



**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
FOR HOUSING
ASSOCIATIONS**

**THE KEY BARRIERS, CUTTING THROUGH THE DIGITAL
NOISE AND HOW TO START YOUR BUSINESS CASE**

W H I T E P A P E R

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DIGITAL NOISE

When you start to [deconstruct digital transformation](#), it's like opening a can of worms, so much technology, ideas and many new ways of working. We call it digital noise.

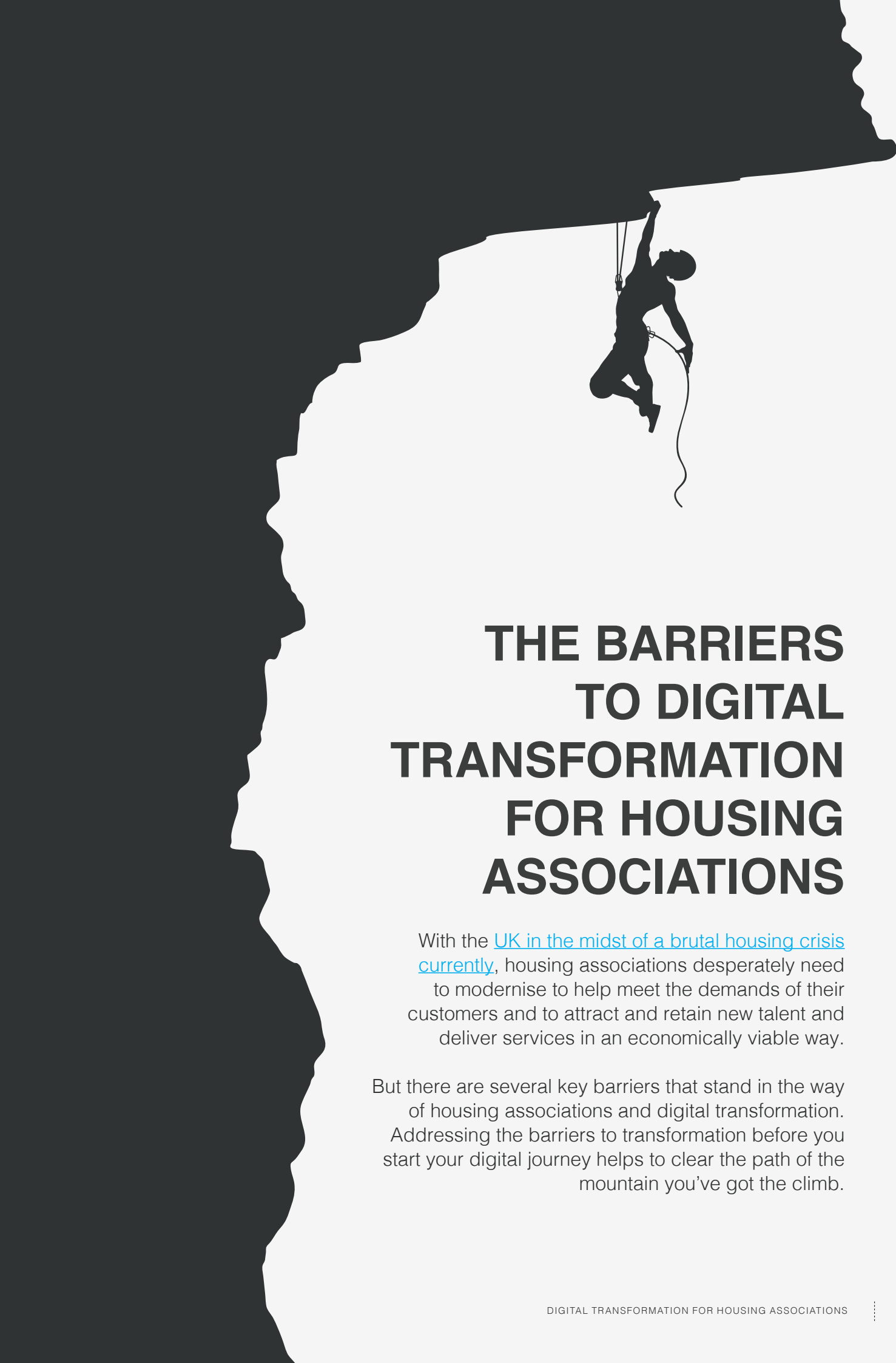
Particularly for housing associations, demonstrating value for money is essential. But we know [the short-term quick fix approach to digital transformation doesn't work](#). Simply introducing a new digital channel or pushing people online is not enough! Digital transformation applied correctly can be like drinking a magic potion. Not only will it reduce costs; it will improve the experience for tenants, maximise employee engagement and create a platform for commercial growth and prosperity.

