

The Art of **LEADERSHIP,** **DELIVERY,** and **INNOVATION** in Modern IT



LEAD
with Vision



DELIVER
with Excellence



INNOVATE
for Impact



COLLABORATE
for Success



STRATEGY



DELIVERY



PERFORMANCE



INNOVATION



TECHNOLOGY



SECURITY

LEADERSHIP

INSIGHTS FROM HEAD OF DELIVERY AND PMO, TIQRI MR. LAHIRU RATHNAPALA

| Empowering **People**. Delivering **Value**. Building the **Future**.



MR. LAHIRU RATHNAPALA
Head of Delivery and PMO, Tiqri



1. With over 20 years of experience in IT and digital transformation, we would love to hear about your professional journey and how you progressed into your current role as Head of Delivery and PMO.

My journey in IT began in 2004 as a software support engineer, where I quickly developed an understanding of the importance of stability and precision in delivery. Early in my career, I found myself naturally drawn to coordinating people, resolving operational challenges, and driving team performance, which eventually led me into my first leadership role, leading a support team. Over the years, I worked with several multinational organizations, managing complex applications and leading cross-functional teams. As I gained more exposure, I became increasingly involved in decision-making processes, which motivated me to transition from technical roles into managerial positions. I then moved into project and program management, working across domains



such as telecom, capital markets, and asset management. Each role strengthened my ability to balance technical expertise with strategic leadership. Today, as the Head of Delivery and PMO at Tiqri, I focus on enterprise governance, portfolio management, and innovation, combining my technical background with organizational strategy.

2. You have led numerous large-scale programs across domains such as Telecom Billing, Capital Markets, and Asset Management. Could you share one particularly impactful or challenging project that stands out in your career?

One of the most impactful projects I managed was a large-scale B2B portal for a UK-based telecom provider listed under the FTSE 100. This was a highly complex program that integrated hundreds of backend systems managed by multiple vendors across different countries. Despite the scale and complexity, we were able to achieve zero downtime deployments and maintain 100% service availability throughout. The project was also

certified at CMMI Level 5, which reflects the highest level of process maturity. Managing a cross-functional team of over 130 members across multiple locations made this a defining experience in my career, as it required balancing operational excellence, technical complexity, and large-scale coordination simultaneously.

3. Today, digital transformation is a key priority for many organizations. From your perspective, why should businesses regardless of their size take digital transformation seriously?

Digital transformation is no longer just a trend; it is a necessity for survival. Regardless of their size, organizations must embrace transformation to remain relevant, competitive, and resilient in a rapidly changing world. It enables businesses to enhance customer experience, unlock new opportunities, and adapt quickly to disruptions. In today's environment, standing still is the fastest way to fall behind. Transformation is not just about implementing technology, but about fundamentally changing how organizations think, operate, and

respond to customer needs. Without it, businesses risk becoming obsolete.

4. If you had to identify one key practice or mindset that organizations should adopt immediately to succeed in digital transformation, what would it be?

One of the most important mindsets organizations should adopt is a product-first mindset. Whether an organization is project-based or product-based, it is ultimately delivering something to users or customers. Understanding user requirements, focusing on customer



value, and continuously improving the product are essential for success. Without this mindset, organizations may struggle to evolve and deliver meaningful outcomes, as true transformation requires continuous improvement and alignment with user needs.

5. Imagine this: a major organization is undergoing a large-scale digital transformation initiative, but the project is facing delays and resistance. What are the first steps you would take to get it back on track?

The first step would be to re-establish clarity by understanding what went wrong and revisiting the vision, objectives, and expected outcomes of the project. It is then important to engage stakeholders to identify the root causes of resistance and rebuild trust through clear and transparent communication. In situations where governance structures are weak, they need to be re-evaluated and restructured to ensure effective delivery. Additionally, prioritizing features that deliver immediate customer value can help regain momentum. Addressing such challenges requires a methodical approach, strong leadership, and the ability to adapt based on the situation.

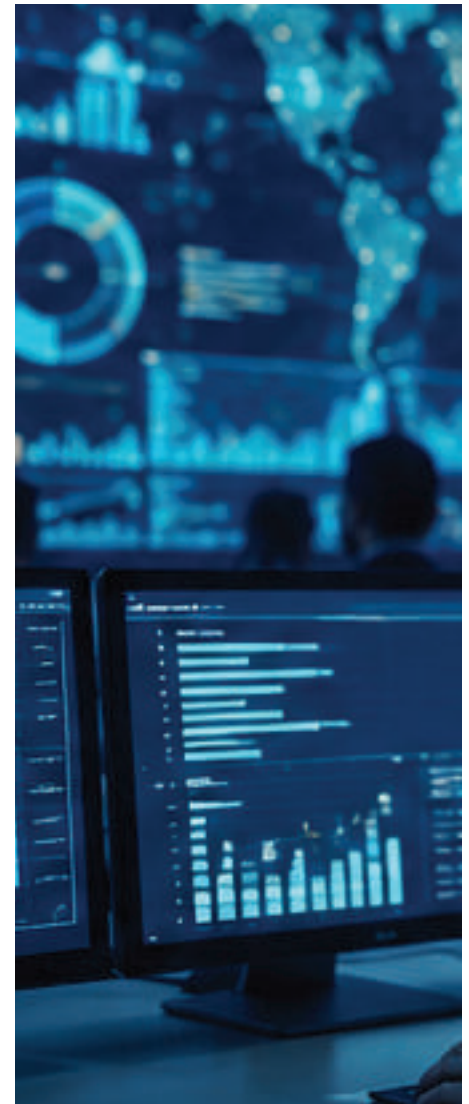
6. As organizations continue to digitize, what do you see as the most pressing challenges or risks in delivering successful IT transformation programs today?

