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## Abstract

Learn how Unilever uses IT technical opportunities to innovate. Starting with business strategy and deriving the IT strategy, this case gives concrete examples for successful innovations. The innovations enabled by IT technology are leveraged for business growth. The tangible examples are related to financial and supply chain processes. Unilever's successful leadership has been confirmed in its recent ranking as No. 4 in Gartner's supply chain ranking 2014 (Gartner, 2014). In all examples the Digital Capability Framework (DCF) concept has been used to identify and structure innovation and transformation action areas required for successful implementations.



# UNILEVER CASE STUDY

## Implementing the Real-Time, Digital Enterprise to Unlock Value and Enable Business Growth

**How often are companies stuck in endless IT projects with no perceived value for value chain stakeholders ? Learn with six concrete examples how Unilever has embraced the digital enterprise concept to bring real value to stakeholders.**

by Marc Béchet, Thomas Lütke Siestrup, Axel Uhl, and Henk-Jan Hulshof

Every day more than twenty-five percent of the world's population use at least one Unilever product from a total of four hundred brands including some of the world's most recognizable like Dove, Axe/Lynx, Lux/Radox, Becel/Flora, Knorr, Lipton, Magnum, Surf, and Ben & Jerry's (see figure 1). With its global reach, Unilever is committed to supporting sustainability and providing consumers around the world with the products they need to look good, feel good, and get more out of life. Fourteen brands each with sales over EUR one billion.

### Serving Consumers Every Day

The Unilever value chain is a key competitive capability, which ultimately allows consumers to enjoy the Unilever brands. There are two billion consumers who use a Unilever product each day, in virtually every country in the world. The consumers are served by ten million stores and 150,000 Unilever customers. Each day more than 10,000 trucks deliver a range of 60,000 products from 440 distribution centers and 250 Unilever factories. In turn, 200,000 quality materials are sourced from 160,000 suppliers

#### Personal Care : 36% of sales



#### Foods: 27% of sales



#### Refreshment: 19% of sales



#### Home Care: 18% of sales



Fig. 1: Strong brands and balanced portfolio

14 "Billion Euro" brands

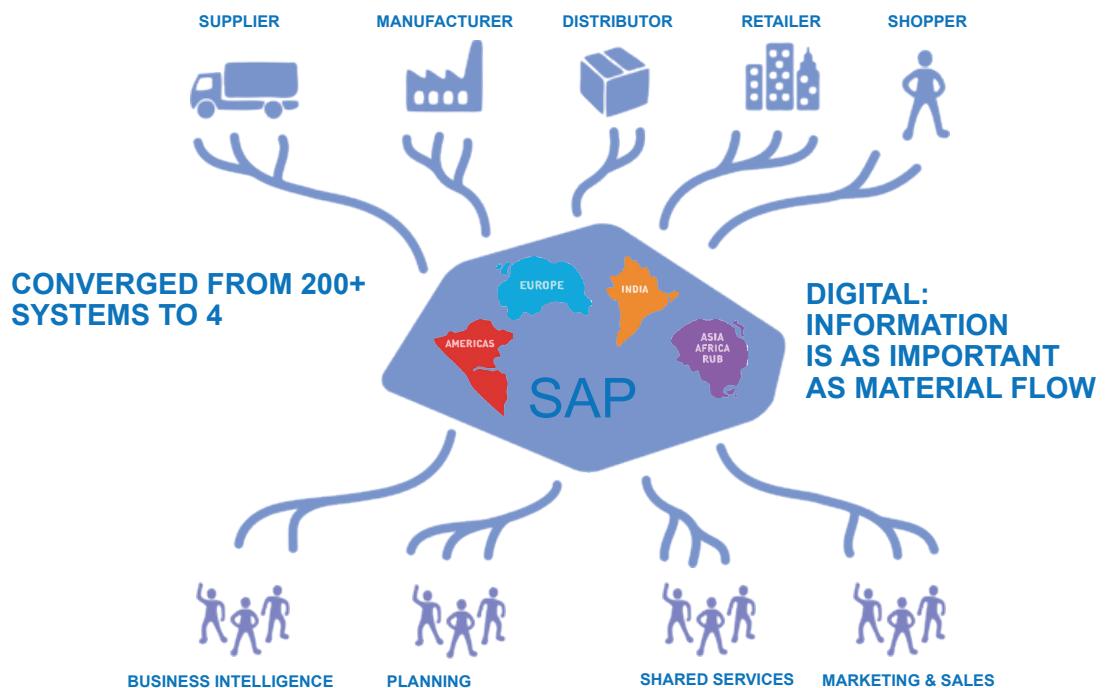


Fig. 2: Unilever value chain

and converted into products, of which by the end of 2013, 48% agricultural raw materials were sourced sustainably. Around the world 174,000 employees work to deliver superior service and generate annual sustainable, profitable revenue of EUR 50 billion. To run these operations efficiently and reliably, more than 50,000 employees use core SAP business solutions to process business transactions twenty four hours, seven days a week to total

