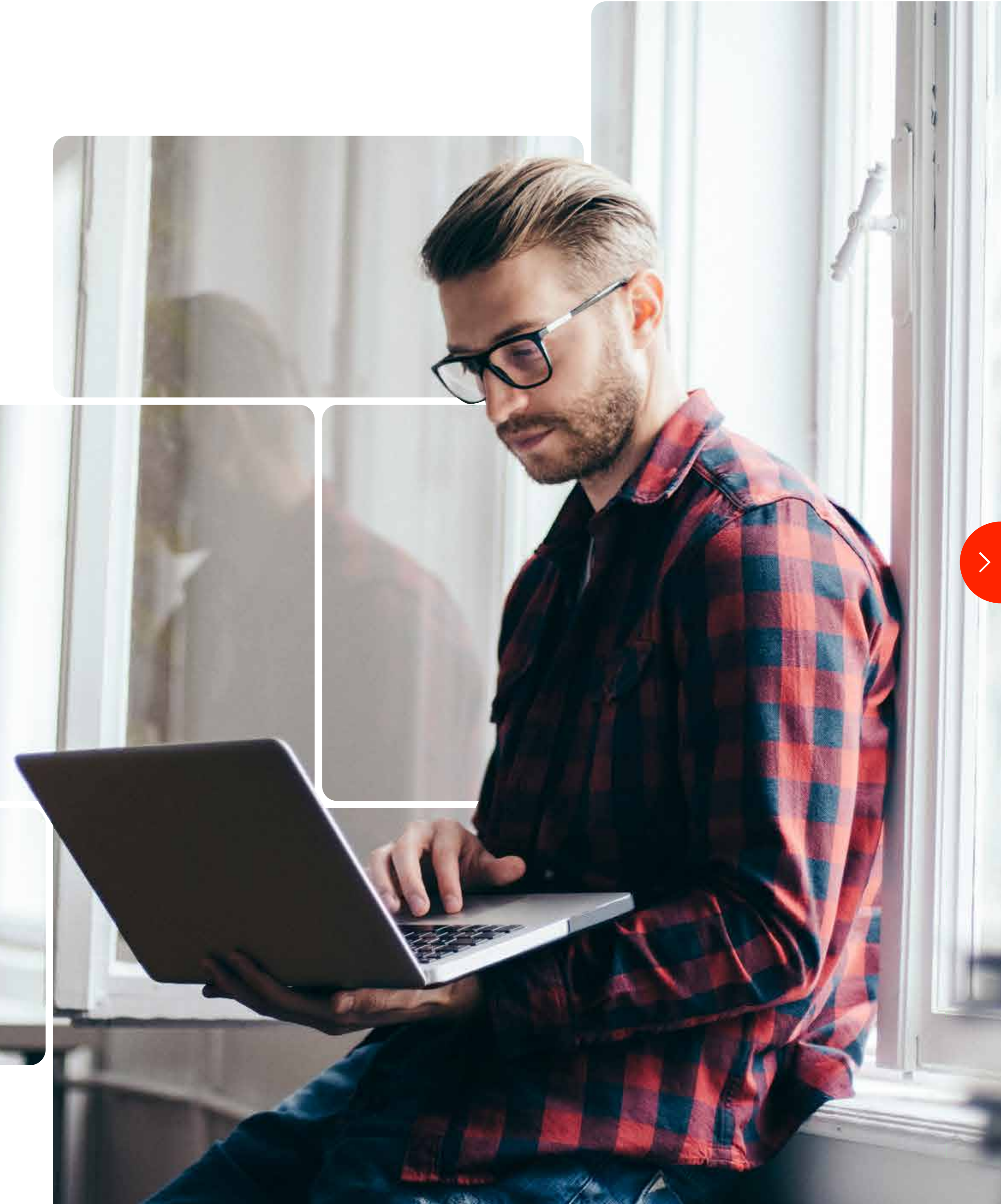
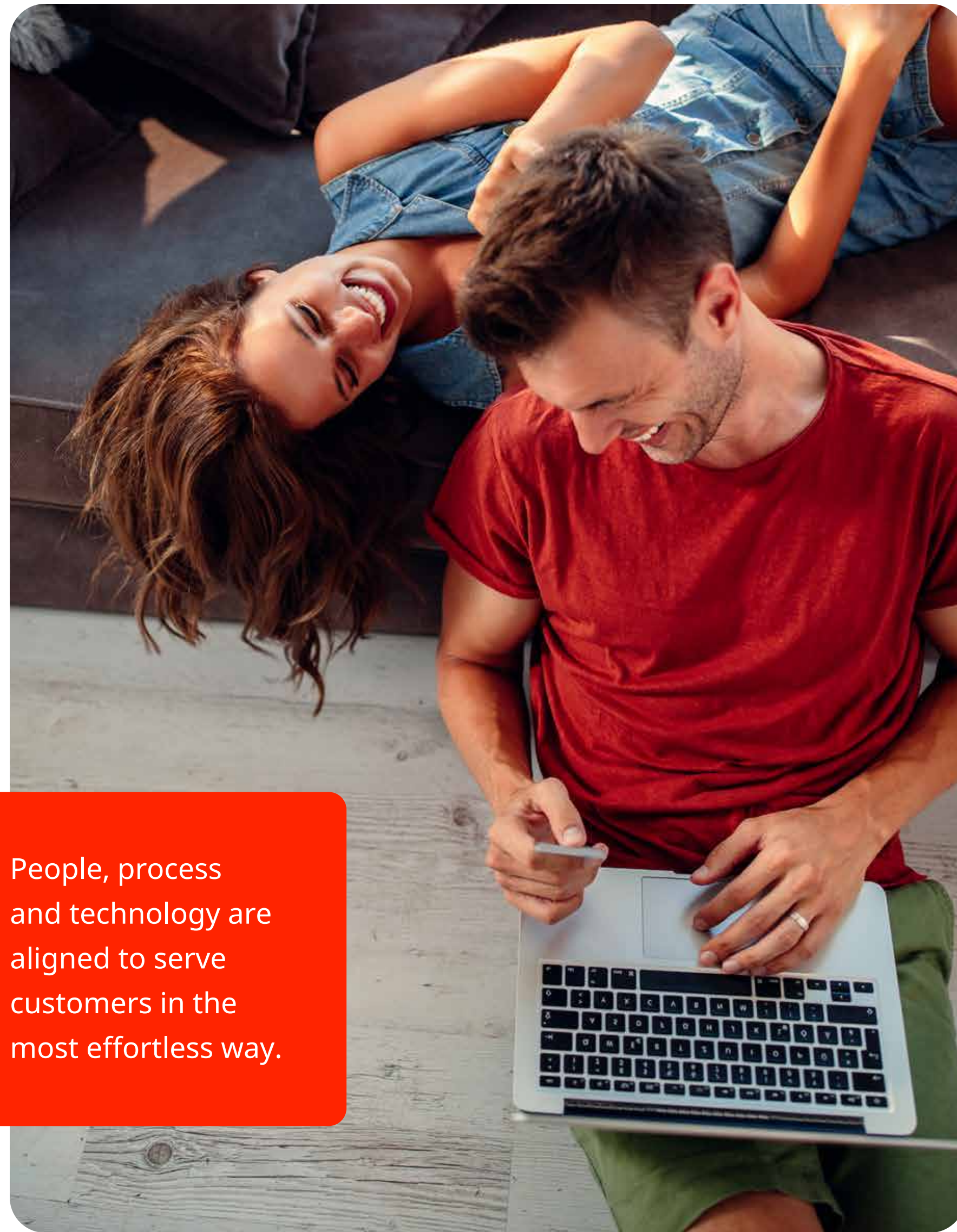




