GLOBAL JOURNAL
OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH - A: ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT

Volume 26 | Issue 1 | 2026 | Article ID: GJMBR-156044 | Language: English

CATALOGING
LCC • T58.6

Beyond Silos: A Strategic Framework for the Integrated Nexus of Technology and Business Systems

Article Record

Dr. Thembela Nokela*
*Corresponding Author

Benoni, Gauteng, South Africa

RECEIVED	REVISED	ACCEPTED	PUBLISHED	PEER REVIEW
2026-01-07	2026-01-08	2026-01-13	2026-04-10	Double Blind

Abstract

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case study | corporate strategy | digital paradox | digital transformation | integrated strategic nexus | organizational agility | qualitative methods

AI USE STATEMENT
No generative AI was used for analysis or results.

FUNDING
No external funding was declared for this work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY
Not applicable for this article.

ETHICS
No ethics committee approval was required for this article type.

CONSENT
Not applicable for this article.

TRIAL REG.
Not applicable.

Crossref DOI: 10.34257/GJMBRA156044

How to Cite: Nokela, T. (2026). Beyond Silos: A Strategic Framework for the Integrated Nexus of Technology and Business Systems. Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 26(1), 12-16. DOI: 10.34257/GJMBRA156044

AR Experience | Web Page | DOI

Print ISSN 0975-5853
Online ISSN 2249-4588

Under the strict compliance and defined process of

ARCHIVAL RECORD

GJMBR · Vol 26 · Issue 1 · 2026

Article ID GJMBR-156044 · DOI 10.34257/GJMBRA156044

Print ISSN 0975-5853 · Online ISSN 2249-4588

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GJMBR Volume 26 Issue 1

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Abstract

This research paper explores the persistent "Digital Paradox"—the phenomenon wherein significant investments in digital technologies fail to yield commensurate strategic value for organisations. Recognising that digital and business strategies are becoming inseparable, the study develops the Integrated Strategic Nexus (ISN) framework to guide the unification of technology and business management within contemporary enterprises. Employing a rigorous qualitative mixed-methods approach, the study integrates a PRISMA-compliant systematic literature review (SLR) with multiple case studies of five multinational firms, incorporating 35 semi-structured interviews with C-suite executives. Thematic analysis using NVivo 14 software underpins the findings. Results demonstrate that "Strategic Osmosis"—the seamless absorption of technology into core business strategy—enables organisations to achieve higher integration maturity, reflected in superior strategic realisation rates, innovation velocity, and financial performance. This paper contributes original value by synthesising the Resource-Based View (RBV) with emergent digital business strategy literature to propose a robust diagnostic tool for assessing integration depth. Practical implications include a call for the reconfiguration of corporate governance, with particular emphasis on repositioning technology leaders as strategic architects. The ISN framework is validated through empirical and theoretical triangulation, offering a roadmap for organisations seeking to maximise the strategic value of digital investments.

Keywords: *case study, corporate strategy, digital paradox, digital transformation, integrated strategic nexus, organizational agility, qualitative methods, resource based view, strategic governance, technology-business integration*

Corresponding Author: Dr. Thembela Nokela, Benoni, Gauteng, South Africa, e-mail: thembela.nokela@lyceum.edu.za
DOI: 10.34257/GJMBRA156044

1. Introduction

The contemporary business environment is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity a condition increasingly described as "permanent turbulence" (Sebastian et al., 2017). Against this backdrop, the traditional dichotomy between technology and business management is dissolving. Historically, Information Technology (IT) was relegated to a peripheral support function, often managed in isolation from the broader strategic agenda (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). This compartmentalisation, or "siloing," resulted in limited strategic alignment and suboptimal returns on digital investments.

Recent scholarship, however, emphasises the criticality of integrating digital and business strategies. Bharadwaj et al. (2013) contend that digital business strategy is increasingly indistinguishable from overall corporate strategy, with competitive advantage emerging at the intersection of technology capabilities and innovative business models. Despite this recognised imperative, many enterprises continue to experience "Governance Drift," wherein technology initiatives are decoupled from business outcomes (Westerman et al., 2014). This drift manifests not as a technical deficit, but as a failure of leadership and integration, often exacerbated by debates over centralisation versus decentralisation of IT governance.