## The Unilever value chain is a key competitive capability to deliver products to ten million stores, which serve two billion consumers.

four billion transactions per year. Therefore, SAP software is at the heart of the Unilever value chain. With this scale and capabilities, Gartner has ranked the Unilever global value chain as leader in Consumer Goods and fourth across all industries (Gartner Inc., 2014).

### Unilever Strategy: The Compass Ambition

The Unilever "Compass" envisages dou-

bling the size of the company, while at the same time reducing the environmental footprint and increasing positive social impact (see figure 3).

In order to achieve the objectives of this strategy, Unilever is doing more than simply putting additional products on the shelves.

Expansion and growth on an already strong base in emerging markets is a central component of the ambitious roadmap. Unilever is well positioned to be able to achieve this as the products are sold in more than 190 countries, and what is more, Unilever has more than 50 years experience in countries such as Brazil, China, India, and Indonesia and 57% of sales in emerging markets.

Growing the business while reducing environmental impact will also result in a more competitive cost structure. Cost reduction and margin improvement will continue to be driven from the global supply chain, containing cost with discipline and using digital capabilities for insights to make and implement smart decisions. This will continue to support continuous improvement, which will generate additional savings. These additional savings can come from restructuring, merg-

ers and acquisition synergies, improved sourcing for direct and indirect materials, and value improvements across all disciplines. At Unilever, the use of high performing enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions is key to achieving sustainable margin improvement.

### **Unilever IT ERP Strategy – Simplify Everything**

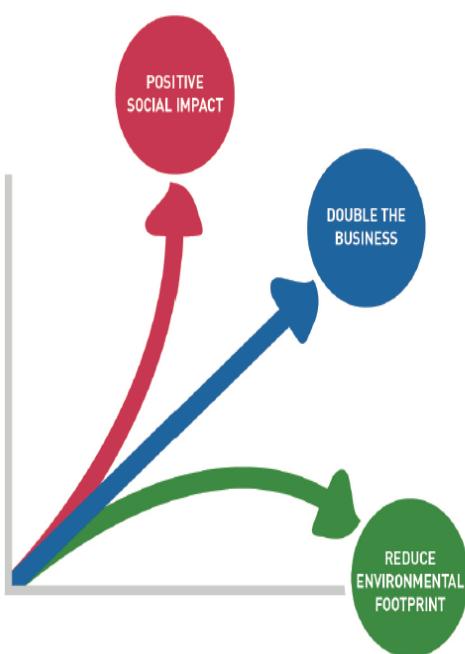
To implement the business strategy, Unilever has been driving business transformation and simplification during the past several years, including consolidating business units and establishing global functions and services. To enable this business transformation, Unilever has consolidated more than two hundred local ERP systems to the current four regional SAP system landscapes in a time-frame of around seven years (see figure 2). In addition, the four regional landscapes are managed as one global platform to drive speed of innovation. An industrialized “develop once and deploy everywhere” approach results in faster, more productive global innovation. One example is the integration of major acquisitions within six months. Similarly, the global ERP platform is being used to en-

able speed of consumer-driven product innovation. Another example is the rapid implementation of business solutions to

### **Unilever has consolidated more than 200 local ERP systems into four regional SAP landscapes within seven years.**

support the finance strategy of increased partnering with business to drive performance management and growth. These business solutions using new in-memory technology (HANA) were implemented globally in four months to support the EUR 50 billion business.

Such incremental investments will further unlock value from significant investments already made in the core ERP platform. The demand to handle increasing data volume being generated by business growth as well as from social media, mobile and smart devices will be met with new in-memory technology. For this reason, Unilever has developed and is implementing a SAP HANA roadmap. This is a journey with the goal of achieving an increasingly agile, responsive, real-time,



**Double the size of Unilever  
whilst reducing our environmental footprint  
and increasing our positive social impact**



demand-driven digital enterprise where the digital and physical world of customers can be seamlessly integrated into the value chain.