A modern application platform for a customer-first culture





People, process and technology are aligned to serve customers in the most effortless way.

Creating a customer-first culture

Where people, processes and technology align around customer needs – is the biggest challenge CX professionals face. But it's one made almost impossible for most organisations by the disjointed technologies used to deliver the digital experiences that support customer journeys.

In a world where CX increasingly involves launching new products and services at speed – then making these available on multiple digital channels – a tight partnership with the CIO is a critical foundation for the fulfilment of customer-first ambitions. This may be a step outside the comfort zone of most CX professionals – but a necessary one if they are to regain control of their customers' journeys.

However, a willingness to work with the CIO is not enough. To be successful, that partnership must be supported by a means of delivering digital CX that overcomes the barriers that have afflicted application development for too long. Enabling the customer journeys of 2020 and beyond demands a modern, high-speed development platform that allows business leaders and IT to collaborate seamlessly and deliver multi-channel applications quickly; one that gives them the flexibility to adapt and iterate these services as customer preferences change.

In CX Networks' recent Global State of Customer Experience Report, CX professionals said that building a customer first culture was their #1 challenge. (Solution providers and industry commentators also put it in their top three) Clearly, there is an ongoing struggle to ensure that people, process and technology are aligned to serve customers in the most effortless way.

The Report also identified a range of pressing CX challenges (discussed in detail below): these range from ROI to digital transformation and align closely with the issues raised in my own discussions with CX experts in organizations around the world.

It's easy to consider these as separate challenges – and, indeed, they are viewed that way by most CX professionals. But, in fact, it makes much more sense to consider them as different aspects of the same customer-first issue.

The key barriers to implementing a customer-first culture

Siloed customer data: the ongoing use of legacy technology and disconnected data repositories means that most organisations maintain multiple different versions of the truth – making it almost impossible to harness all of a company's data to deliver a consistent, high-quality customer experience.

Linking CX to ROI: Most CX practitioners know which metrics they should be using to support ROI. However, many CX initiatives might take as long as 5-8 years to start delivering real value – and it is simply impossible to generate meaningful ROI over such an extended timescale.

