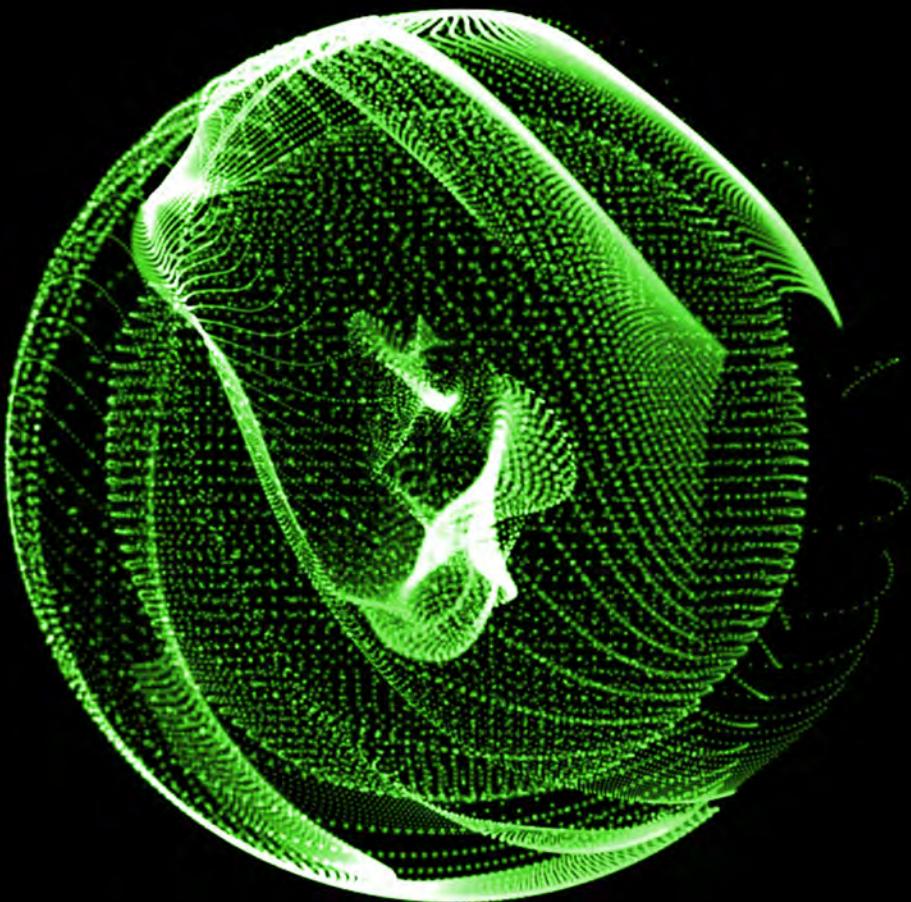


Deloitte.



Platform-as-a-product

**Shifting to a product-centric mindset for
platform technology**

Without applying the same product-centric approach to platforms, organizations can face significant delays in providing the capabilities needed for best-in-class product experiences.



Introduction

Organizations today are increasingly embracing product-centric thinking—customer-centric innovation delivering value through iterative releases. However, this mindset often overlooks a critical component: the platform upon which these products are built.

Shifting consumer expectations are pressuring executives within legacy organizations to modernize their IT and digital operating models, to allow their organizations to launch market-differentiating products quickly amid challenges from market disrupters. In fact, organizations are expected to spend more than \$675 billion in 2024 on cloud platforms worldwide.¹ With such substantial investments in technology, these organizations aim to derive significant value from the products and solutions built on these platforms. Specifically, among the surveyed organizations, 56% of respondents anticipate that their cloud investments will lead to faster innovation and quicker time to market.²

To maximize the value from these investments, it is crucial for organizations to adopt a product mindset to manage their platforms. This approach involves treating platforms not just as technical assets but as products, with a strategic focus on continuous improvement and long-term sustainability. By shifting from traditional IT project management, which often focuses on sequential projects that deliver limited enterprise value, to a product-oriented approach, organizations can better meet evolving user needs and reduce technical debt. This shift not only enhances user satisfaction but can also help ensure that substantial technology investments translate into significant business value. This includes increased efficiency, faster time to market, and a stronger competitive edge.

To break down how organizations should apply a product mindset, it is imperative that we explore two main topics:

- 1** Define a platform and its relationships to digital products
- 2** Define what product mindset means and how these principles apply to managing platforms



What is a platform?

A platform can be defined as a dynamic ecosystem that provides the essential infrastructure for developing, deploying, and operating digital products. Unlike stand-alone digital products, platforms span both hardware and software layers, creating a versatile foundation that supports a myriad of applications and services.