### Implementing the Unilever HANA roadmap

In 2011 Unilever assessed HANA technological capabilities with a proof of concept in the Finance area at the SAP labs in Walldorf. Soon after the successful initial tests, the Controlling and Profitability Analysis accelerator was implemented in 2012 across all four regional ERP land-

HANA to areas in the supply chain, several areas of opportunity were identified using Design Thinking and the SAP HANA roadmap was further developed. One learning was that to get the full benefits of this new technology, it is necessary to re-engineer business processes. HANA is not just about speed, it also allows new ways of doing business and even enables new business models. For example, it is possible to use and combine point-of-sale, mobile and social media data to drive agile, consumer-driven enterprise planning and execute an order of magnitude more responsive than today. In this case, the potential positive impact on new product launches as well as for promotions on existing products is significant.

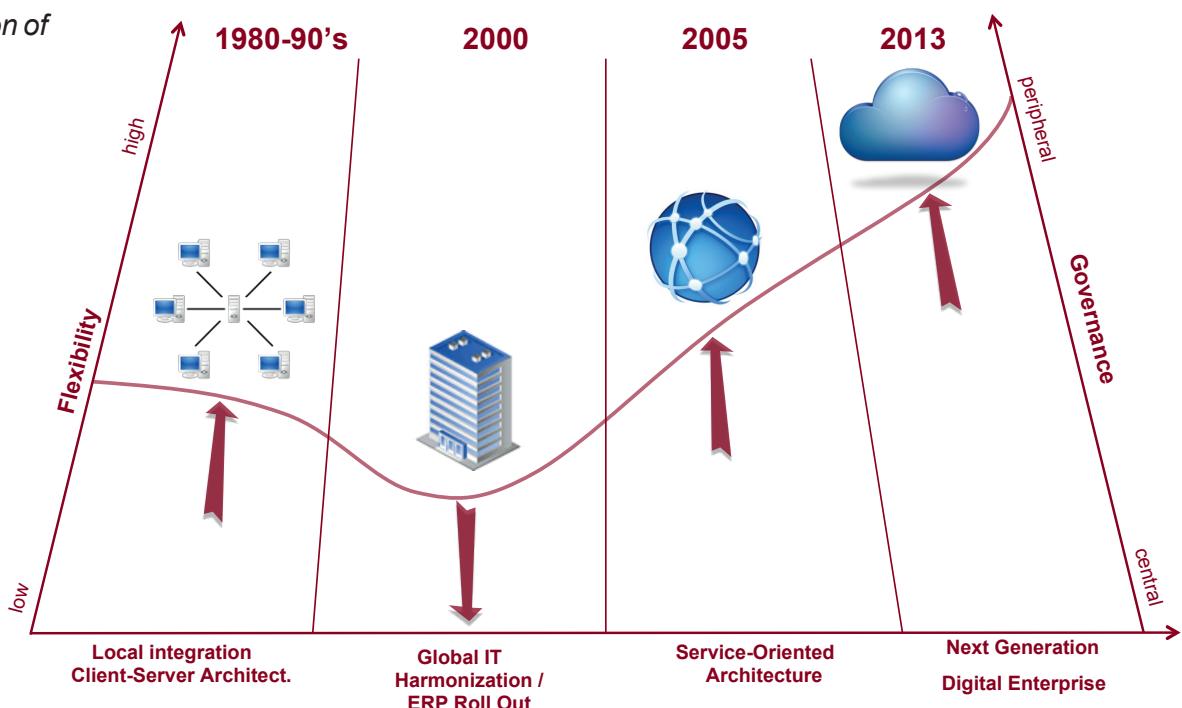
To capitalize on such opportunities, work has started at Unilever to migrate the business suite on HANA. As envisaged on the Unilever HANA roadmap, one of the largest SAP core transaction systems worldwide has been successfully migrated to run on HANA as a proof of concept.

In this case study we introduce and use the Digital Capability Methodology as a framework to analyze and structure the Unilever HANA roadmap.