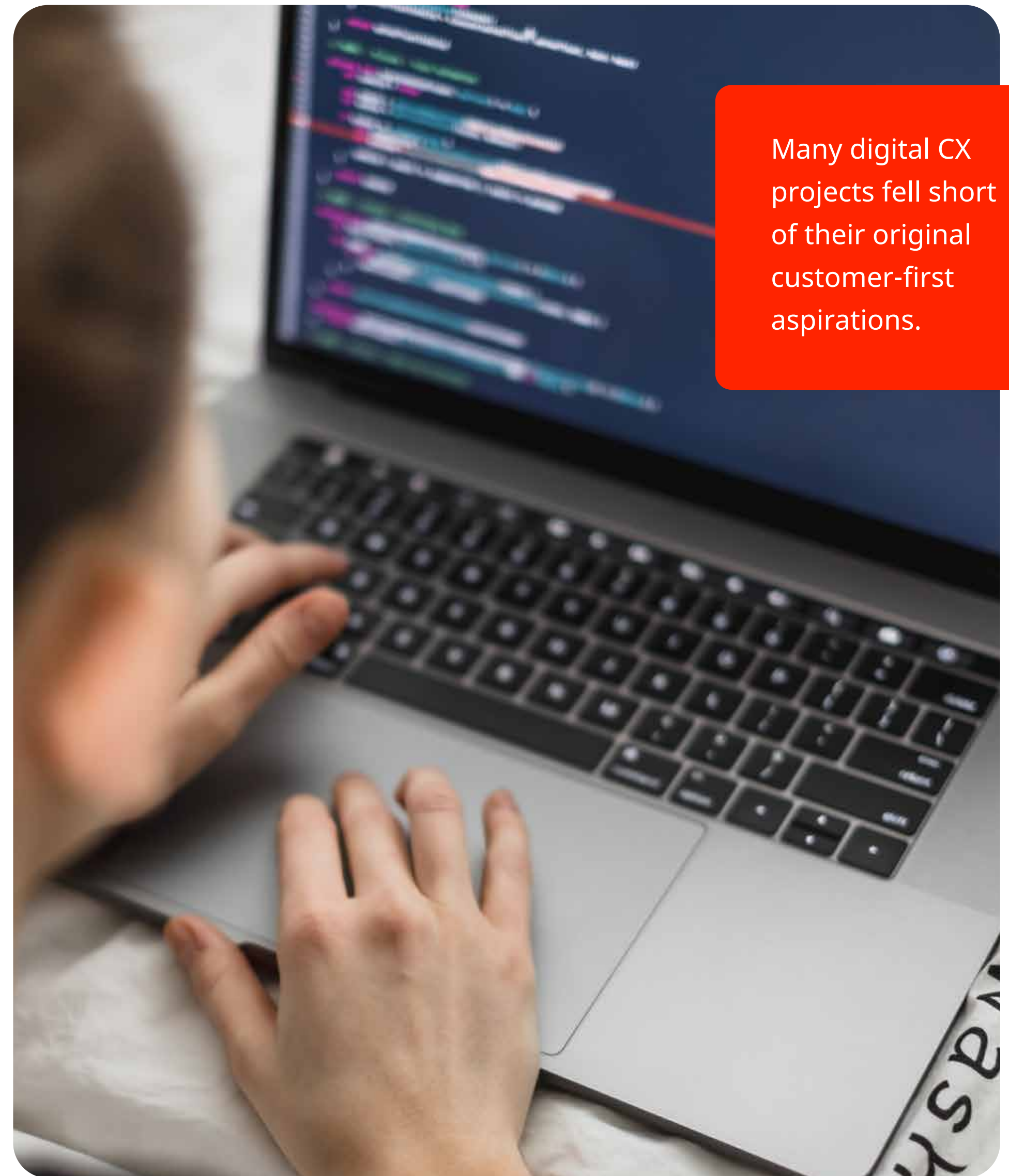
Acting on the data: Again, most CX professionals are aware of the key trends affecting their customer journeys but are limited in their ability to respond to these in a timely manner. The insights are there, but they simply cannot be actioned: CX professionals are being asked to run with their feet tied together because their IT teams are too slow to deliver, or the pre-packaged software they use to create their digital CX makes it impossible to meet customer needs.