Platforms

Platforms serve as the backbone of an organization's digital strategy, extending horizontally across multiple lines of business and product teams. This horizontal integration allows platforms to streamline processes and facilitate interactions across the enterprise, making them indispensable in the digital landscape.

A platform is a foundation of self-service application programming interfaces, tools, services, knowledge, and support, which are arranged as a compelling internal product.

Potential business benefits: A platform can standardize business processes—making workflows more efficient and transparent—so companies can better manage internal functions and satisfy their customers. Companies can more efficiently develop and launch products, serve their customers, and create intelligence to improve operations and inform business and product strategy.

Types of platforms

The term platform can be applied across a wide variety of tools and technologies such as:

CRM

Support customer relationship management
(e.g., Salesforce)

Human Capital Management

Manage HR functions (e.g., Workday)

ERP

Integrate management information across organizations
(e.g., SAP)

Experience Cloud

Enhance customer experience and engagement
(e.g., Adobe Experience Cloud)

IT Service Management

Provide suites of applications for internal/external ticketing and service needs

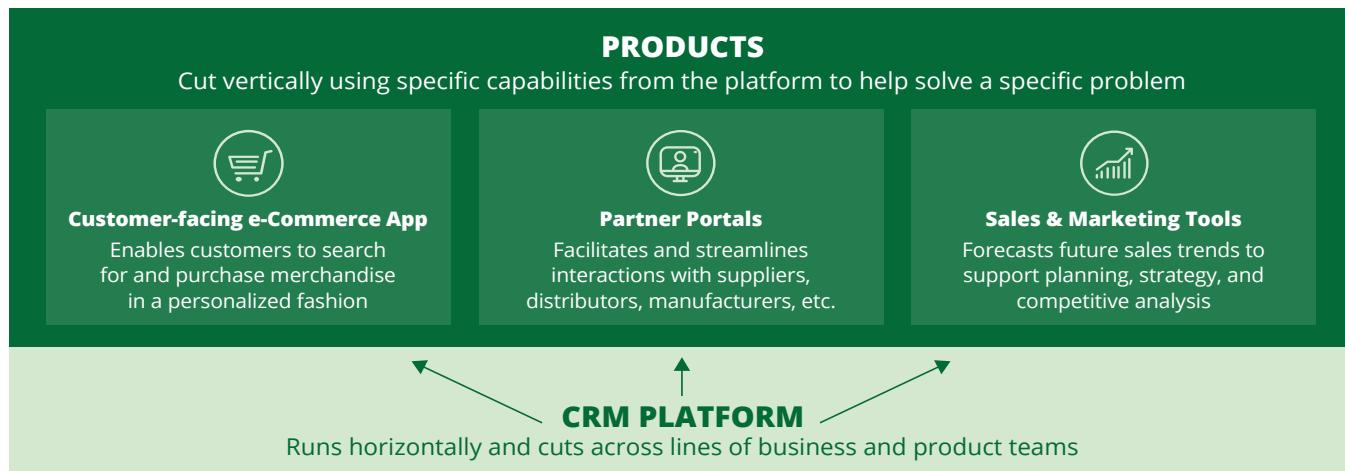




Products

Products cut vertically through these platforms, leveraging specific capabilities to solve targeted problems or enable unique functionalities. This approach allows products to address specific needs effectively, utilizing the robust infrastructure provided by the platform.

Figure 1: Illustrative platform supporting multiple applications/products



Source: Deloitte internal analysis

Digital products tend to get all the attention as they provide a distinct set of capabilities and drive tangible value for the business and its users. However, most digital products rely on some form of platform capabilities to provide this end-user experience and will put capacity demands on the team managing the platform. This capacity demand, if not managed correctly, can lead organizations into missing feature launch windows and becoming slow to address changing user needs.

Figure 2: Illustrative Adobe Experience Platform supporting multiple applications, services, and products

CLOUD	Adobe Experience Cloud																			
CATEGORIES	Content and commerce		Data insights and audiences				Customer journeys				Marketing workflow									
PRODUCTS	Adobe Experience Manager	Adobe Commerce	Adobe Analytics	Adobe Customer Journey Analytics	Adobe Real-Time CDP	Adobe Audience Manager	Adobe Target	Adobe Campaign	Adobe Journey Optimizer	Adobe Marketo Engage	Adobe Workfront									
SERVICES	Identity		Profile		Segmentation		Ingestion		Query		AI/ML	Privacy & Governance	Destination							
PLATFORM	Adobe Experience Platform																			
	Data Sensei Content																			

Source: Adobe

Adobe Experience Platform is an example of a platform that serves as the foundation of Adobe Experience Cloud and is provided as a customer experience management platform with real-time customer profiles, continuous intelligence, and an open and extensible architecture that enables delivering personalized digital experiences.