## To get full benefits of SAP HANA, it is necessary to design new processes and business model.

scapes, enabling period end-close on day one. This was done in a risk-managed way and at a record speed of four months. Business users have been delighted with the results, increased speed and quality of information. Based on this success, additional financial accelerators and operational reporting solutions were implemented. The focus in 2013 was to expand

*Fig. 4: Evolution of IT governance*



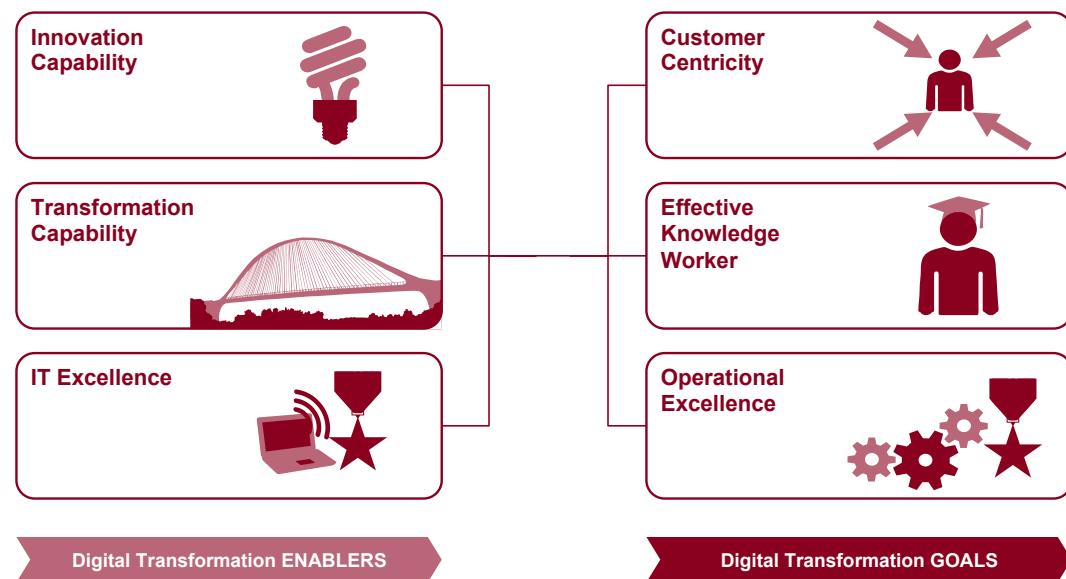


Fig. 5: Six key competencies for a digital transformation

### The Digital Capability Framework Methodology

We refer to the Digital Capability Framework (DCF) as a model to define a digital enterprise strategy and roadmap. Over time, the distribution of influence of the key stakeholders on IT architectures changed repeatedly (see figure 4): In the phase of local business integration, IT and business had a similar share of influence; afterwards, in the centralization and standardization phase, IT grew stronger; then IT was forced by business to become more agile, i.e. to quickly adapt to new business requirements.

New technologies and trends are driving IT towards a more holistic way of governing. For IT to be successful there needs to be increased focus on customers and employees. To embrace these changes in the governance of IT strategies, SAP Business Transformation Services and the Business Transformation Academy jointly developed the “Digital Capability Framework”. The aim of this framework is to help company managers analyze the potential of their company in order to leverage technical innovations and to reach their stakeholders. The term “Digital Transformation” used in the DCF is defined as the transformation towards becoming a Digital Enterprise by improving one’s digital capabilities. The Digital Capability Framework

consists of six dimensions: three “Digital Transformation Enablers” dimensions and three “Digital Transformation Goals” dimensions (see figure 5).

We outline the “Digital Transformation Goals”:

- Customer Centricity: This goal includes a strong focus on customer value and the best possible customer interaction with the business, for example, through digital marketing and intuitive “from-where-you-are” access to important information or processes.
- Effective Knowledge Worker: This involves, for example, cross-functional and cross-country cooperation, a common culture with accepted values and effective knowledge sharing, mutual learning, high employee productivity as well as decentralized decision-making processes.
- Operational Excellence: This means bringing business processes to an industrialized level, avoiding interfaces or integration gaps wherever possible, and having full transparency regarding key service performance. It involves collaboration not only within the company but also with external partners and suppliers.

The framework’s three “Digital Transformation Enablers” dimensions represent

the underlying capabilities, which have to reach a certain level before it makes sense to tackle a Digital Transformation.