We need to look beyond the traditional approach to cost cutting; trimming headcounts, squeezing suppliers on costs and pushing customers to self-serve channels.

For digital transformation solutions that work and deliver cost savings in the future, you need to consider the word "*transformation*" and adopt an innovation mind-set. It is not enough to only convert what you have always done into digital channels or web portals. The best results are achieved with a fresh pair of eyes. Reviewing existing workflows, processes, customer journeys, reviewing how services are consumed and fulfilment is achieved across the whole supply chain. Whilst it is important to take a holistic approach, you don't have to change it all in one go! Experience shows us it is very possible to break this change down into incremental steps, that work towards a cohesive strategy, gaining benefits quickly along the way and importantly being able to accommodate change throughout your own journey of transformation.

Yes, it is important to design technology solutions that augment people, processes and workflows, but it is crucial to take the time to review positive opportunities for change, review and redesign customer engagement, staff operations and business processes and maintain this momentum moving forwards! Then align well designed solutions that integrate with your housing associations providing a path to the future and support ongoing opportunities for positive change.

This white paper will help transformation leaders to cut through the digital noise and understand solutions that will integrate and work within your housing association. Covering the key digital transformation barriers for housing, A-class solutions and how to create a business case for them.



THE BARRIERS TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

With the [UK in the midst of a brutal housing crisis currently](#), housing associations desperately need to modernise to help meet the demands of their customers and to attract and retain new talent and deliver services in an economically viable way.

But there are several key barriers that stand in the way of housing associations and digital transformation. Addressing the barriers to transformation before you start your digital journey helps to clear the path of the mountain you've got the climb.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STARTS WITH CULTURE, NOT TECHNOLOGY

A key barrier to transformation that many organisations encounter when they go off and try to start their projects is that digital transformation isn't just about the technology. At the end of the day, it always comes back to people.

It's crucial to get culture right within your organisation first, it's like the infrastructure layer before your real technology infrastructure. [If it's not addressed there are three key human barriers you will encounter:](#)

1

INERTIA

The tendency for people to do nothing or remain unchanged

2

DOUBT

Their view will be that this digital transformation project will fail

3

CYNICISM

The schadenfreude some feel when digital transformation struggles

Naturally, [people resist change](#). If the culture isn't right, your employees will not rally together and support you as you embark on this essential change. Resulting in you being left as the [lone nut](#) forever.

To encourage and help your people to support your digital transformation projects, the culture needs to be open. It's a [culture of collective creativity and collective responsibility](#). Destroying the hierarchy to create a structure that is flat and level.

North Star Housing Group were able to tackle an ingrained issue by overhauling their culture. Experiencing cuts to public sector budgets, [North Star employees' absence rates skyrocketed](#), largely attributed to stress due to inconsistent management and a lack of strategic direction. By introducing policies that helped create an open culture, like a shared leadership model, North Star were able to reduce their absence rate from 4.2% to 1.4% and increase their employees' engagement and collaboration. Demonstrating the detrimental effects a negative culture has on businesses. Moral of the story is: first things first, get your culture right!