For organizations to fully capitalize on their platform investments and drive significant return on investment, platforms need to deliver in the following important areas:

Four key areas to maximize platform investments

Answer the business need: The end user (internal developer, marketer, sales rep, etc.) must be involved in requirement definition and enable self-service capabilities where applicable to foster autonomy and efficiency.

Support strategic priorities: Enhancements to the platform should be prioritized by items that are going to help support the organization's broader strategic priorities. Platform teams need to step outside the order-taker mindset and understand how the platform can deliver value to the organization and its users' investment (ROI).

Provide ease of use: Platform team support and knowledge should be accessible, and the platform should be designed to be intuitive to reduce tech debt. Example: Adobe Experience Cloud offers a single gateway to companies in which they can integrate their businesses to measure, improve, and customize the user journey, which may improve overall efficiency.

Help get the job done: Platforms should create an easy option for getting the job done, giving compelling results that incentivize focusing on users' needs. Effortless integration with other platforms helps organizations save time and money.

Defining product mindset

Organizations are increasingly adopting a product mindset to continuously develop, refine, and launch digital products that not only delight users but also drive desired outcomes to the business. To deliver leading user experiences, it's crucial that teams maintain a strong focus on the end users—the individuals who will consume features or the capabilities being delivered. This approach requires a near-obsessive focus on end users and outcomes, and platform teams should be mirroring the attention given to digital products. But what implications does this have for your platform's implementation or operation? How can you implement a platform that consistently supports key use cases? How do you engage business users and enhance platform adoption?

Deloitte leverages a flexible framework to deliver and operate exceptional products, employing product-centric thinking to shift the focus of IT organizations from milestones to value delivered, and from outputs to outcomes. To learn more about this framework, please refer to [our paper](#) that discusses our four pillars of product management in more detail.

Figure 3: Deloitte's four pillars of product management framework



Source: Deloitte internal analysis

Activating product models

For decades, organizations have used traditional IT project management approaches to implement and operate platforms. Teams often fall into the trap of measuring production, rather than value. This results in a “one and done” implementation—with IT delivering a “Ferrari” without the user manual or driving lessons to teach businesses how to get it out of the driveway. This approach also creates a recipe for technical debt, as there is no one actively managing, iterating, and evolving the platform over time.

Shifting from managing a platform as a set of technical capabilities to an iterative product requires viewing the platform as an evolving product that provides continuous value to its users. This switch enables focus on the delivery of real business outcomes—faster time to market, increased revenue, and more innovation.

Focus on six key factors to activate product models:

1 Shared vision

Establish shared vision between IT and business stakeholders early and reestablish often to align teams from the top down. This should include aligned objectives, key results, and key performance indicators (KPIs) across teams.

2 User-centric design

Implement user-centric design practices to foster a deep understanding of your internal user (developers, SREs, marketers) requirements.

- Understand the needs, pain points, and workflows of your platform’s users—whether they’re internal teams, external partners, or end customers. Regard internal users as the “customers who will consume platform services.”
- Apply design-thinking principles and assign product managers to your platform to ensure a deep understanding of user requirements.
- Create and iterate on internal user journeys to create accessible, self-serve platform interactions where possible.

Embedding a product-centric mindset to software engineering requires the IT organization to take a systematic approach. Instate techniques such as continuous collaboration, customer journey mapping, data analytics, and customer insight.

3 Change management

Incorporate change management processes into your implementation to increase platform adoption. Depending on organizational structure and need, this might include:

- Early user acceptance testing and feedback to build a sense of ownership.





4

Intake process

Create clear, consistent intake processes comprising cross-functional leadership teams to prioritize and communicate work effectively.

Leverage shared vision and KPIs to prioritize intake requests based on value metrics and client priorities.

5

Portfolio governance process

Define your portfolio taxonomy and establish a clear understanding of organizational decision-making at each layer. Products that rely on similar back-end platforms should not operate in silos to avoid ballooning tech debt and creating downstream bugs.

- Product teams: Product teams should focus on product-specific enhancements and identify fixes that require changes within only their product. It is crucial for organizations to recognize how these products interact with one another to ensure streamlined and smooth portfolio operations. For example, before adding a new field to a product screen, ensure that the corresponding messages interfacing with downstream systems and back-end data stores can handle the new field. Assess how any changes might affect the platform, dependent products, or external interfaces, and ensure adequate testing to avoid unexpected issues and downtime.

