



Research Article

Governing Digital Transformation: An Integrated Framework for Project Management, Scheduling, and Change Leadership

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Abstract

This article proposes an integrated framework for managing complex digital transformation projects within large multinational corporations. It critiques siloed approaches and argues that success hinges on the confluence of robust project governance, adaptive scheduling, and structured change management. This conceptual paper employs a single, in-depth case study of the Hilti Group's migration from SAP to Salesforce. The analysis is structured around a tripartite framework evaluating the project through the lenses of (1) the PRINCE2 methodology for project governance, (2) Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM) for scheduling, and (3) the ADKAR model for change management. The analysis demonstrates that digital transformation projects are not merely technical upgrades but strategic organisational changes. The recommended integrated framework ensures strategic alignment through PRINCE2's business case focus, mitigates resource-based risks via CCPM's buffering system, and actively manages human resistance using ADKAR's staged approach to change readiness. This paper synthesises three established but often separate project management domains into a single, cohesive framework. It provides project managers and organisational leaders with a practical, holistic model for navigating the technical, logistical, and human complexities inherent in major digital transformation initiatives, thereby enhancing the probability of project success and strategic benefit realisation.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Project Governance, PRINCE2, Critical Chain Scheduling, Change Management, ADKAR Model, Hilti Case Study.

Introduction

The contemporary business landscape is characterised by rapid digitalisation, forcing multinational corporations to undertake large-scale digital transformation projects to maintain competitive advantage. These initiatives, however, are notoriously fraught with high failure rates, often attributed to oversimplified approaches that treat them as mere IT projects rather than complex organisational change processes (Bock et al., 2022; Ika & Pinto, 2022). This article addresses this gap by arguing that the effective management of digital transformation requires an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses governance, scheduling, and human factors. We illustrate this argument through a critical case analysis of the Hilti Group's migration from an SAP system to the cloud-based Salesforce CRM, a initiative impacting over 20,000 employees globally (Tienken,



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2024). The remainder of this article is structured as follows. First, we present the case background. Second, we develop our integrated framework, analysing the Hilti case through its three core components: (1) the PRINCE2 methodology for project governance, (2) Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM) for scheduling under uncertainty, and (3) the ADKAR model for leading change. Finally, we discuss the implications of this framework for theory and practice, concluding that a multi-faceted approach is essential for successful digital transformation.

Case Background: Hilti's Salesforce Transformation

The Hilti Group, a leading global provider of construction tools and services, embarked on a significant digital transformation journey by implementing Salesforce CRM to replace its existing SAP system. This project was a strategic move to enhance customer relationship management, improve operational efficiency, and foster innovation across its operations in over 120 countries (Bömelburg & Gassmann, 2024). The scale of the project—requiring the re-skilling of IT, marketing, and sales teams across 23 countries—positions it as a quintessential example of the challenges inherent in large-scale digital transformation.

An Integrated Management Framework

Project Governance: The PRINCE2 Methodology

For a project of Hilti's complexity, a structured governance framework is paramount. We propose the PRINCE2 methodology as an ideal fit, contrary to more rigid models like Waterfall. PRINCE2's principles of continued business justification, defined roles and responsibilities, and managed stages provide the necessary structure without excessive bureaucracy (Erkol, 2023; Varajão et al., 2024).

Its focus on the three pillars of governance is crucial:

- **Structure:** Establishes clear roles (e.g., Project Board, Manager, Champion vs. Sponsor) and processes for decision-making.
- **People:** Ensures stakeholder engagement and defines the necessary competencies for the project team.
- **Information:** Mandates regular reporting and communication plans to maintain alignment and manage risks (Aguión et al., 2022; Giuliadori et al., 2023).

This governance structure ensures the project remains aligned with Hilti's strategic objectives of enhancing global customer relations and operational efficiency.

Advanced Scheduling: Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM)

Traditional scheduling techniques like the Critical Path Method (CPM) are insufficient for digital transformations due to their neglect of resource constraints and uncertainty. For Hilti's project, which involves thousands of employees across diverse regions, Critical Chain Project Management (CCPM) is a superior choice (Olson, 2024; Mayouf et al., 2024).

CCPM extends CPM by:

- Incorporating resource dependencies into the schedule.

- Using buffers (project, feeding, resource) to protect the project completion date from inevitable delays.
- Reducing student syndrome and Parkinson's Law by focusing on aggressive but possible task durations.

This approach provides the flexibility and risk mitigation needed to handle the uncertainties of migrating to a new enterprise system across a global organisation.

Leading Change: The ADKAR Model

Technical success is futile without user adoption. Hilti's shift to Salesforce represents a profound change in processes and culture. The ADKAR Model (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement) provides a structured, people-centric framework for guiding this change (Isiche & Mandere, 2024; Fortney, 2024).

Application for Hilti would involve:

- **Awareness:** Communicating the *why* behind the move to Salesforce from top leadership.
- **Desire:** Creating "change champions" to build buy-in and answer "What's in it for me?".
- **Knowledge & Ability:** Providing phased, role-specific training and sandbox environments to build competence and confidence.
- **Reinforcement:** Embedding the use of Salesforce into performance metrics and celebrating successes to make the change stick.

This model directly addresses the two key cultural challenges identified: resistance to change and the need for enhanced collaboration (Guerra et al., 2020; Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Discussion and Implications

The Hilti case demonstrates that digital transformation cannot be managed through a single-lens approach. Isolating technical implementation from human factors and strategic governance is a recipe for failure. Our integrated framework explicitly connects these elements:

- PRINCE2 ensures the project is strategically justified and well-controlled.
- CCPM ensures it is logistically feasible and resilient to disruptions.
- ADKAR ensures it is embraced and adopted by the people it affects.

For academics, this framework synthesises distinct streams of project management literature into a holistic model. For practitioners, it provides a actionable checklist for leaders overseeing complex transformations. It moves the conversation beyond *what* tool to implement to *how* to manage the entire ecosystem of change effectively.

Conclusion

This article argues that managing digital transformation is a multidimensional challenge that requires an integrated approach. Using the Hilti Group's Salesforce implementation as a case context, we proposed a framework combining the governance strengths of PRINCE2, the logistical realism of CCPM, and the human-centric focus of the ADKAR model. While based on a single case, the framework offers a template for other organisations embarking on similar journeys. Future research should empirically test this framework across multiple cases to further refine and validate its components.

Ultimately, success in the digital age depends not just on choosing the right technology, but on managing its implementation with equal parts strategy, logistics, and empathy.

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