LEGACY THINKING PREVENTS HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS HAVING A GROWTH MINDSET

If there's one big killer of digital transformation projects before they've even begun, it is legacy thinking. This old-fashioned way of thinking [pushes back on any suggestions of disrupting the market](#).

It's particularly common in companies such as housing associations, evolving into more commercially savvy organisations - from a start point of entities that had transitioned from the public sector. Leaving a large percentage of traditional public sector workforce; stereotypically set in old ways and adverse to risk. A collaborative approach is required, involving key stakeholders, including users, the business, IT and external experts (who have been there, seen it and done it before!). So that digital initiatives don't just become IT projects, without considering the needs of the end-users and [leaving grassroots ideas killed in the weeds](#).

Having a growth mind-set is about helping turn your failure into growth opportunities and challenges the established thinking.

Just because that is the way we have always done it, it does not mean that is what should be done in the future as technology, user and customer expectations change.

The growth mind-set supports and helps to develop grassroots ideas that emerge. It also sets the vision for where businesses would like to go, and which values underpin it. Plus the ability to quickly and easily test ideas and new initiatives with pilots cannot be underestimated.

As expectations increase for housing associations, [both from customers and colleagues](#); it is becoming ever more vital to have this growth mind-set and innovation culture, as a driver for your digital transformation.

Your customers will compare your online services with those of the very best digital innovator and [your employees will overwhelmingly prefer the advanced technology they use at home than that they use at work](#). There's the requirement to do more than just keep up.

MISUNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

Digital transformation is an ongoing, dynamic process; it doesn't have a clear start or end. It's an ongoing process of transformation, evolution and incremental change for a business. This is of course, a very daunting prospect for many housing associations. This is also exactly why there is the need to have a shared vision and a robust plan from project to project. To ensure that everything is encompassed and integrated as part of an overall programme of continuous improvement.

A-CLASS SOLUTIONS FOR HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Time to cut through the noise, and realise the technology solutions that are the most relevant you. We're not going to lie, we're experts in the housing sector, it's our most populated customer sector, one we have worked in for over 15 years and we've delivered many digital transformation projects that have been revolutionary for housing associations like yours.

“We decided to go with Britannic for our WAN and telephony, amongst other considerations, because we were confident that they could not only look after what we needed now, but are also the type of strategic partner we need for the future. The first phase, the WAN deployment, is progressing well. The Project Manager has been excellent, keeping the project running smoothly, managing any difficulties and regularly communicating with us on progress. Much of our own resources are focussed on keeping our business going so we have little spare capacity to manage this one – Britannic have made sure that they let us know what is required from our side at each stage. I am looking forward to next steps of our partnership with Britannic.”

ADVANCE HOUSING
PHILIP JACKSON, HEAD OF ICT & BUSINESS SYSTEMS

The contact centre is a vital business aspect for housing associations, it's the core for customer service and engagement. Before you go about selecting new technologies, it's important to understand how they will improve your customers' experience. We lead with solutions that help to solve your customer service problems in the contact centre like Conversational AI, RPA, Process and Workflow Orchestration, Smart Inboxes, Smart Forms and Self Service portals.

MEET AMI... YOUR BEST AGENT YET

Ami is our [revolutionary Conversational AI](#), created with organisations like housing associations in mind. She gains her knowledge from content on your website and learns by having real conversations with your customers. Not there to replace your employees, but complement and free them from menial, repetitive tasks that disrupt their productivity. Ami is there for your customers 24/7, 365 and she doesn't need energy drinks to pull all-nighters!

With the current housing crisis in the UK, your housing association needs Ami to help deal with the demands of your customers and spread the workload evenly across your already stretched employees. Housing associations could be utilising Ami to help deal with customer issues such as maintenance repairs, generic queries and welfare enquiries. No need for your customers to speak with a contact centre agent, when they can log their fault with Ami.

ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION (RPA) FOR CLUNKY PROCESSES

Teamed with Robotic Process Automation (RPA), you can take our technology tools like Ami to the next level. Once Ami has had the conversation with your customer, she can either pass it on to a human agent if needed, or with RPA take action herself, so your employees don't have to. In the housing sector, this could translate into a task like a maintenance request being fully automated.

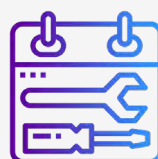
AN AUTOMATED MAINTENANCE REQUEST



Customer reports leaky boiler via Ami. They share pictures and details and suggest a day and time to have the issue fixed.



Ami automatically reports the issue. She pulls through all the details and logs the information with the maintenance request.



Using RPA, she books a date and time to fix the issue for the customer and notifies the maintenance team.



The customer is sent a confirmation of the maintenance appointment. It's as easy as that!

A task that originally would've been passed around your contact centre until it reached the right department has been taken away. Now, your customers can easily schedule a maintenance request using chat (Ami) and other channels, such as SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Alexa, voice (telephone) and email!

GAMIFICATION IN CONTACT CENTRES

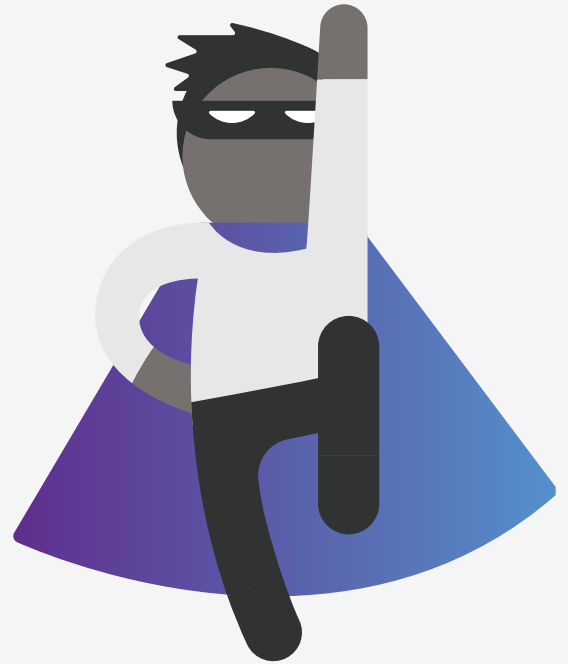
There's no doubt that the role of [the contact centre agent is changing](#). In future, they will be more specialist and proactive, rather than reactive. With these new automation technologies and the help of Ami, your contact centre agents will be talented, customer service heroes.

And what better way to motivate your customer service heroes than a competition between one another? Brace yourself, gamification in the contact centre is here.

We all know that saying happy employees = happy customers. Gamification is a key way to keep your contact centre agents happy. Just watch your customer sentiment, NPS score and positive C-SAT reviews increase.

Gamification motivates call centre agents because it enables them to feel empowered and valued. By implementing it in your housing association you'll start to see results like:

- Increased productivity
- Agents achieving and exceeding personalised goals
- Higher customer satisfaction
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased agent knowledge
- Quicker first call resolution rate
- Alignment to your corporate goals
- Information displayed in a more engaging manner
- Blended information from multiple systems – contact centre, CRM, housing management system and many more



(VERY) SMART INBOXES

With a large amount of messages coming into your contact centre inbound, all too often the resolution rate is too slow.

Super-charge your contact centre with a Smart Inbox. Our solution acts as an automation hub for messages coming in. Utilising 'if this' 'then that' principles to initiate workflows. This level of automation helps to organise requests coming in and speeds up the resolution time.

SMART FORMS

The traditional contact centre agent uses 7 different systems on average day to day. At housing associations, where the workload is stretched already in particular, this doesn't bode well for productivity.

What if we told you that you can reduce the number of contact centre systems your agents work out of to one? Your single pane of glass. Introduce Smart Forms as your input process and your agents will thank you. Integrated data ensures the information is fed back into the correct fields on any one of your average 7 different systems. Accuracy is increased and significant time saved; a win-win for you and your customers.

