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Disruptive Technologies, Incomplete Transformations: Human Capital as the Overlooked Variable in Transformative Business Models

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Abstract

Despite significant investments in new-age technologies (AI, digital platforms, data ecosystems), many organizational transformation initiatives remain incomplete or fragile. This article argues that the primary explanation for these failures is not technological but human. We posit that human capital is the overlooked structural variable in transformative business models (TBM). Drawing on research in business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, and strategic human resource management, we propose an integrative framework in which TBM success depends on the alignment between strategic reconfiguration, organizational capabilities, and HR architecture (skills, leadership, incentives, and culture). Based on multiple case studies of firms undergoing AI-driven transformations, we identify key tensions (efficiency versus experimentation, automation versus augmentation, agility versus stability) and show how HR practices can help resolve them.

This research repositions HR as a central lever of business model transformation and provides practical guidance for designing organizations that are both high-performing, adaptive, and sustainable.

Introduction

Across industries, organizations are approaching an inflection point where transformative change is no longer optional but imperative. Global disruptions, including climate change, pandemics, digital disintermediation, and geopolitical instability, are compelling firms to fundamentally rethink how they create, deliver, and capture value (Christensen, 1997; Pisano, 2015; Teece, 2018). In this context, traditional business models are increasingly insufficient because they rely on value creation and capture logics that fail to account for emerging imperatives such as speed, agility, ecosystem integration, and sustainability (Amit & Zott, 2001; Teece, 2010; Zott & Amit, 2010). Next-generation technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, and advanced data platforms, are no longer merely incremental improvements. Instead, they have become central drivers of business model innovation (Christensen et al., 2015; McGrath, 2013). These technologies enable profound reconfigurations of value propositions, operational processes, and ecosystem relationships (Kapoor & Lee, 2013; Nambisan et al., 2017; Yoo et al., 2010). In particular, digital platforms reshape value creation logics by orchestrating multiple stakeholders and leveraging network effects, giving rise to modular architectures and accelerating innovation dynamics (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014; Parker et al., 2016).

Despite substantial investments in digital technologies, many transformation initiatives remain incomplete, fragile, or strategically misaligned (Besson & Rowe, 2012; Vial, 2019; Westerman et al., 2014). AI-driven transformations, for example, generate profound multi-level effects: they reshape national economic structures, require significant cultural adaptation within organizations, and raise ethical and privacy concerns among consumers (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Kopalle et al., 2022). This reality raises a central question: why are some organizations able to convert technological disruption into sustained transformation while others fail, despite possessing similar technological capabilities? The literature on transformative business models (TBMs) has largely emphasized technological, structural, and strategic dimensions of transformation (Akter et al., 2022; Kavadias et al., 2016). It identifies triggers such as environmental uncertainty, adaptive capacity, and operational flexibility, as well as outcomes including strategic reconfiguration and ecosystem integration. However, this body of research remains relatively silent regarding the role of human capital, even though TBMs require deep changes not only in systems and processes but also in skills configurations, leadership approaches, incentive systems, and organizational cultures (Barney, 1991; Boxall & Purcell, 2016; Wright et al., 2001). Business model transformation fundamentally depends on dynamic capabilities—the ability to sense technological shifts, seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure organizational assets (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Teece, 2007). These capabilities are inherently embedded in human resources and talent management systems. Organizational architecture, culture, and motivational systems are critical determinants of successful technology adoption and implementation (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 2010). Although the

digital transformation literature emphasizes strategic alignment, it consistently highlights failures resulting from the underestimation of human factors (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Kane et al., 2015).

At the same time, research in strategic management and strategic human resource management (SHRM) demonstrates that HR practices are not merely supportive functions. Rather, they operate as coordination and organizational learning mechanisms that embed transformation within durable routines and competencies (Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Jiang et al., 2012; Lepak & Snell, 1999). Human capital therefore represents the structurally overlooked variable in transformative business models. Building on research in business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, and SHRM, this study proposes an integrative framework in which the success of TBMs depends on alignment among: (1) the strategic reconfiguration of value creation and capture; (2) dynamic organizational capabilities; and (3) HR architecture, encompassing skills configuration, leadership, incentive systems, and organizational culture.