The literature reveals intense debate regarding the optimal locus of IT decision-making: centralisation is touted for its efficiency and standardisation, whereas decentralisation is linked to agility and innovation (Sebastian et al., 2017; Westerman et al., 2014). However, such binary approaches have proven insufficient in addressing the core challenge the need for a governance model that unifies technology and business imperatives in real time. The present study intervenes by proposing that the solution lies not in choosing between centralisation and decentralisation, but in pursuing "governance integration", a holistic alignment of technical and business domains.

This research sets out to bridge the persistent gap between digital investment and strategic value realisation a phenomenon encapsulated in the so-called "Digital Paradox." By developing and empirically validating the Integrated Strategic Nexus (ISN) framework, the paper aims to provide both scholars and practitioners with a comprehensive model for achieving deep, sustained integration between technology and business management. The ISN framework is explicitly designed to reposition technology from a cost center to a strategic asset, thereby unlocking new sources of value and competitive differentiation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Evolution of Digital-Business Integration

The relationship between technology and business strategy has evolved markedly over the past decade. Early approaches positioned IT as an operational enabler, distanced from the core drivers of value creation (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). However, the proliferation of digital technologies cloud computing, artificial intelligence, open source

software, and generative AI has rendered this separation untenable. Modern enterprises must now orchestrate technology and business functions as mutually reinforcing elements of a unified strategic agenda (Westerman et al., 2014; Sebastian et al., 2017; Linåker & Muto, 2025).

The literature identifies multiple frameworks for conceptualising digital-business integration. The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that sustainable competitive advantage arises from the unique configuration and integration of organisational resources including technological assets, human capital, and business processes (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

Recent work extends this perspective to digital resources, emphasising the importance of dynamic capabilities, agility, adaptability, and learning, as mediators of Value (Sebastian et al. 2027).

Research on open source software (OSS) adoption in the public sector further illuminates the interplay between technology policy, governance, and strategic outcomes. Linåker and Muto (2025) demonstrate that OSS is a strategic enabler of digital transformation, supporting interoperability, sovereignty, and transparency. However, they also find that the successful realisation of these benefits depends on clear policy frameworks and institutional support structures, such as Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs). This underscores the centrality of governance integration in translating technological potential into strategic impact.

Similarly, the emergence of generative AI (GenAI) presents new challenges and opportunities for requirements engineering (RE) and broader business processes (Cheng et al., 2025). While GenAI offers transformative potential for automating and optimising RE activities, its adoption is constrained by issues of reproducibility, interpretability, and trust. These challenges highlight the need for integrated governance frameworks that address both technical and organisational dimensions.

2.2. Governance Integration: From Theory to Practice

Governance integration is increasingly recognised as the linchpin of successful digital transformation. Westerman et al. (2014) argue that the failure to realise value from digital investments is rarely due to technical shortcomings; rather, it results from a lack of alignment between technology initiatives and business strategy. They advocate for a "Digital Mastery" approach, wherein organisations develop both digital capabilities and strong leadership to integrate technology with business objectives.

Sebastian et al. (2017) extend this argument, demonstrating that large, established firms must fundamentally transform their operating models to achieve digital maturity. This transformation requires the dissolution of traditional silos, the reconfiguration of governance structures, and the elevation of technology leaders such as Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and Chief Technology Officers (CTOs) to the status of core strategic architects.

Emergent frameworks for AI governance further reinforce the importance of layered, integrative approaches. Agarwal and Nene (2025) propose a five-layer model that bridges regulatory mandates, technical standards, assessment methodologies, and certification processes. Their case studies on AI fairness and incident reporting reveal that effective governance depends on the alignment of high-level principles with actionable implementation tools. This layered approach is directly relevant to the integration of technology and business systems, as both domains require structured pathways from strategy to execution.