- Transformation Capability: This is known as “Business Transformation Management”. It means the ability of an organization to constantly reinvent itself and successfully turn innovative ideas into reality.
- Innovation Capability: Successfully achieving continuous and long-term innovation presupposes certain conditions, including an effective innovation process, involving customers or thought leaders into the process, an open-minded company culture as

date, and analyze data. Use of HANA has made this work easier and faster in several areas. Previously, data need to be extracted, transformed, and loaded to a Business Information Warehouse (BW) system prior to analysis. This was performed in a batch job that took hours. With data in-memory on HANA, analysis can now be done immediately, directly on the transaction system data. This allows the quality of data to be analyzed and the month-end close process iterated if needed. Existing reports run faster. Exceptions are identified earlier and corrective actions taken. The month-end close cycle is reduced significantly and is completed on day one.

With regard to the DCF methodology, this example and its progress is clearly related to the enabler “IT Excellence” and results in improved “Operational Excellence”, which is one of the goals within digital transformation.

Improved quality and speed to information provides earlier insight into performance. Therefore, focus of activity in Finance is shifting from validating the numbers to interpreting and using the numbers to drive business growth.

### **Example 2 – Process Excellence Empowered by HANA**

Beyond acceleration, HANA provides opportunities to rethink and simplify the way processes are run. Without performance constraints processes can be designed differently. Steps can be integrated and more can be done at once. One example at Unilever is the invoice and goods receipt reconciliation process. Several ERP transactions are used to manage this process and provide contextual information about vendor, history, open items, cleared items etc. However, the user has to navigate as many as ten transactions and submit batch jobs that take 16 hours to run. Using in-memory technology, these multiple transactions have been replaced by one monitoring dashboard with real-time actionable information produced directly from the transaction data and the 16

## **With in-memory technology, finance is shifting from validating numbers to using them to drive business growth and design new processes.**

well as an appropriate working environment.

- IT Excellence: Breakthrough technologies, which enhance the IT excellence include real-time insight into important company data, stability, digital security, agility, and dynamic plug-and-play functionality.

### **Six Examples of Implementing the Real-time, Digital Enterprise**

In the next section we explain in more detail some practical examples of how Unilever has been implementing digital capabilities on top of the ERP platform to unlock business value. The DCF framework helps to analyze and structure these examples within the different digital capability framework domains and capabilities.

#### **Example 1 – Turbo Charging Finance with SAP HANA**

Finance is dependent on the quality of data for reporting and to drive the right management decisions. For example, during the month-end closing process a lot of effort is spent to reconcile, vali-

hour batch process has been eliminated. This dashboard provides all transparency needed in one screen. Selection of period is a matter of moving the needle, summary information is provided directly and long-standing open items are brought to the attention of the user with a user-friendly interface and graphics. All data is consolidated and analysis to the lowest detail is directly possible. The depth of analysis and the simplification for monitoring and managing the account are empowering business users to better manage this reconciliation process.

This example refers to the process improvement for reconciliation purposes and again is related to the capabilities of “IT Excellence” and results in an improved “Operational Excellence” as outlined in the Digital Capability Framework above.

The reconciliation of vendor invoices and goods receipts illustrates how process improvement and an incremental investment in new digital technology (HANA) is unlocking value, even for a fairly simple and long-standing business process. This process was selected as an “early move” owing to process maturity, business need, and ease of implementation. However, the approach and learning can be extrapolated to many other processes where a similar digitization approach can be used to unlock even greater value.

The following is illustrative of the potential value of this solution as applied to the Unilever example:

Generically in the consumer industry, 20% of revenue is typically spent on purchasing. For Unilever, this would translate to a value of approximately EUR ten billion. Industry estimates are that approximately 5% of the purchasing volume show inconsistencies and need further investigation, a value of EUR 500 million. On average 2–5% of these turn out to be wrong payments or missing deliveries requiring follow-up actions. In the Unilever example, this would represent a value of EUR 10 to 25 million which would need to be actively managed. With longer time-lags, more effort is required to resolve is-

sues. With improved digital capabilities for timely reconciliation and clearing of the Goods Received/Invoice Received account as described, the work effort and amounts involved can be significantly reduced as described.

### **Example 3 – Improved Performance Management with Business Planning**

Simulating market changes and proactively planning business activities are of key importance to Unilever. The business planning and consolidation (BPC) solution is used to support this business process and to analyze different scenarios. Changes of demand and supply are planned at regional and global levels and the impact on profitability and cash flows are calculated. This results in high volumes of data and a large number of complex scenarios. Unilever explored the HANA capabilities for business planning with the goal of improving this process. The results of an extensive proof of concept showed a performance increase of up to 18 times for certain scenarios. This

**For the business planning and consolidation process, an increase in performance up to 18 times for scenarios allows a simplified and more integrated planning process.**

new level of performance results in opportunities to further simplify and integrate the planning process.