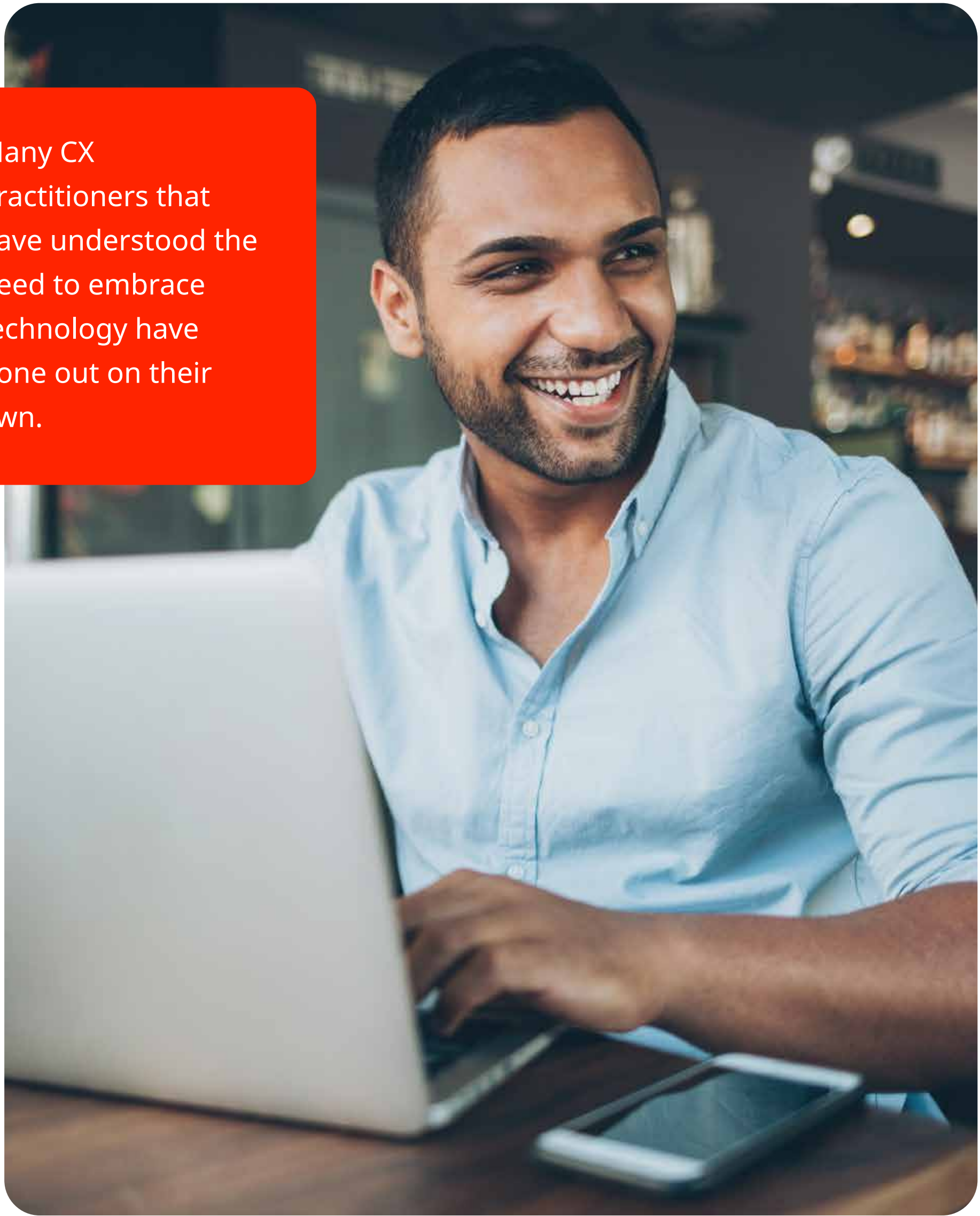
Digital Transformation: The first response to the lockdown was to push customer interactions online – but many were done quickly rather than properly – 'best effort' rather than 'best'. Most lacked critical functionality at launch and implementing any kind of upgrade remains overly time-consuming. This is because organizations either didn't have the technology in place that allowed them to pivot quickly; or had outsourced their digital customer experience, losing control of something that is critical for the success of their business. The end result was that many digital CX projects fell short of their original customer-first aspirations.

Senior management buy-in: Based on all the above, it's not surprising that the leadership does not have faith in customer first initiatives which struggle to deliver value on so many different fronts.

The bottom line is that delivering a customer-first culture requires a fundamentally different approach to creating digital experiences, and too many departments have too much invested in 'business as usual' to accommodate the necessary changes.

Many digital CX projects fell short of their original customer-first aspirations.





Many CX practitioners that have understood the need to embrace technology have gone out on their own.

Light at the end of the tunnel

In Dante's Divine Comedy, the words, 'Abandon hope all ye who enter here,' appear above the entrance to hell. You might be forgiven for thinking that I am giving a similar instruction to CX professionals – but nothing could be further from the truth.

The solution to the above problems lies in taking a new approach to application development – an area beyond the experience of most CX professionals: in my experience, few of those responsible for the customer experience joined the industry from a technology background, with the majority coming from customer service or marketing functions. Nevertheless, customer journeys have moved decisively online as a result of the lockdown – and many customers will continue to use digital channels long after face-to-face alternatives become available once again. We must all move with them.