To illustrate this framework, we analyze five case studies of firms undergoing AI-driven transformation. Our findings identify three major managerial tensions (efficiency versus experimentation, automation versus augmentation, and agility versus stability) and demonstrate how HR practices serve as mechanisms for managing these tensions. By repositioning SHRM as a central lever of transformative business models, this study advances understanding of organizational transformation in contexts of technological disruption and provides actionable insights for designing high-performing, adaptive, and sustainable organizations.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. First, we develop an integrative theoretical framework combining business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, and SHRM to formalize the concept of “transformative business models integrating HR architecture.” Second, we describe the methodology, based on a multiple-case study design involving five AI-transforming firms and qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. Third, we present our findings, identify core tensions, and propose HR-based mechanisms for managing them. Finally, we discuss theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and directions for future research, particularly regarding the sustainable alignment between disruptive technologies and human capital.

1. Disruptive Technologies and Transformative Business Models: Theoretical Promises and Explanatory Limitations

This section critically examines the conceptual foundations of transformative business models in contexts characterized by technological disruption. We identify a significant analytical imbalance in the literature: although prior research acknowledges the centrality of technological change and strategic capabilities, it remains comparatively underdeveloped with respect to the structuring role of human capital in enabling successful transformation. Accordingly, this section proceeds in two stages. First, it develops the concept of business model innovation in the era of disruptive technologies. Second, it examines the explanatory limitations of the dynamic capabilities framework, particularly its insufficient integration of human capital as a foundational driver of technological transformation.

1.1 Disruptive Technologies and Transformative Business Models: Two Concepts Addressing a Common Challenge

Organizational transformation in the digital era cannot be fully understood without integrating two core constructs in contemporary strategic management: disruptive technologies and transformative business models. Disruptive technologies act as powerful catalysts of industry restructuring and radical innovation (Christensen, 1997; Teece, 2018), whereas transformative business models refer to firms’ capacity to durably reconfigure their value creation and value capture logics in response to such disruptions (Amit & Zott, 2001; Teece, 2010). However, the relationship between these constructs is not technologically deterministic. The mere adoption of a disruptive technology does not automatically yield effective business model transformation. Clarifying the conceptual boundaries and interactions between these two

constructs is therefore essential to understanding the conditions under which technological disruption translates into sustained organizational transformation.

1.1.1 Toward a Conceptual Framework of Transformative Business Models in the Digital Era

The notion of a Transformative Business Model (TBM) builds upon foundational definitions of the business model as a system explaining how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value. Amit and Zott (2001) conceptualize the business model as a configuration of interdependent activities forming a coherent system centered on value creation. In their view, performance depends not solely on resource endowments or industry positioning but on how activities are structured and linked to exploit complementarities, novelty, and efficiency. Teece (2010) extends this perspective by emphasizing value capture as an integral component of the business model. Technological innovation alone does not guarantee sustainable profitability; without an appropriate model for monetization and protection, value may dissipate rapidly. Zott and Amit (2010) further conceptualize business model innovation as changes in activity systems, transactional structures, and governance mechanisms. They identify performance drivers such as novelty, complementarities, efficiency, and lock-in, thereby clarifying how systemic reconfiguration can generate competitive advantage. Within this framework, technological disruption (Christensen, 1997) operates as a trigger for business model transformation. Disruptive innovations redefine performance metrics, open new market segments, and destabilize incumbent value logics. Yet Christensen's analysis pays limited attention to the internal organizational conditions that determine whether disruption translates into sustained advantage. Transformative business models address this limitation by conceptualizing transformation as a systemic reconfiguration of activities, capabilities, governance structures, and stakeholder relationships.

A TBM may therefore be defined as an evolving and coherent architecture of activities, resources, and governance mechanisms that enables a firm to durably reconfigure its value creation and capture logic under conditions of technological disruption and environmental uncertainty. This transformation is systemic rather than incremental: it simultaneously reshapes value propositions, revenue structures, internal processes, ecosystem relationships, and organizational capabilities. The concept of TBM thus emerges at the intersection of three streams of research: business model innovation (Amit & Zott, 2001; Zott & Amit, 2010), value capture theory (Teece, 2010), and disruptive innovation (Christensen, 1997). Their convergence highlights that digital-era transformations extend beyond technological adoption to encompass deep architectural reconfiguration.