One of the most pressing challenges today is cybersecurity, as increased digital integration expands the

potential attack surface. Alongside this, there is a growing shortage of skilled talent, particularly in areas such as AI, cloud computing, and cybersecurity. Another challenge is change fatigue, where employees struggle to cope with continuous transformation initiatives. While access to technology and knowledge has improved significantly, applying that knowledge effectively in real-world scenarios remains difficult. These challenges highlight the need for organizations to invest not only in technology but also in people and processes.

7. IT projects often involve both technical complexity and human factors. How important is team dynamics and stakeholder management in ensuring project success?

Team dynamics and stakeholder management are critical because technology alone does not guarantee success, but people do. High-performing teams thrive on trust, collaboration, and shared accountability. At the same time,



engaging stakeholders from the early stages of a project helps align expectations and reduce resistance. Strong relationships and effective communication enable teams to navigate complexities and deliver successful outcomes. Without these human elements, even the most technically sound projects can fail.



8. With the rise of emerging technologies such as AI and automation, how is the landscape of project delivery evolving, and how should organizations adapt their strategies?



AI and automation are significantly reshaping project delivery by reducing cycle times, improving quality, and providing predictive insights. Tasks that once required significant time and effort can now be completed much faster using intelligent tools. However, organizations must adopt these technologies strategically by embedding them into their workflows while ensuring that human oversight remains in place. AI should be used as an enabler to improve efficiency, but it should not replace critical thinking and decision-making. Adapting successfully requires both technological adoption and continuous reskilling of teams.

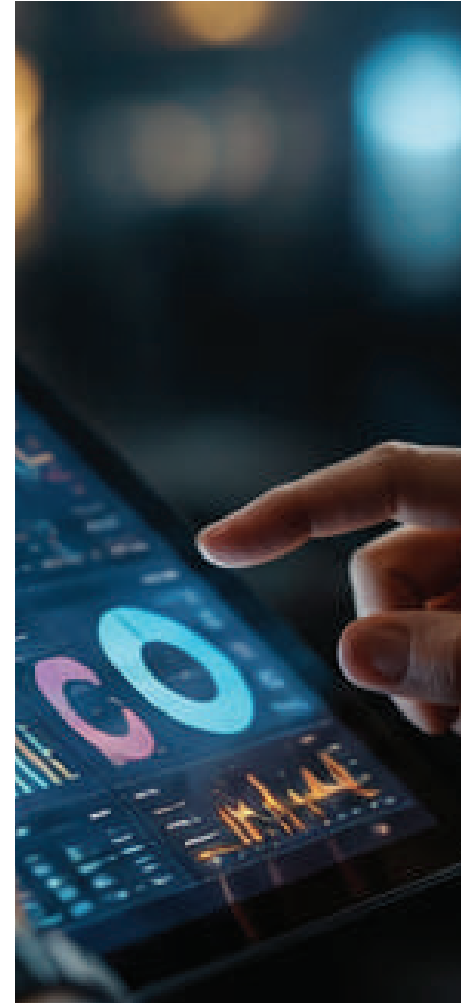
9. Delivering large-scale programs requires strong leadership and strategic thinking. How can students begin developing the mindset and skills needed to manage complex IT projects?

Students should focus on developing both technical and non-technical skills. While it is important to learn modern technologies and tools, it is equally important to build capabilities such as communication, critical thinking,

analytical reasoning, and teamwork. Developing a systems-thinking approach helps in understanding the bigger picture while managing details effectively. Although AI tools are powerful, relying on them excessively can limit cognitive development. Therefore, students must learn to balance technology with fundamental skills, as these are essential for making sound decisions and leading teams in complex environments.

10. As we look to the future, which trends in digital transformation and IT project management do you find most promising, and what advice would you give to students aspiring to build a career in this field?

Some of the most promising trends include AI-driven delivery, cloud-native architecture, and hyper automation. These trends are transforming how organizations innovate, scale, and operate. For students, the key is to remain curious and committed to continuous learning, as the industry is evolving rapidly. It is important to build both technical expertise and leadership skills. However, technical expertise alone is no longer enough; the true differentiator is the ability to understand business needs and align technology solutions to deliver value. Those who can bridge business and technology, while adapting to change, will be the ones who succeed in the future.



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