2.3. Practical Challenges and Gaps

Despite significant advances in the literature, several challenges remain. First, there is often a lack of clarity regarding the mechanisms by which regulatory and strategic mandates are translated into operational practices (Agarwal & Nene, 2025). This gap contributes to inconsistencies in compliance, risk management, and value realisation.

Second, the integration of emerging technologies such as generative AI and OSS into business processes is often hampered by fragmented governance and limited benchmarking (Cheng et al., 2025; Linåker & Muto, 2025). Both studies highlight the need for holistic evaluation frameworks and robust metrics to assess integration depth and maturity.

Finally, the literature points to the persistent challenge of aligning diverse stakeholders, business leaders, technology professionals, regulators, and end-users, within a unified governance structure (Westerman et al., 2014; Sebastian et al., 2017). Overcoming these challenges requires not only new frameworks but also empirical validation and context-sensitive adaptation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To address the complexity of technology-business integration and generate actionable insights, this study employs a qualitative mixed-methods approach in three sequential phases:

1. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) A PRISMA-compliant systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to synthesise the theoretical and empirical foundations of technology-business convergence. Following the protocols outlined by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), the review encompassed 120 peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2026, sourced from leading academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and IEEE Xplore. The inclusion criteria prioritised works addressing digital strategy integration, IT governance, open source adoption, requirements engineering, and AI governance. The review process involved:

- Defining research questions and inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- Conducting a comprehensive search using relevant keywords and Boolean operators.
- Screening titles and abstracts for relevance.
- Assessing full texts for methodological rigor and thematic fit.
- Coding and synthesising findings using thematic analysis.

2. Multiple-Case Study Analysis Building on the SLR, the study employed a multiple-case study design to empirically investigate integration practices in five multinational firms identified as "Digital Masters" (Westerman et al., 2014). These organisations, drawn from the logistics, manufacturing, and financial sectors, were selected for their demonstrated digital maturity and strong leadership capabilities.

Data collection involved 35 semi-structured interviews with C-suite executives, including CIOs, CTOs, Chief Digital Officers, and board members. The interview protocol was designed to elicit detailed narratives on strategic participation, resource flexibility, alignment conflict resolution, and key performance indicator (KPI) integration. Interviewees were selected based on their direct involvement in strategic technology decision-making.

Table 1. Comparative Strategic and Financial Performance Metrics

Performance Indicator	Siloed Organisations (n=2)	Integrated Nexus (n=3)	Variance (%)	Statistical Significance (p)
Strategy Realisation Rate	38.2%	80.4%	+110.5%	$p < 0.01$
Innovation Velocity (Days)	410	155	-62.2%	$p < 0.05$
Mean Return on Equity (ROE)	9.6%	18.8%	+95.8%	$p < 0.05$
Project Abandonment Rate	46.0%	12.0%	-73.9%	$p < 0.01$
Agility Score (1-10 Scale)	3.4	8.9	+161.8%	$p < 0.01$

In addition to interviews, internal strategy documents, governance policies, and performance reports were analysed to triangulate findings.

3. Thematic Analysis and Data Synthesis Qualitative data from interviews and documents were transcribed and imported into NVivo 14 software for coding and analysis. Thematic analysis followed the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Familiarisation with data through repeated reading.
- Generation of initial codes reflecting key concepts and practices.
- Search for overarching themes, including "integration maturity," "strategic osmosis," and "value leakage."
- Review and refinement of themes to ensure coherence and relevance.
- Definition and naming of themes.
- Synthesis of findings to inform the development of the ISN framework.

Quantitative performance data (e.g., strategy realisation rates, innovation velocity, return on equity) were extracted from company reports and benchmarked across case organisations. Statistical significance was assessed using appropriate tests (e.g., t-tests) to validate observed differences between siloed and integrated firms.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. The Integrated Strategic Nexus (ISN) Framework

Analysis of the case studies and literature synthesis led to the development of the Integrated Strategic Nexus (ISN) framework. The ISN conceptualises the integration of technology infrastructure, business strategy, and organisational culture as overlapping gears within a dynamic feedback loop. At the point of intersection—the "Nexus"—value is generated through real-time data sharing, joint decision-making, and continuous alignment of technical and business objectives.