Enable your agents to work from one screen. Communicating with customers with contact centre technologies and social media. Get to the point quick and improve the speed your agents deal with customer issues.

WEB REAL-TIME COMMUNICATIONS (WEBRTC)

Placing service at your customer's fingertips is easy with WebRTC. The solution we've got up for grabs is WebCall. Make your customer journey easier and enable communication through web chat, screen sharing, video chat and calling at the click of a button from your website.

WebRTC connects digital platforms with people in the contact centre. Enabling you to answer queries faster and help your customer during their browsing session on your website. It also enables you to understand the digital journey and route based upon stage in the online process or page. Better still, WebCall will integrate with your contact centre system for easy tenant handling through your customer service hub.

THE BUSINESS CASE STEPS FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE HOUSING SECTOR

Digital transformation is not a choice, it's a necessary journey for all businesses. We all know this, but you need to convince your stakeholders and colleagues first before you start on the path to transformation. Remember, digital transformation starts with people and culture – not technology. Culture is a different kettle of fish, it's the first step before building your business case. Once you've got your culture right, you're ready to follow our steps to building a business case. If you need help embarking on this journey we can share our experience with you on the steps to take to not only get the technology right, but importantly embark upon this process of cultural change, engagement, design and successful implementation.

It's a project that needs to be led by board members and C-level executives, plus a digital transformation executive leader, if you're lucky enough to have one! For housing associations, [there are 6 key questions board members should ask](#) when they are discussing digital strategy with their executives:

THE 6 KEY QUESTIONS

1

What will it take to meet our customers' expectations in a digital world?

2

Do our business plans reflect the full potential of technology to improve our performance?

3

Is our portfolio of technology investments aligned with opportunities and threats?

4

Do we have the capabilities required to deliver value from the technologies?

5

Who is accountable for digital and how do we hold them to account?