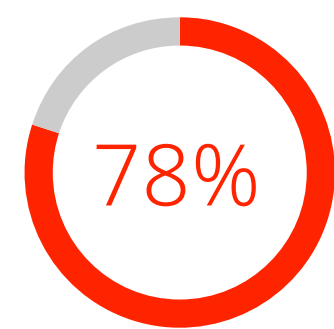
Many CX practitioners that have understood the need to embrace technology have gone out on their own and acquired pre-built packages, rather than partner with IT to find a solution that works for both. This approach does mean action can be taken quickly, but usually results in a 'Frankenstein' customer journey, consisting of disconnected and inconsistent applications which can't be properly integrated or tailored to your customers' specific requirements. At the end of the day, these 'solutions' are no better than the original legacy-based systems they were intended to replace.

However, it's hard to criticise CX professionals for choosing this route as their IT colleagues often have very limited capacity for delivering innovation or responding quickly to customer needs. Typically, the IT department is hamstrung by the very technologies they use to develop and maintain applications: typically, up to 70% of IT's time is spent 'keeping the lights on' – managing ageing core systems and critical business applications. And even if IT does manage to make the time, the sheer complexity of traditional development technologies means that – no matter how skilled the IT resource – it can take several months to deliver a single mobile app.

We need to break with the past if we are to create an environment in which a customer-first culture can flourish. The truth is that technology - and IT - want to be friends with CX professionals and the two parties should get acquainted as quickly as possible: those CX professionals able to leverage technology to their advantage can find a way of using it to build applications around their customers.

The importance of CX/IT collaboration in the post COVID world

The pressure on CX professionals will only increase as customer experience overtakes price and product as the key brand differentiator.¹



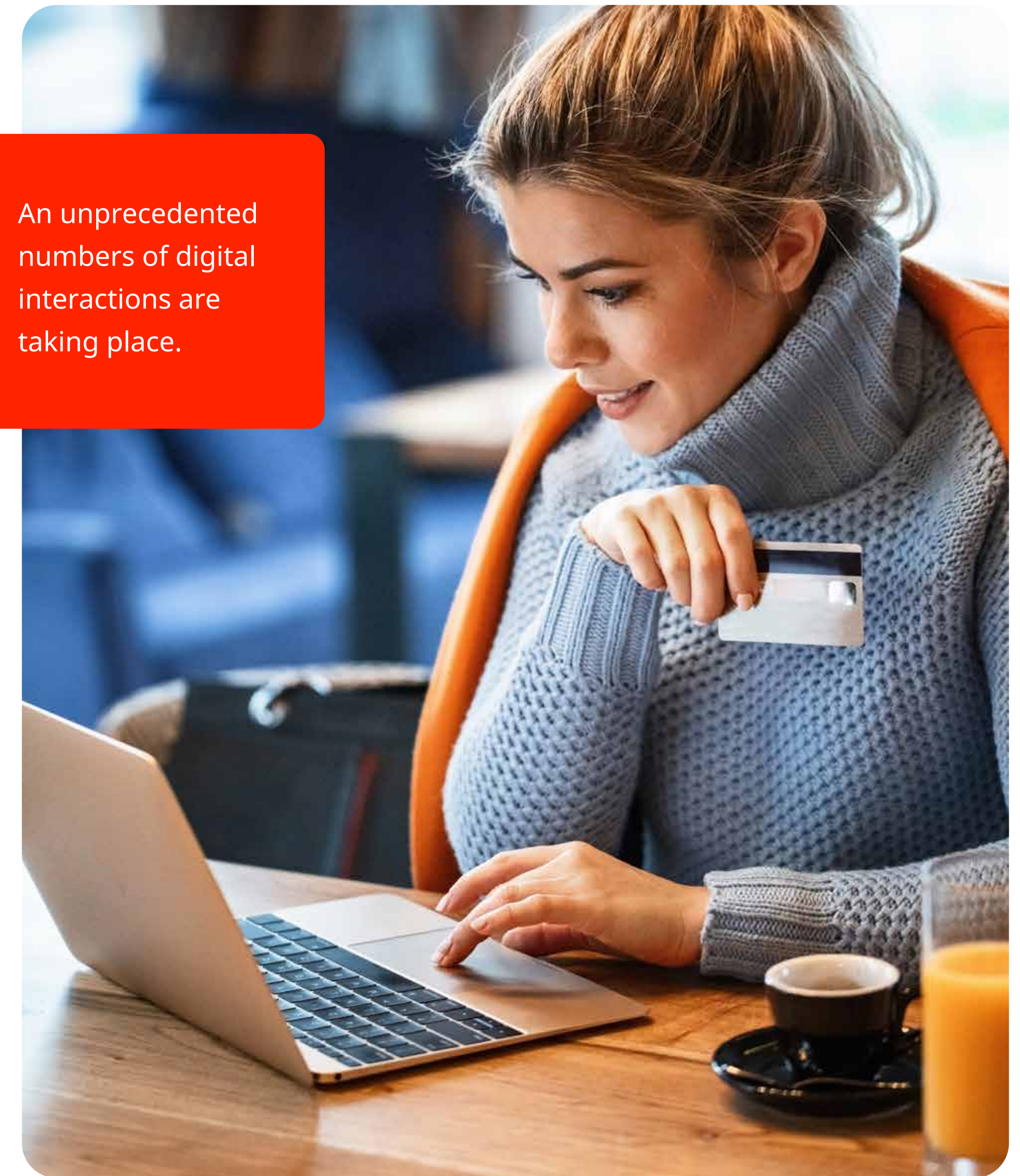
78% of US consumers have changed stores, brands of the way they shop as a result of the pandemic.

