

Weaving Digital Transformations with Digital Thread



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Federal and defense agencies' increasing reliance on speedy contracting options, such as government wide acquisition contracts and Other Transaction Authorities (OTAs), show they're looking to acquire advanced technologies and capabilities more rapidly.

That pace puts pressure on contractors to respond in kind. Federal contractors have to move through capture, development and manufacturing processes quickly and smoothly to address the quickening demand. The design and management data that supports those processes has to keep up. Identifying and then converting dissimilar or dispersed data, however, can be time-consuming and delay production. A "lift and shift" upgrade that makes all of the data compatible—is costly, tedious and inefficient. That leaves contractors with a tough question to answer: How does one get essential data from one set of systems to another quickly and effectively, without bumbling the bank?

Ideally, manufacturers, such as aerospace and defense (A&D) organizations, move data across dissimilar systems, such as computer-aided design (CAD), product lifecycle management (PLM), enterprise resource management (ERP), or perhaps a maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) system in real time to keep delays at a minimum.

This is critical to meet contractual deadlines, national security demands, and maintaining manufacturing operations.

However, more closely orchestrating integration of those systems can create a digital thread that links product engineering design specifications to the development process, making the product's manufacturing and the processing of data more efficient, all the way through aftermarket and service.

Similarly, for government contractors, the ability to harness all their data and processes as part of their capture strategy and program execution is incredibly important.

Digital thread is about establishing a 'data culture' where companies use their data to improve their decision-making. The solution and underlying technology

can build a single source of truth and a framework for collaboration.

Using the A&D industries as an example, these large government-contracting industries are "incredibly resilient," said Raj Shankar, vice president of digital transformation and GTM for the aerospace and government markets at Salesforce.

During the pandemic, Shankar said, contractors invested a lot into the supply chain to strengthen the defense industrial base and in customer engagement models for sales, marketing and operations, modernizing their capabilities. Data and increased access to that data, drives all of those capabilities.

Digital thread is elemental for digital transformation

Digital thread can be an indispensable part of contractors' efforts to transform their operations to keep up with the quickening pace of governments' needs.

It's a new approach where, rather than transform data at its source, it allows data to stay in legacy systems, connect and transform on-demand, driving business insights and capabilities as and when they're needed.

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Lack of data coordination slows progress

Even though a strategy for digital thread can be a key part of transformational investment, it's just being recognized.

Quoting recent research, Shankar said that when you look at some of the research data, especially when it comes to digital thread—or when it comes to organizations utilizing data—there is evidence that suggests that there's only about 9% of organizations are actually deriving operational efficiency and business gains from digital services and data. More than 40% say that disparate data systems and data sources pose major operational risks

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While federal and defense agencies' reliance on speedy contracting options is increasing, the demand on contractors to respond is also amplified. Digital thread, as a new approach, can be essential to contractors' efforts to maintain operations for the governments expanded requirements.

Download this whitepaper and learn how a digital thread can transform the way your organization accesses data.