6

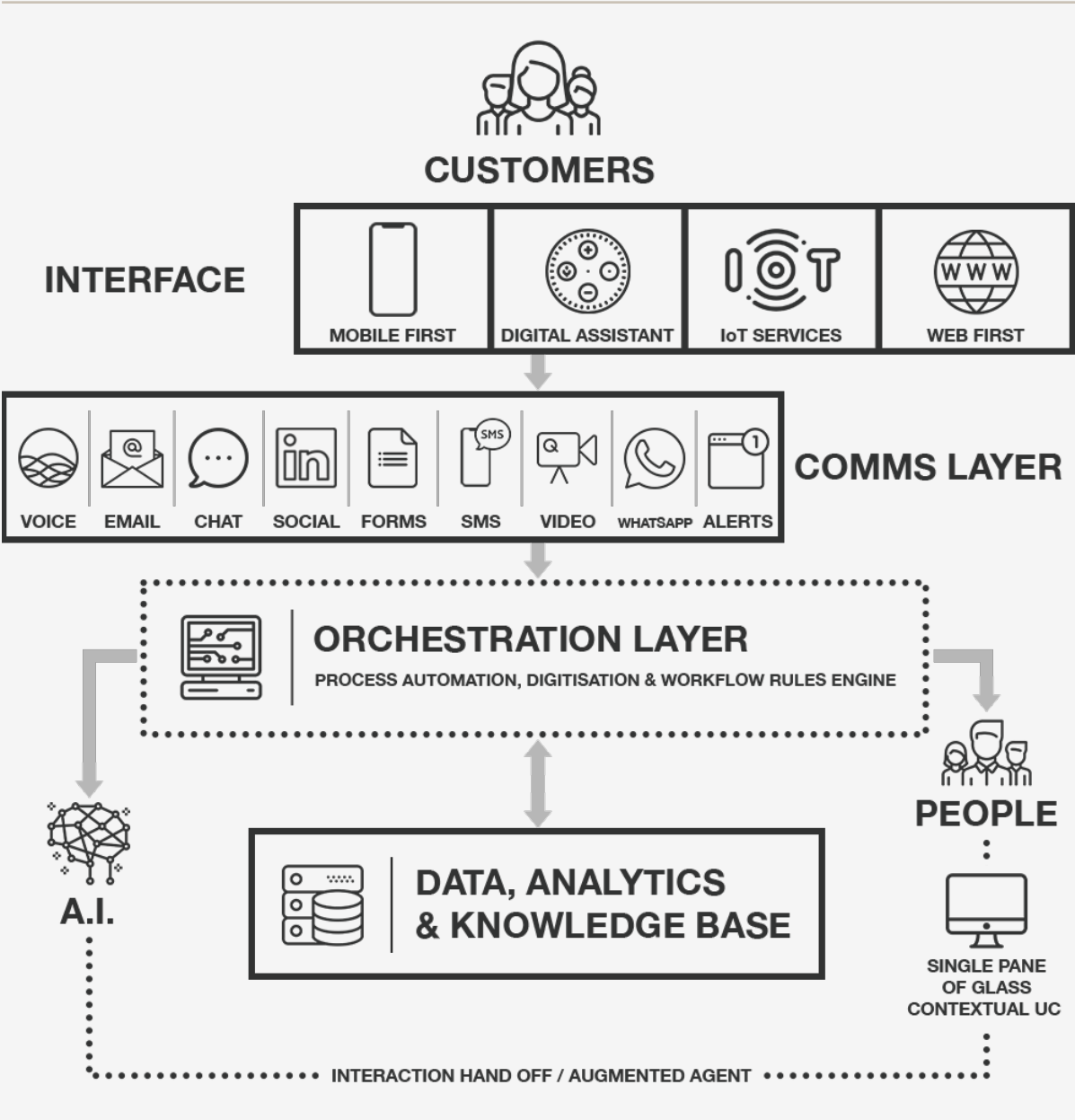
Are we comfortable with our level of digital risk?

INFRASTRUCTURE IS ALWAYS A GOOD PLACE TO START

It's difficult to know where to start. With digital transformation being such a large change, particularly for housing associations, often set in their ways. But you've got to start somewhere.

It's best to start with infrastructure and areas that will have little effect to customers and employees. Get the infrastructure flexible, agile and working for you before you look at projects with a higher rate of change.

Our orchestration layer encapsulates how you can build and ICT infrastructure that's fully integrated. Transformation can be made easy if the basics are right.



ABOUT BRITANNIC


We are award-winning specialists in voice communications, systems integration and managed services. Most importantly, we're a long-term partner for the housing sector and help to deliver value and excellence of service both internally and externally to tenants. Whilst managing and developing complex and mixed technology infrastructures and service providers within typically fixed and increasingly restricted, annual budgets. We strive to innovate and embrace new technologies to support the changing demographics of the tenant community and changes within the UK economy, whilst meeting staff expectations and objectives passed down from the board.

We help to improve access to tenants, enhance customer service, support equality and diversity, support KLOEs and the green agenda. Underpinning business continuity plans, enabling mobile and flexible working and delivering value for money, are also key benefits of our managed solutions.

Our leading business and technical expertise with a consultative approach has helped many housing associations with their Digital Transformation. We work with you to understand your business goals, processes and culture to develop personalised digital strategies. Discovering your needs, demonstrating technology and designing, building and supporting your integrated solution, enabling you to meet your objectives at your own pace.

As leaders in innovation we are proud to bring disruptive technologies to customers such as: artificial intelligence, Web Real Time Communications and Robotic Automation Processing. Digital Transformation is an evolutionary journey, and we help you to keep it simple and flexible, transforming business communications, processes and improving your customer experience.

TALK TO ONE OF OUR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION EXPERTS.

 01483 242526

 hello@btl.net.co.uk

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