Product managers, product architects, and the platform leadership team should meet monthly or biweekly, depending on release frequency, work complexity, ongoing changes, and business criticality. During these meetings, they should:

- Review and discuss the short-, medium-, and long-term platform roadmaps.
- Examine related product dependencies.
- Consider end-user feedback.
- Identify and address problem areas that need resolution.

6

Adopting a platform strategy for growth

Organizations that deploy open platforms, such as Adobe Experience Platform, to enhance customer capabilities and offer more modern experiences will accelerate their growth initiatives. This approach creates strategic advantages in the digital economy.

Benefits of platform-as-a-product

A central repository: Makes it easy and efficient to manage, find, share, and archive content, assets, and customer data on a single platform.

Self-service: Allows people to find the content and data they need, when they need it.

Strengthen relationships: Enables teams to collaborate more effectively, and facilitate distribution to vendors, customers, and partners through web-based portals.

Saves time: An average of 10% to 30% of creative time is spent looking for assets. Platform streamlines workflows so creative teams can be more productive.

Repurpose data: Makes it easy to find and repurpose your existing content/assets, rather than incurring the high (financial and opportunity) cost of re-creating lost files or repurchasing missing images.

Saves space: A central repository eliminates data duplication and frees email systems from large file transfers.

Brand consistency: Helps ensure consistent branding by giving sales, partners, clients, and vendors easy access to approved files.

Reduces risk: Facilitates and enables tracking and enforcement of proper rights management, eliminating costly legal landmines for improper use.

Competitive edge: Asset management decisions and actions are informed by analytics and insights derived from enterprise data that supports the entire customer journey.



Client success story no. 1

A leader in the vacation industry

A travel and leisure industry client with a global fleet of ships sailing to 1,000 destinations worldwide was looking to consolidate two brands on a single platform to reduce costs and improve the multi-brand's strategic goals, including the build-out of a universal component library, which would enable it to enter new international markets efficiently. Deloitte Digital reframed the business case by leveraging our experience in the Travel & Hospitality sector and Adobe Experience Cloud. The new, modernized Adobe Experience Manager solution now enables multi-brand organizations to manage and publish digital content from a single platform-as-a-product. The Deloitte team delivered a best-in-class customer experience with a strong underlying foundation for the future within 10 months. This event represented the successful launch of a technology platform, on-time and on-budget.

Results:

50%
improved performance

\$450K
per year reduction in TCO

50%
reduction in time to market

Client success story no. 2

Large US retailer

A major US retailer's existing content management system (CMS) was difficult to use, not integrated with other tools, and composed of mostly flattened images. This created inefficiencies and duplicative processes that hindered efforts to support personalization at scale. Deloitte was brought in to define the functional and technical requirements for the CMS and then implement Adobe Experience Manager, part of Adobe Experience Cloud. Deloitte collaborated with the client and built out a custom library of feature-rich user interface components, enabling the personalization of targeted content messaging. The site is live, and further pages are being rolled out across brands on Adobe Experience Platform.

Results:

130+
tactics for personalization,
from 3 tactics limited to homepage

~2 days
content update cycle time,
reduced from 4 weeks

What will you build?

Dramatic shifts in technologies and business expectations drive increasingly rapid changes in how platforms need to execute and support business needs. As a result, incorporating core attributes of a product mindset into large-scale platform implementations and IT operating models has become increasingly important.

Ready to take your platform to the next level? Deloitte has worked with platform teams across industries at every stage of the maturity scale. Our professionals can help you define your vision, generate use cases, and guide you through new ways of working.

Endnotes

1. Gartner, "Gartner forecasts worldwide public cloud end-user spending to surpass \$675 billion in 2024," press release, May 20, 2024.
2. Deloitte, "Future of Cloud survey: Industry cloud trends," accessed August 2024.



Get in touch



Anthony Jardim
Principal
Deloitte Consulting LLP
ajardim@deloitte.com



Tim Juravich
Principal, Design-Led
Products & Engineering
Deloitte Consulting LLP
tjuravich@deloitte.com



Vincent Attonito
Manager
Deloitte Consulting LLP
vattonito@deloitte.com



Samer Yadav
Specialist Master
Deloitte Consulting LLP
sameyadav@deloitte.com

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Madeline Menard, Sydney Nagorsky, Tim Nicholes, and Edith Martinez for their contributions to this article.

Deloitte.

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee ("DTTL"), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the "Deloitte" name in the United States and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.