Business planning improvements and managing changes with actual information will drive better decisions at scale. Applying the DCF methodology to this example, the objective of “Customer Centricity” and “Operational Excellence” are supported. The core enabler is again digital technology, but due to changed business processes, Unilever will need to apply transformation capabilities to establish new processes to realize the maximum benefit potential.

#### **Example 4 – Optimizing Supply Chain Management**

To optimize supply chain planning, production planning, and sourcing of products and raw materials, Unilever uses the SAP Advanced Planning and Optimization (APO) solution. With APO, the demand for production is analyzed and optimized taking delivery times, process times, and priority of demand into account. The APO solution runs on dedicated infrastructure but there are several components in the planning landscape, including a BW system that is used to extract and stage demand data. Unilever did a proof of concept to verify system behavior, viability, and benefits within the Unilever landscape.

The proof of concept has shown significant benefits and readiness to migrate APO to HANA. The APO solution on HANA also provided additional capacity to schedule sales orders. Additional dai-

this solution is as follows: better planning and scheduling of deliveries will result in a better On Shelf Availability (OSA):

- A common industry perspective is that if customers cannot find products available on the shelf there is a transition rate to competitor products of almost 20% (with potential lifetime switching of a consumer to another brand)
- Based on the results of the proof of concept, in some scenarios this new capability could be used to better manage replenishment through the supply chain and OSA could potentially be increased by 0.5 %
- Assuming that 50 % of 0.5% OSA improvement could be additional revenue, this translates to 0.25% revenue increase or as applied to Unilever, a potential revenue increase EUR 125 million and additional margin of around EUR 50 million

Different assumptions and scenarios can be used for these illustrative calculations but there is a general industry agreement that an increase in on-shelf availability will increase revenue and related margin, even more so if such new capabilities are applied to manage new product launches and promotional activity.

#### **Example 5 – Driving Scale with SAP Business Suite on HANA**

With positive experiences from productive use of HANA and promising results from several proofs of concept, a core objective in the digitization roadmap is to run all ERP systems on HANA. To this end, Unilever ran a proof of concept with one of their largest ERP systems. In 2013 Unilever copied the European system to the SAP data centre in Walldorf. At the SAP labs the system was converted to run on HANA. Initial tests successfully assured back up, multimode memory usage and performance resilience. Standard SAP transactions have also been successfully tested. The project is still under way with next steps to test transactions running on custom code. All indications are that this

ly sales orders with an estimated value of 6.8% can be loaded into the system to optimize the planning and scheduling of supply. This provides the opportunity for better service to the customer, production planning optimization, and further reduction of inventory. In addition, IT total cost of ownership (TCO) can be reduced with a simplified IT landscape, a smaller data footprint from compression, and reduced hardware requirements.

In terms of the DCF model – in this example the goal capabilities of “Customer Centricity” and “Operational Excellence” will be improved. Once again these capabilities are enabled by new digital technology as well as process change.

An illustrative quantification of the value of

large-scale system can be run on HANA. The business value of performance at scale: Not being constrained by system performance allows a combination of analytics and transaction activity at scale, on the same data in real time to an extent not previously possible. As illustrated by the previous examples, this opens the door for improved optimization and business performance management. Where needed, more simulation and analysis of scenarios can be run to drive decisions and then seamlessly implemented via transaction processing. The following are examples of processes that can benefit from the seamless integration of analytics and transactions enabled by this disruptive innovation in digital capability:

1. Variance management
  - a. Production simulations to reduce waste, scrap, rework, and labor
  - b. Shipping and scheduling optimization for logistics
  - c. Pricing, assuring the best price and incentives to drive profitability
  - d. Purchasing, assuring the right volumes at the required delivery time and price
2. Continuous improvement with incremen-

## To run SAP Business Suite on HANA opens the door for improved optimization and business performance management.

- tal optimizations in every process step
3. Internal and external benchmarking requires full transparency and comparability
  4. Unleash competitive spirit across units to source and compare efficiency
  5. More accurate and profit-and-loss-driven decision making (promotions, product pruning etc.)
  6. Maximizing return on marketing and sales investments by optimizing product portfolio and sale channels

The impact of the business processes above can be represented based on their impact on revenue, cost, working capital and fixed capital. This will impact the profitability and the return on invested capital to drive business value.