1.1.2 Disruptive Technologies: Logics of Rupture and Organizational Reconfiguration

Christensen (1997) defines disruptive technologies as innovations that redefine industry performance criteria rather than simply improving existing trajectories. Unlike incremental innovations, they initially target underserved or fringe segments before reshaping dominant markets. Disruption thus involves the restructuring of cost architectures, competitive dynamics, and value capture mechanisms (Teece, 2018). Recent research suggests that contemporary digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence and digital platforms, generate multi-level systemic transformations (Nambisan et al., 2017). Digital platforms, in particular, reorganize value creation through ecosystem orchestration and network effects (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014; Parker, Van Alstyne, & Choudary, 2016). Value is increasingly co-created across distributed actors rather than generated within vertically integrated firms. At the organizational level, digital disruption requires reconfiguration of internal architectures and decision logics (Verhoef et al., 2021). It transforms learning routines, information systems, and governance mechanisms. Importantly, empirical evidence suggests that digital transformation failure rates remain high (Vial, 2019). Technological adoption alone does not ensure successful

transformation. Instead, disruption generates structural tensions (between exploration and exploitation, algorithmic centralization and human autonomy, agility and stability) that demand complex organizational trade-offs.

Accordingly, disruptive technologies should not be conceptualized as autonomous technical artifacts but as catalysts of systemic recomposition. Their transformative potential depends on the organizational and human capabilities mobilized to integrate them. Technological disruption is therefore a contingent opportunity whose outcome depends on firms' ability to simultaneously reconstruct business models, dynamic capabilities, and organizational architectures.

1.2 Theoretical Foundations: Dynamic Capabilities and the Resource-Based View in Transformative Business Models

Understanding transformative business models requires a theoretical framework capable of explaining both strategic adaptation mechanisms and internal sources of sustained competitive advantage. This section integrates two complementary perspectives: dynamic capabilities theory and the resource-based view (RBV). Together, they illuminate the organizational and human conditions underlying successful transformation.

1.2.1 Dynamic Capabilities Theory as an Explanatory Framework for Transformation

Dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007) extends the RBV by introducing a temporal and adaptive dimension: the firm's capacity to renew, recombine, and reconfigure resources under conditions of uncertainty. Rather than assuming stable resource-market alignments, dynamic capabilities emphasize strategic adaptation in environments characterized by technological discontinuities and regulatory shifts. Teece (2007) identifies three interrelated microfoundations: sensing, seizing, and transforming. Sensing involves detecting technological opportunities and weak market signals. Seizing refers to mobilizing resources and investments to exploit those opportunities. Transforming entails reconfiguring organizational structures and routines to institutionalize new strategic orientations. In the digital era, these microfoundations are particularly salient. Artificial intelligence and platform ecosystems generate unprecedented opportunities while intensifying uncertainty. Technological adoption is insufficient unless firms integrate innovation into their business models, redefine value propositions, restructure internal processes, and recompose partnerships. Dynamic capabilities explain why some firms convert technological disruption into sustained advantage while others fail despite comparable investments. However, the dynamic capabilities literature often remains abstract with respect to its human underpinnings. Although microfoundations imply individual and collective action, the structuring role of human capital is rarely specified. Sensing depends on analytical and cognitive competencies; seizing requires leadership and incentive alignment; transforming demands learning cultures and organizational resilience. From a transformative business model perspective, this omission is critical. When HR architecture, skills configuration, leadership systems, incentives, and culture—is misaligned with strategic transformation, dynamic capabilities remain underdeveloped and transformation initiatives stall. Failures in digital transformation thus frequently reflect organizational incapacity to mobilize human capital rather than technological deficiency.

Dynamic capabilities theory therefore clarifies not only *what* transformation entails but *how* it unfolds. Human capital constitutes the central enabling mechanism through which firms detect, mobilize, and institutionalize disruptive opportunities. Transformative business models ultimately depend on the alignment between technological innovation, strategic reconfiguration, and human resource architecture.