Research McKinsey²

The delivery of rapid and ongoing CX improvements is therefore critical, especially in a 'new normal' world in which unprecedented numbers of digital interactions are taking place. In these circumstances, the IT department is a key partner for CX professionals – and building this relationship on a solid technology foundation is a necessary first step in the realisation of a customer-first culture in 2020 and beyond.

First and foremost, a true CX/IT partnership requires IT operations to be simplified, enhancing responsiveness and allowing the two teams to collaborate on designing and delivering digital customer journeys and their supporting processes and data. For example, one of OutSystems' insurance customers has such a tight collaboration between its CX and IT teams that, if users start reporting problems (e.g. their policy details aren't being served up correctly), a fix can be deployed in two or three hours. In many other companies, the CX team can be waiting six months for this to happen. The collaboration, responsiveness and agility resulting from such a partnership can only be enabled by an agile, modern application development platform.

An unprecedented numbers of digital interactions are taking place.



¹<https://www.intelligentcio.com/north-america/2020/10/13/why-great-b2b-customer-experiences-are-more-important-than-ever/>

²<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/survey-us-consumer-sentiment-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>



The first real alternative to traditional development and a new way of creating applications.

A modern, high-speed application development platform

But what might such a platform look like? Firstly, it must enable a new way of developing applications, one that eliminates the repetitive and time consuming tasks that prevent developers from focusing on delivering business value.

It must also be designed to enable cross-team collaboration and to accelerate time to market for new applications – with a high-quality UX and a multi-touchpoint approach as its defining characteristics.

That's precisely what OutSystems' Modern Application Development Platform provides. It is the first real alternative to traditional development and a new way of creating applications for any digital touchpoint using a visual approach that massively speeds up development time - think weeks or days rather than months or years.

The OutSystems platform connects seamlessly to any system or third-party service and comes with a host of pre-built digital experience components based on the world's leading applications and an optimized toolset that supports collaboration between the business and IT. In addition to empowering professional developers with ground-breaking capabilities, OutSystems includes specialized tools enabling every member of a multi-disciplinary team to contribute and collaborate seamlessly. Business analysts, CX and UI/UX professionals, IT operations specialists – and even architects – all have tools optimized for their roles. The business and IT can therefore work together in lockstep and without friction, so organizations can tap into the diverse talents of their entire team to build applications that are a better fit for their customers – and deliver them faster than ever before.

The platform's omnichannel approach means you can implement what we call an Experience System - a set of application components that serve a particular function for the customer - a 'job to be done'. These experience components can be simple interactions such as the manner in which your customer inputs their delivery address or uses their credit card to pay for your goods or services. With a modern application development environment, you create these components once and deploy them across any digital touchpoint or application (web, app, mobile app, chatbot or voice and personal assistant). Using a single technology to build applications for all channels – and reusing all the components created on it – massively accelerates time-to-market.

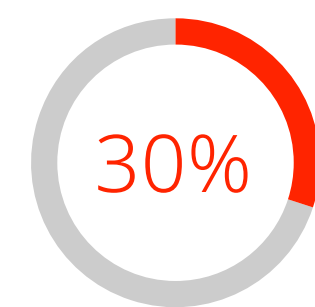
Similarly, if you are addressing issues with your existing digital customer journeys – or have identified changes or additional functionality that will enhance the experience – you simply change the experience component once and this is automatically replicated across all the applications and channels of which that component is a part. So, if you revise the digital experience for your chatbot, then the same component in the IVR system of your call centre or your smart speaker solution is automatically updated. As a result, the digital customer journeys you build around your customer are consistent across any channel or application with which they choose to interact with your brand.

Problems? What Problems?

Taking all of this into consideration, a platform like OutSystems will have a huge impact on the barriers outlined previously. In fact, many of the hurdles to implementing a customer-first culture simply evaporate.

Siloes: Key processes currently residing in multiple legacy systems don't need to stay there. Instead, you can connect to them and easily bring together all of your data to provide customers with an optimal, seamless experience.

Linking CX to ROI: If you could deliver the new digital experiences you need in weeks (i.e. within a fiscal year), plug them into your existing MarTech stack, closely monitor their performance and make continuous improvements to remove friction and re-engage customers, then the whole nature of the ROI conversation changes completely.



