to the state-of-the-art AgilePoint NX because of its responsive characteristics; convenient, cloud-based architecture, that can be deployed on premises, in a private cloud, or consumed as a service; and flexible licensing model.

6. Summary

Business conditions seem to evolve by the day. New technologies, new requirements, new, nimble competitors architected on the latest and greatest IT frameworks—keeping up is a daunting challenge. The traditional method of throwing software engineers at IT problems yields enormous technical debt in the form of mountains of spaghetti code written in any number of different languages that has to be maintained forevermore. It's the very definition of unviable in today's IT environment.

Digital transformation is the answer, low-code platforms are the vehicle, and AgilePoint NX is the safe choice, enabling you to replace all of that legacy code with responsive, easy-to-build-and-understand application models and, in the process, transform anyone and everyone in your organization into potential innovators.
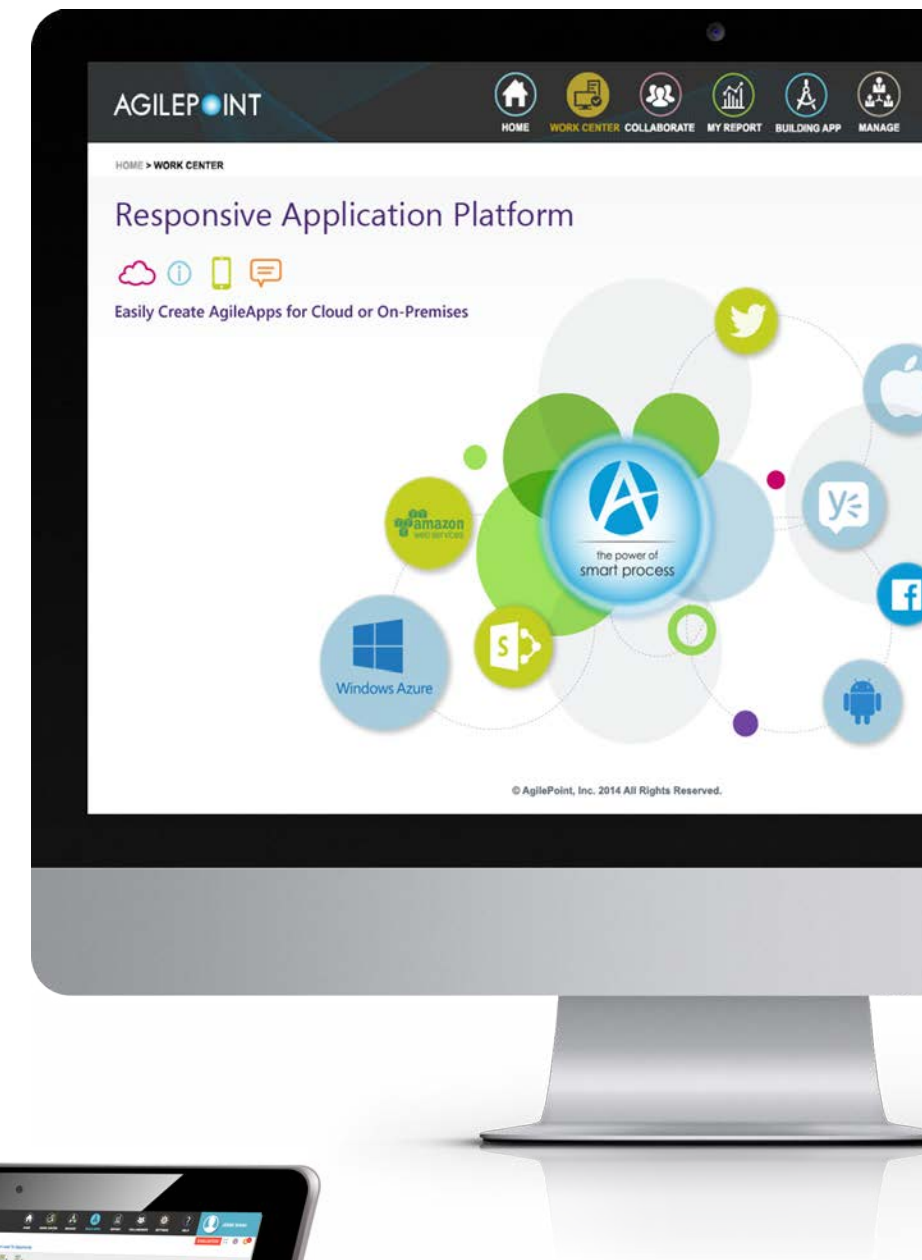
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To learn more about **AgilePoint NX, the Responsive Application Platform,** visit www.agilepoint.com.

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