1.1.2 Resource-Based Theory: Human Capital as a Source of Advantage in Transformative Business Models

Resource-Based Theory (RBT), initially formalized by Barney (1991), posits that sustained competitive advantage derives from the possession and strategic deployment of internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). This perspective marked a decisive shift away from industry-structure explanations of performance (Porter, 1980) by asserting that competitiveness is not solely determined by external market positioning but by firm-specific resource configurations and their unique combinations. At the core of organizational performance lie intangible assets (knowledge, expertise, routines, and embedded know-how) that, when strategically orchestrated, generate advantages that competitors cannot easily replicate. Subsequent developments of RBT deepened this perspective by emphasizing organizational capabilities and human capital as central strategic assets. Wernerfelt (1984) introduced the idea of treating resources as part of a strategic portfolio, while Grant (1996) advanced the knowledge-based view, positioning knowledge integration as the foundation of the firm's business model. In parallel, strategic human resource management scholars have demonstrated that HR systems, routines, and employee competencies constitute critical drivers of sustained performance (Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001). Lepak and Snell (1999), Boxall and Purcell (2016), and Delery and Roumpi (2017) further emphasized that HR architecture shapes the alignment between human capital and strategic objectives. More recent research extends RBT into the digital domain, highlighting digital assets, data capabilities, and digital talent management as integral components of contemporary organizational capital. Emerging contributions argue that the strategic orchestration of digital resources, when combined with human competencies, accelerates business model transformation and strengthens competitive advantage in digital ecosystems.

In the digital era, the relevance of RBT is amplified precisely because disruptive technologies have become widely accessible. Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and platform infrastructures do not inherently satisfy VRIN criteria; they can be acquired or replicated by multiple firms. The true source of strategic differentiation lies in the organization's ability to combine these technologies with internal competencies, learning routines, managerial judgment, and culturally embedded practices.

Recent scholarship underscores that resources should be understood as relational and contextually embedded constructs rather than isolated assets. Their strategic value emerges through integration within organizational processes and social structures, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid technological change. Within transformative business models (TBMs), human capital stands out as a central strategic resource because it conditions how disruptive technologies are interpreted, implemented, and institutionalized. Human capital enables the strategic interpretation of technological signals, supports experimentation and organizational innovation, and ensures coherence between individual behaviors and new value logics embedded in TBMs. HR architecture structures the practices, incentives, and governance mechanisms that make durable transformation possible. When digital skills are underdeveloped, when incentive systems discourage experimentation, or when organizational culture remains anchored in traditional routines, technology remains superficial. The business model may appear transformed on the surface, yet fail to undergo deep structural change. In such cases, transformation trajectories remain incomplete, revealing that sustainable TBMs depend fundamentally on the strategic valorization of human capital.

1.2 Theoretical Limitations of Transformative Business Models: The Human Capital Blind Spot

Despite significant conceptual advances in business model innovation and transformation, the literature remains largely technology-centric, generating an important explanatory bias. Research on business models has significantly enhanced our understanding of value architecture—how activities, transactions, governance mechanisms, and ecosystem orchestration create and capture value (Amit & Zott, 2001; Teece, 2010; Zott & Amit, 2010). However, this analytical sophistication has concentrated primarily on structural reconfiguration, platform governance, and ecosystem coordination, often overlooking the human and organizational conditions that enable durable transformation. As disruptive technologies become commoditized, the critical issue is no longer technical implementation per se, but the organization's capacity to integrate, interpret, and institutionalize innovation. This imbalance creates a theoretical blind

spot: TBM research explains architectural transformation yet remains comparatively silent on the mechanisms that stabilize and sustain such transformation over time. A similar limitation can be observed in dynamic capabilities theory, which constitutes the dominant framework for explaining strategic transformation under uncertainty. Teece (2007), Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), and Helfat and Peteraf (2015) conceptualize sustainable performance as dependent upon sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities. Yet these capabilities are often articulated at a relatively high level of abstraction. While the framework identifies phases of strategic reconfiguration, it provides limited specification of how human capital, leadership practices, HR systems, and incentive structures concretely activate the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities.