Improving new customer conversions by 30%

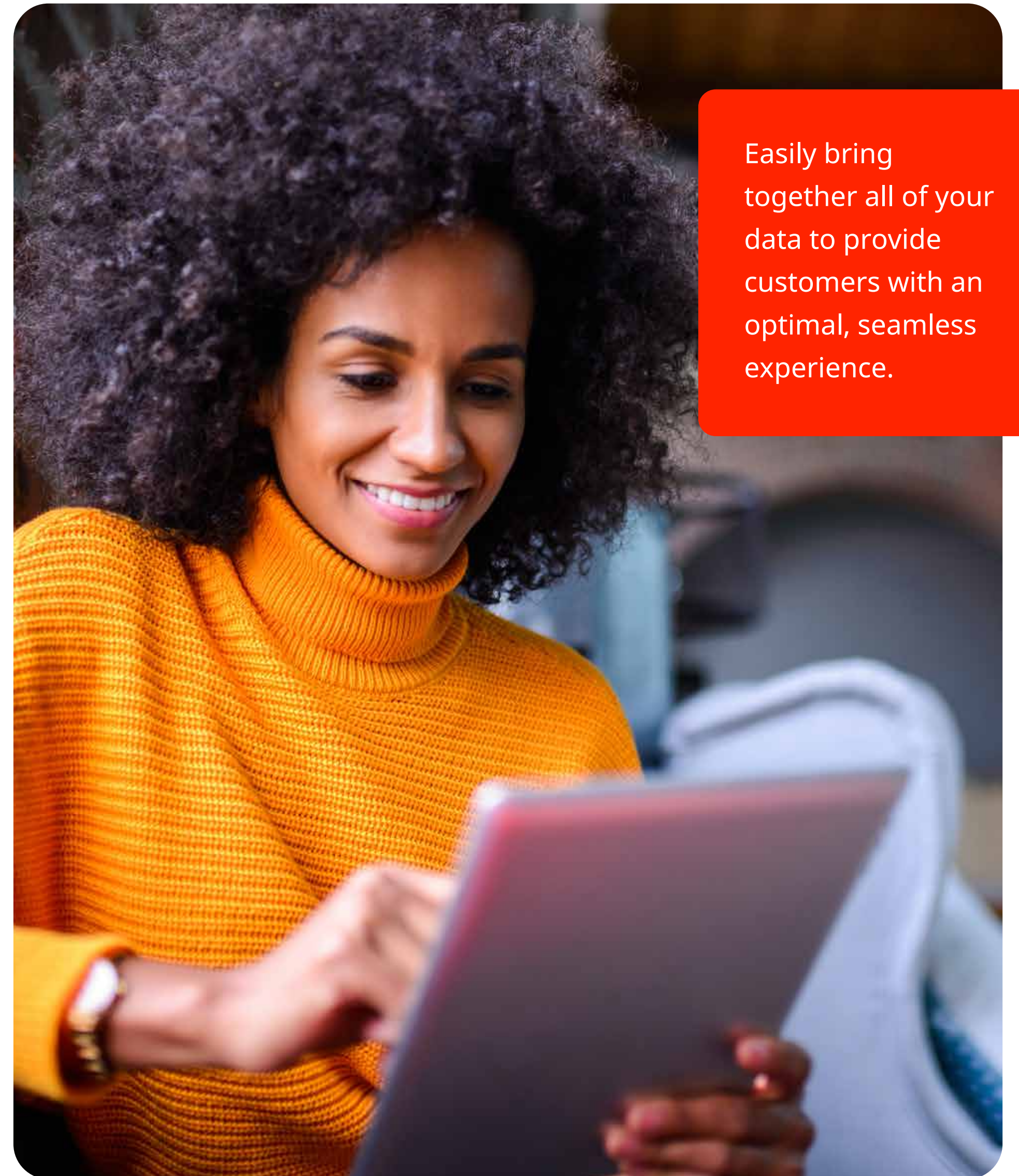
An OutSystems customer – thinkmoney - delivered a new onboarding process in seven weeks – improving new customer conversions by 30% and reducing customer acquisition costs by 21%. In this context, linking CX investments to ROI becomes very straightforward.

Acting on the data: Any CX changes that the data (or your customers) say are needed can now be implemented in as little as a few hours. And, as our customers tell us, writing to a user to say, "thanks very much for your feedback: this has now been implemented" – and to be able to do that one day after they made the suggestion – is incredibly powerful.