By improving the overall IT Performance and reducing the IT cost Unilever extends the “IT Excellence” capabilities as outlined in the DCF. This clearly offers op-



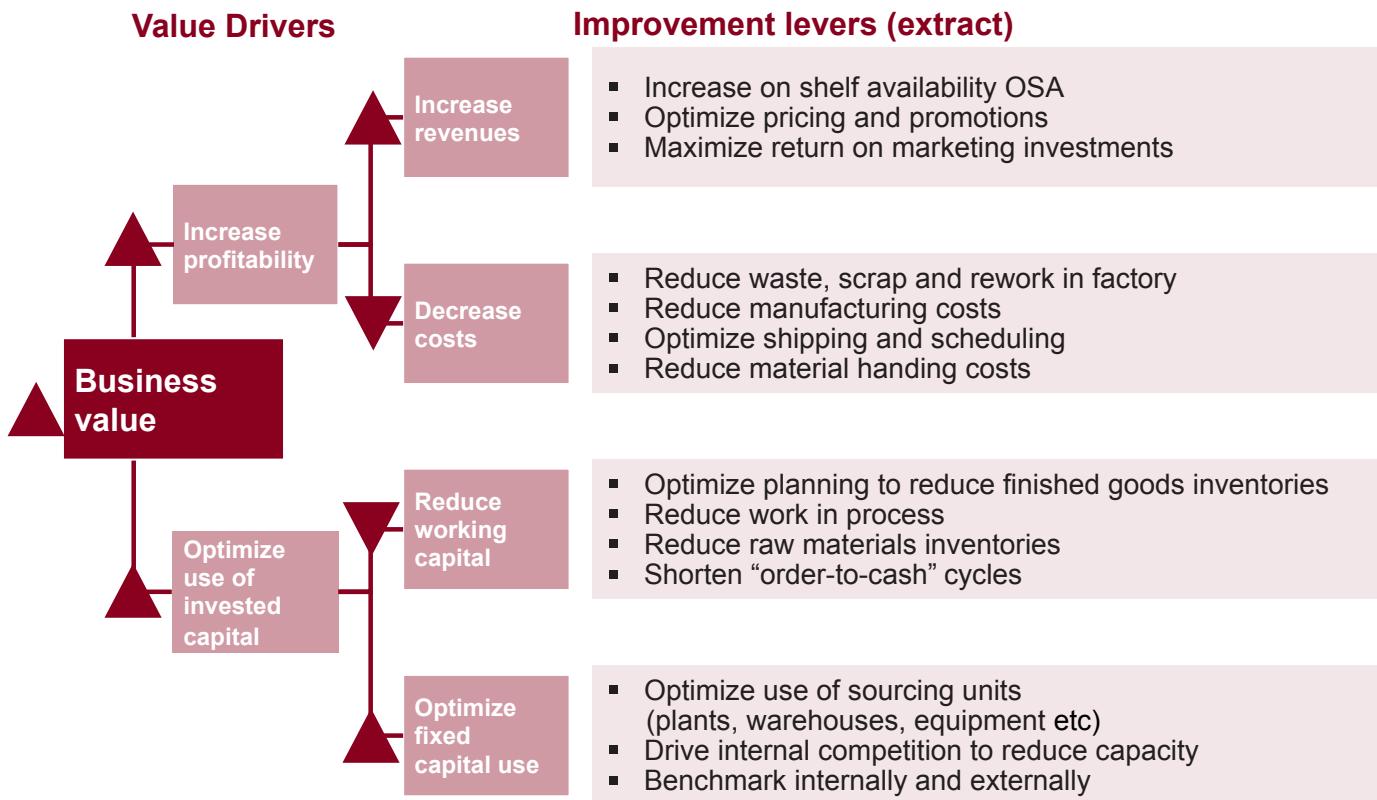


Fig. 6: Schematic link between drivers and business value

portunities in all digital goal capabilities such as "Customer Centricity", "Effective Knowledge Worker", and "Operational Excellence". This is also valid for the next example described in this article.

using the Unilever global process and information model, enriched with SAP standard process and transaction mapping. The BRS is the repository of target system configuration, enables the "design and develop once" approach and serves as a template to drive harmonization. It provides ERP collaterals and accelerators to implement new solutions and enable Unilever's growth agenda. With the use of HEC, this reference system has been designed, developed, and configured at unprecedented speed, i.e. four months. The Unilever business reference system has established the foundation to better utilize existing and new business solution capabilities and allow programs to scale up fast and innovate business solutions at speed.