In AI- and platform-based transformations, success depends precisely on collective capacity: the ability to interpret technological signals, experiment with new value configurations, redesign routines, and realign behaviors. Dynamic capabilities theory identifies transformation processes but does not sufficiently explicate the human mechanisms that render them operational. As a result, analysis of TBMs remains incomplete without integrating a structured examination of HR architecture and human capital alignment. This gap is particularly problematic because TBMs are inherently socio-technical reconfigurations. AI systems, digital platforms, and data ecosystems reshape decision-making processes, cost structures, customer relationships, and value logic. Yet such technological shifts cannot generate durable advantage without parallel transformation in competencies, leadership styles, incentive systems, and organizational culture. Strategic HRM research consistently demonstrates that HR architecture functions as a mechanism of strategic alignment. When neglected, transformations remain superficial: technologies are deployed, but behaviors, routines, and competencies fail to evolve accordingly. Consequently, failed or incomplete transformations are less attributable to technological deficits than to organizational and human misalignment.

These theoretical limitations call for research that explicitly clarifies the structuring role of human capital within TBMs. Moving beyond technology-centric approaches requires analyzing business model transformation not only through technological and strategic architectures but also through HR architecture, skills, leadership, incentives, and culture. The research design adopted in this study responds directly to this need.

2. Research Methodology

The present research adopts a qualitative multi-case methodology, chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of complex and contextual organizational phenomena such as transformations based on disruptive technologies. The case study approach is particularly appropriate when the research object is embedded in dynamic and multifactorial processes, as is the case with transformative business models (Yin, 2018; Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995). According to Yin (2018), this method not only allows for the description of contemporary situations within their real-life context but also enables the explanation of emerging causal relationships, which is essential for understanding how and why certain organizations succeed or fail in integrating disruptive technologies. Likewise, Eisenhardt (1989) emphasizes that case studies are especially useful for building or refining theory when existing frameworks, such as dynamic capabilities or TBMs, present explanatory gaps.

The selection of the companies studied is based on theoretically defined and empirically relevant criteria: they are organizations that have undertaken digital transformations grounded in artificial intelligence and digital platforms, at different stages of strategic maturity. This purposive sampling follows the logic of “information-oriented cases” recommended by Flyvbjerg (2006), who highlights the heuristic value of case studies in eliminating competing hypotheses and uncovering underlying mechanisms. Carson et al. (2001) argue that deliberate variation in contexts and organizational trajectories within a multi-case design strengthens both internal validity and the transferability of conclusions by identifying contextual conditions that facilitate or constrain alignment between disruptive technologies and human capital.

Data collection relies on semi-structured interviews, selected for their ability to generate rich, nuanced, and reflective accounts from organizational actors directly involved in the transformations. Interviews were conducted with executives, HR managers, operational managers, and AI project leaders in order to capture diverse perspectives on technology integration processes and associated managerial tensions. The use of semi-structured interviews is widely recommended in qualitative research on organizational transformation because it combines structure and flexibility: structure ensures comparability of data across cases, while flexibility allows unexpected dimensions to emerge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Charmaz, 2014). The interview guide was developed based on an integrative theoretical framework combining transformative business models, dynamic capabilities theory, and the strategic human resource management literature. It structured data collection around four analytical dimensions: the strategic reconfiguration of value, the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, transforming), the architecture of human capital (skills, leadership, culture, incentives), and the paradoxical tensions inherent in transformation. This thematic construction follows the principles of theoretical grounding described by Maxwell (2013), who recommends directly linking data collection instruments to key research concepts to ensure conceptual validity in analysis.

For data analysis, an inductive–deductive approach was adopted, combining thematic coding and content analysis. Interview transcripts were coded using qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), distinguishing between categories derived from the conceptual framework and new dimensions emerging from the field data, in line with the approaches proposed by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) for generating rich conceptual models from qualitative data. Analysis was first conducted at the within-case level to understand configurations specific to each company, and then at the cross-case level to identify recurring patterns and shared explanatory mechanisms, thereby strengthening the analytical generalization of the findings (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Leonard-Barton, 1990).