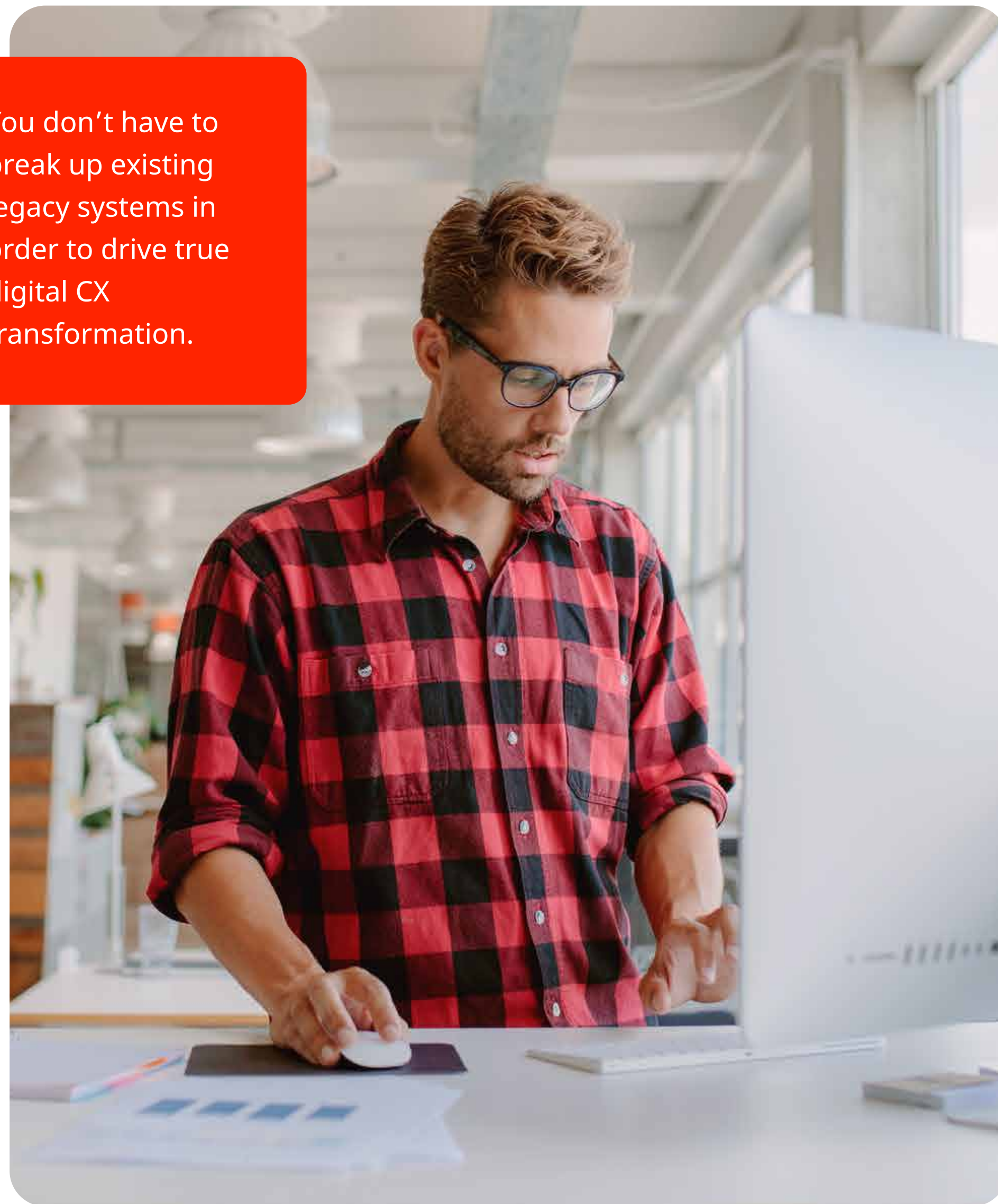
Digital Transformation: 'Best effort' can quickly become 'best' through rapid iteration. Because of the modular nature of the platform and the ability to update multiple digital touch points simultaneously, implementing incremental change is straightforward – and these small changes can quickly add up to a complete overhaul of your digital experiences.

Management buy-in: If you have delivered on all the items listed above, it's hard to imagine that senior executives would not be 100% behind your CX efforts and eager to support further investments. thinkmoney's Managing Director described OutSystems as a 'game-changer' – and there's no reason why CX professionals shouldn't make the same kind of difference to their company.

Easily bring together all of your data to provide customers with an optimal, seamless experience.



You don't have to break up existing legacy systems in order to drive true digital CX transformation.



Conclusion

A customer-first culture must find physical expression in the customer experience and in processes that are optimised with the customer in mind.

In our increasingly digital world, this means CX professionals must have both a tight partnership with IT and a digital CX strategy built on an agile, modern development platform.

You don't have to break up existing legacy systems in order to drive true digital CX transformation: you can make the most of what you already have and extend it to ensure that technology is driven by the customer and not vice versa.

The bottom line is that the delivery of a great digital customer experience cannot be outsourced – and will not be realised if CX and IT teams inhabit different worlds. For the first time, OutSystems provides a technology platform and organisational backbone that enables true collaboration between IT and CX professionals – and makes a customer-first culture a reality rather than an unrealisable aspiration.

About OutSystems

OutSystems was founded in Portugal in 2001 with the mission to give every organization the power to innovate through software. The OutSystems application platform's high productivity, connected, and AI assisted tools help developers rapidly build and deploy a full range of applications anywhere the organization requires. With more than 350,000 community members, 1,200 employees, 300 partners, and thousands of active customers in over 60 countries and across 22 industries, OutSystems has achieved tremendous global scale while helping organizations change the way they develop applications.

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