Visual Description: The ISN framework is represented by three interlocking gears labeled "Technology Infrastructure," "Business Strategy," and "Organisational Culture." The central intersection the Nexus serves as the locus of value creation, where information flows seamlessly and decisions are co-owned by technical and business leaders.

4.2. Comparative Performance Metrics

Table 1.1 presents average strategic and financial performance indicators for siloed versus integrated organisations, based on data from the five case study firms.

Analysis of Table 1.1:

The data reveal a pronounced performance gap between siloed and integrated organisations. Notably, the strategy realisation rate in integrated firms more than doubles that of siloed counterparts (80.4% vs. 38.2%, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative coding indicates that this is attributable to the phenomenon of "Strategic Osmosis," wherein technical teams are not only informed of the "what" but are deeply engaged with the "why" of each initiative. This shared understanding fosters alignment, accountability, and accelerated execution.

Integrated firms also demonstrate substantially faster innovation cycles, with average time-to-market for new products reduced by 62.2% (155 days vs. 410 days, $p < 0.05$). This is linked to the adoption of "agile budgeting" practices, enabling rapid resource reallocation in response to market shifts—a capability often absent in siloed organisations.

Financial performance, as measured by return on equity (ROE), is nearly twice as high in integrated firms (18.8% vs. 9.6%, $p < 0.05$). Project abandonment rates—a proxy for value leakage—are dramatically lower in integrated environments (12% vs. 46%, $p < 0.01$), reflecting more effective prioritisation and alignment.

The agility score, derived from a composite assessment of decision-making speed, adaptability, and organisational learning, is significantly higher in integrated firms (8.9 vs. 3.4, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the link between governance integration and dynamic capability.

4.3. Thematic Insights

Strategic Osmosis and Integration Maturity The concept of "Strategic Osmosis" emerged as a central theme across high-performing organisations. In these firms, technology leaders are embedded in the earliest stages of strategic planning, contributing to vision-setting, resource allocation, and risk assessment. This contrasts with siloed organisations, where technology input is often solicited late in the process, resulting in misalignment and reactive execution.

Integration maturity is characterised by the presence of formal mechanisms for joint decision-making, shared KPIs that encompass both financial and non-financial metrics, and institutionalised feedback loops between business and technical functions. High-maturity organisations exhibit:

- Early and continuous involvement of CIOs/CTOs in strategic planning cycles.
- Formalised processes for dynamic budget reallocation in response to external shocks.
- Multi-dimensional KPIs that track not only financial outcomes but also innovation, customer experience, and operational resilience.

Value Leakage in Siloed Organisations Siloed firms are plagued by "value leakage"—the dissipation of resources on projects that are technologically sound but strategically irrelevant. High project abandonment rates (46%) reflect a failure to align technical execution

with evolving business priorities. Interviews reveal frustration among both business and technology leaders, who cite a lack of visibility, misaligned incentives, and bureaucratic inertia as persistent obstacles.

Agile Budgeting and Resource Flexibility Integrated firms excel in agile budgeting an approach that enables rapid reallocation of digital resources in response to market disruptions or strategic pivots. This capability is underpinned by real-time data sharing, cross-functional governance bodies, and a culture of experimentation. The result is a marked acceleration in innovation velocity and a reduction in time-to-market for new offerings.

KPI Integration and Board Oversight High-maturity organisations employ integrated KPI dashboards that provide the board with a holistic view of technology-business integration. Non-financial metrics—such as innovation pipeline health, customer satisfaction, and system resilience—are monitored alongside traditional financial indicators. This supports proactive governance and early identification of misalignment.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpreting the Digital Paradox

The findings substantiate the argument that the "Digital Paradox" is fundamentally a governance failure rather than a technical one. Treating technology as a support function leads to its management as a cost to be minimised, resulting in underinvestment, misalignment, and missed opportunities for value creation (Westerman et al., 2014). By contrast, positioning technology as a "Strategic Nexus" transforms it into a capability to be maximised, driving superior performance across multiple dimensions.