## HANA Enterprise Cloud platform allows programs to scale up fast and innovate business solutions at speed.

### Example 6 – Using a Cloud Platform for Speed to Value

At the same time as validating requirements and the viability of running all business suite applications on HANA, the utilization of ERP capabilities and functional delivery of business solutions has also been a key focus area. For this purpose, Unilever implemented a business reference system (BRS) using the HANA enterprise cloud platform (HEC). This business reference system was configured

### Unlocking Value by Implementing the Digital Enterprise on SAP HANA

Unilever's experience with productive HANA systems and conclusions from several completed proof of concepts provides powerful insights. These include

the use of cloud capabilities to innovate at speed and to utilize and benefit from all SAP's capabilities. The following statements about costs and benefits underpin the business case to drive this digitization journey aggressively.

#### **Costs**

Based on TCO research there is evidence that digital capabilities running on HANA will provide reductions in the cost of IT infrastructure. This is based on significant system simplification, a reduced need to extract and replicate data, reduction of batch jobs, reduction of database-related activities and a consequent reduction of required hardware capacity. These factors will drive IT costs down significantly. On the other hand, initial IT investments are required to set up the new infrastructure with required software licenses and services. Taking these factors into account it is estimated that IT TCO of implementing the digital enterprise on HANA can be neutral to beneficial over time.

#### **Benefits**

The use of digital capabilities for business performance management and faster, simpler, and smarter processes will drive business growth and sustainable margin improvement. Several examples have illustrated the value opportunity. For example, the APO case detailed above allows better planning with more

complete data, which can in turn be translated into improved on-shelf availability

## **The Unilever business reference system has established the foundation to better utilize existing and new business solution capabilities.**

and additional sales with optimized working capital. In this case we table an illustrative margin benefit of EUR 50 million. Extrapolating to the business value drivers and levers (see figure 6), we believe it is reasonable to drive for margin improvement of more than 50 basis points over time. In fact, with a continuous improvement as an enterprise priority, it should

## **It is estimated that IT TCO of implementing the digital enterprise on HANA can be neutral to beneficial over time.**

be possible to use these capabilities to achieve sustainable annual margin improvement in this range. To illustrate the point, this level of improvement (50 basis points margin improvement) applied to Unilever would have a positive margin impact of EUR 250 million.

### **Key Learnings**

- ▷ When improving a company's customer centricity, it is not sufficient to focus only on the customer-facing processes (e.g. Customer Relationship Management and call centers). The entire value chain needs to be optimized and integrated, since the customer experience and satisfaction are influenced by every single interaction with the company, including back office processes (e.g. incorrect invoicing information about product availability). In this context, having heterogeneous processes and IT landscapes poses risks that should be avoided.
- ▷ In a global company, the complexity of working with local solutions and country-specific processes hinders operational excellence and a flawless customer orientation. What is needed are globally harmonized standards, processes, and data with a mature reference model that fully supports local needs via powerful scenarios which can be used to drive growth.

## Conclusion

Several examples of implementing the real-time, digital enterprise have been described and demonstrate that even for established processes there are significant opportunities to unlock value with further digitization. Implementing such a digital enterprise involves connecting the whole enterprise, beyond marketing, to the digital and physical worlds of the consumer as well as seamlessly synchronizing enterprise-wide activities. Functional silos must be minimized and cross-functional processes simplified to become faster, more effective and more efficient. Developing and implementing these opportunities requires embracing new ideas, changes in IT, re-thinking of business processes, and even changes to business models. The Digital Capability Framework (DCF) as used in this case study has provided a useful

structure to analyze and classify the examples. Moreover, it confirms Unilever's digital capabilities, prerequisites for success in implementing the real-time, digital enterprise to unlock value and enable business growth. Unilever has started doing this in specific areas and is realizing benefits. The ultimate goal is to become an increasingly demand-driven, responsive, and agile enterprise, consistently delivering superior service. Owing to its perspective across the business as well as technology insights, in some enterprises IT may be well positioned to demonstrate the opportunity and catalyze these changes. Beyond successful innovation and implementation of powerful business solutions based on new technology, it is the effective use of existing as well as new digital capabilities that will make the difference and deliver sustainable, profitable growth.

## Service

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