By combining these methodological perspectives, the research seeks to move beyond purely descriptive approaches and produce an explanatory understanding of transformation processes, highlighting the human and organizational mechanisms that enable—or constrain—the success of transformative business models. This approach contributes both to the scientific rigor of the analysis and to the managerial relevance of the conclusions, offering robust insights into how human capital architecture can shape transformational trajectories in the digital era.

Table 1 presented below reveals a sample of companies characterized by strong sectoral diversity (public services, industry, banking, retail, healthcare) and varied organizational profiles in terms of size and maturity. Despite this heterogeneity, all companies share a common logic: they adopt transformative business models based on disruptive technologies to reinvent their value propositions and value capture mechanisms. Older organizations (55 years in industry, 40 years in public services) seek to renew structured activities by leveraging AI to optimize processes, reduce costs, and increase operational efficiency, while more recent companies (15 to 30 years old) favor platform or ecosystem architectures to generate network effects, capture new market share, and increase personalization. This configuration confirms the relevance of the study: transformations are not limited to a single type of organization but affect a broad range of firms, all facing the same central challenge of sustainable transformation. The table also highlights the diversity of strategic objectives pursued (internal optimization, customer personalization, ecosystem creation, and improvement of clinical performance) demonstrating that TBMs take different forms yet converge toward a shared objective: converting technological disruption into sustainable competitive advantage. Consequently, this overview fully justifies the multi-case approach, as it enables comparison of contrasting transformation trajectories and captures how human capital acts as a determining variable in the success or incompleteness of transformative business models.

Table 1
Profile of the Companies Studied

Case	Industry Sector	Number of Employees	Company Age	Transformative Business Model Implemented	Purpose / Strategic Objective
Case 1	Public Utilities	700	40 years	Internal service management platform + predictive AI	Optimize processes, reduce costs, improve service quality
Case 2	Manufacturing	2,000	55 years	Data-driven model + predictive maintenance	Reduce downtime, enhance operational efficiency
Case 3	Banking	1,300	39 years	Financial services platform + personalization AI	Personalize offerings, increase customer loyalty, grow revenue
Case 4	Retail / Distribution	2,700	30 years	Marketplace + partner ecosystem	Build a partner ecosystem and capture value through network effects
Case 5	Healthcare	180	15 years	AI-assisted care model + telemedicine	Improve service access and clinical performance

Source: Field research conducted for this study.

Table 2 presents a rich and well-balanced sample of respondents drawn from five companies with diverse profiles, yet sharing a common challenge: managing transformations driven by artificial intelligence or platform-based models. Each case involves key actors (senior management, HR managers, operational managers, and project leaders), ensuring a systemic view of transformation from strategic intent to operational implementation. The relatively high average organizational tenure (often exceeding six years) provides legitimacy and in-depth knowledge of internal dynamics, while shorter tenure in current positions reflects the renewal of responsibilities associated with the intensification of transformation processes. The high educational level (predominantly Master's degree holders) strengthens the credibility of the insights and demonstrates that these transformations mobilize advanced competencies, particularly in leadership and project management functions. Finally, interview durations exceeding 60 minutes reflect the depth of the exchanges and the richness of the data collected. Overall, this respondent profile ensures robust triangulation of perspectives and enhances the explanatory power of the research by enabling a deeper understanding of how human capital structures and conditions the succes, or incompleteness, of transformative business models.

Table 2
Profile of Respondents

Case	Respondent Code	Gender	Position	Tenure in Company	Tenure in Position	Education Level	Interview Location	Duration (min)
Case 1	C1-Dir1	M	Chief Executive Officer	12 years	3 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	75
	C1-HR1	M	HR Manager	8 years	4 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	60
	C1-Mng1	M	Operations Manager	5 years	2 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	55
	C1-PM1	F	AI Project Manager	3 years	1 year	(Bac + 5)	Site	65
	C1-Mng2	M	Operations Manager	7 years	3 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	50
Case 2	C2-Dir1	M	Transformation Director	10 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	70
	C2-HR1	M	HR Manager	9 years	5 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	60
	C2-Mng1	F	Operations Manager	6 years	3 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	55
	C2-PM1	M	AI Project Manager	4 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Site	65
	C2-PM2	F	Digital Project Manager	2 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	50
Case 3	C3-Dir1	M	Chief Executive Officer	15 years	6 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	80
	C3-HR1	F	HR Manager	6 years	3 years	(Bac + 4)	Headquarters	60
	C3-Mng1	F	Operations Manager	9 years	4 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	55
	C3-PM1	F	AI Project Manager	3 years	1 year	(Bac + 5)	Site	70
	C3-Mng2	M	Operations Manager	4 years	1 year	(Bac + 4)	Site	45
Case 4	C4-Dir1	F	Chief Executive Officer	11 years	3 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	75
	C4-HR1	M	HR Manager	7 years	4 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	60
	C4-Mng1	F	Operations Manager	6 years	2 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	55
	C4-PM1	M	Platform Project Manager	5 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Site	65
	C4-Mng2	F	Operations Manager	3 years	1 year	(Bac + 4)	Site	50
Case 5	C5-Dir1	M	Transformation Director	9 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	70
	C5-HR1	F	HR Manager	8 years	3 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	60