This shift requires a reimagining of corporate governance. The CIO/CTO must transition from operational management to strategic architecture, participating as a peer in the executive suite and shaping organisational vision, strategy, and execution (Sebastian et al., 2017). The ISN framework provides a roadmap for this transition, emphasising integration at the levels of structure, process, and culture.

5.2. Synthesising Theory and Practice

The empirical results align with and extend the theoretical insights of the RBV and digital business strategy literature. Integration maturity emerges as a dynamic capability one that enables organisations to sense, seize, and reconfigure resources in response to changing environments (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Sebastian et al., 2017). The ISN framework operationalises this capability by specifying the mechanisms strategic osmosis, agile budgeting, integrated KPIs that underpin successful integration.

The analysis also resonates with recent scholarship on AI and OSS governance. For example, Agarwal and Nene's (2025) five-layer framework for AI governance highlights the importance of aligning regulatory mandates with practical implementation tools. Similarly, Linåker and Muto (2025) demonstrate that OSS adoption in government requires not only policy incentives but also robust support structures and capacity-building mechanisms. These insights reinforce the argument that integration is not a one-time event but a continuous process of alignment, adaptation, and learning.

5.3. Addressing Contemporary Challenges

The rise of generative AI, open source ecosystems, and rapidly evolving regulatory landscapes introduces new complexities to technology-business integration. Cheng et al. (2025) identify reproducibility, hallucinations, and interpretability as core challenges in GenAI-enabled requirements engineering, with strong interdependencies that demand holistic solutions. The ISN framework is adaptable to these challenges, providing a structure for coordinating technical robustness, methodological maturity, and governance integration.

Moreover, the public sector's adoption of OSS as documented by Linåker and Muto (2025) offers valuable lessons for private enterprises. The establishment of Open Source Program Offices (OSPOs), clear policy frameworks, and collaborative governance models are shown to enhance strategic alignment and value realisation. These practices can be leveraged in commercial contexts to foster innovation, interoperability, and resilience.

5.4. Implications for Corporate Governance

The practical implications of the ISN framework are significant. Organisations seeking to maximise the strategic value of digital investives should:

- Elevate technology leaders to strategic roles, integrating them fully into executive decision-making bodies.
- Institutionalise joint governance structures—such as digital steering committees and cross-functional task forces—to ensure continuous alignment.
- Develop integrated KPI systems that track both financial and non-financial indicators of integration maturity.
- Foster a culture of experimentation, learning, and agility, supported by real-time data sharing and transparent communication.
- Regularly assess integration depth using diagnostic tools grounded in the RBV and digital strategy literature.

Failure to pursue these measures risks perpetuating value leakage, strategic drift, and underperformance in an increasingly digital and competitive landscape.

6. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the integration of technology and business management is no longer an optional endeavor but a prerequisite for organisational survival and success. The "Digital Paradox"— wherein digital investments fail to yield strategic value is fundamentally a governance issue, rooted in the persistence of silos and the marginalisation of technology leaders.

The Integrated Strategic Nexus (ISN) framework, developed and empirically validated through a rigorous mixed-methods approach, provides a comprehensive roadmap for achieving deep, sustained integration. Organisations that embrace the ISN principles realise substantial gains in strategy realisation rates, innovation velocity, financial performance, and organisational agility.

The study's contributions are both theoretical and practical. By synthesising the Resource-Based View with contemporary digital strategy and governance literature, the paper offers a novel diagnostic tool for measuring integration maturity. The empirical findings underscore the importance of strategic osmosis, agile budgeting, and integrated KPIs as enablers of superior performance.

Future research should explore the application of the ISN framework in diverse contexts, including small and medium-sized enterprises, non-profit organisations, and public sector agencies. Additionally, the evolving landscape of AI, OSS, and regulatory frameworks warrants ongoing investigation to ensure that governance models remain adaptive and effective.

In sum, moving "beyond silos" is not merely a conceptual aspiration but an actionable imperative for organisations seeking to thrive in the digital age.

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