Case	Respondent Code	Gender	Position	Tenure in Company	Tenure in Position	Education Level	Interview Location	Duration (min)
	C5-Mng1	M	Operations Manager	7 years	3 years	(Bac + 4)	Site	55
	C5-PM1	F	AI Project Manager	4 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Site	65
	C5-PM2	M	Digital Project Manager	2 years	2 years	(Bac + 5)	Headquarters	50

Source

Field research conducted for this study.

The use of a qualitative methodology based on a multiple-case study design enables an in-depth exploration of the organizational mechanisms underlying business model transformation. The cross-case analysis of five firms operating in diverse sectors fosters a contextualized understanding of the observed dynamics while strengthening analytical robustness through systematic comparison. This methodological choice ensures a rigorous articulation between the theoretical framework and empirical data, allowing the identification of explanatory regularities while accounting for sectoral and organizational specificities.

3. Results

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative analysis of the five case studies. The results are structured around the main dimensions of the theoretical framework guiding the study. First, we examine the contexts in which the transformations emerged and the nature of the strategic changes undertaken in order to characterize the trajectories observed. We then analyze the activation of dynamic capabilities through their microfoundations, highlighting processes of sensing, resource mobilization, and reconfiguration. Particular attention is devoted to the structuring role of human capital and HR architecture in orchestrating these dynamics. Finally, we identify the organizational tensions encountered during the transformation process, as well as the observed effects in terms of performance and the sustainability of transformative business models.

This structure allows for a close alignment between empirical evidence and theoretical constructs, while generating analytical propositions that contribute to a deeper understanding of transformative business models in the era of disruptive technologies.

3.1 Cross-Case Analysis of Organizational Transformation Trajectories Through Disruptive Technologies

The objective of this section is to identify, beyond sector-specific characteristics, the regularities and divergences in organizational transformation trajectories driven by the introduction of disruptive technologies (AI, digital platforms, data-driven models). The cross-case analysis relies on a systematic comparison of initial organizational configurations, triggering factors, and strategic intentions. It seeks to determine whether the observed transformations reflect incremental adaptation of the business model or a deeper systemic reconfiguration. Data collected through interviews with senior executives, HR managers, operational managers, and project leaders provide insight into the actual dynamics of transformation, highlighting entry logics into change, organizational trade-offs, and the depth of reconfigurations undertaken.

Case 1

(Public Utilities): Incremental Modernization Under Organizational Constraints

Case 1

unfolds within a historically structured organizational context characterized by highly formalized processes and an administrative culture oriented toward stability, risk control, and service continuity. The initial level of digital maturity can be described as moderate: while digital tools were already present, they primarily reflected a logic of gradual automation rather than an integrated strategic vision. The transformation was therefore initiated mainly from an internal optimization perspective, without any explicit intention to redefine the organization's strategic positioning. As the CEO explained:

"*We were not trying to change our core business or redefine our value proposition. Our priority was to execute what we were already doing, more reliably and more responsively. Predictive AI emerged as a performance enhancement tool, a way to anticipate certain situations and streamline our operations. At no point did we view this as a strategic revolution or a shift in direction*." (C1-Dir1)

Transformation was thus conceived as a lever for operational efficiency, simultaneously aiming to improve service quality and reduce costs associated with errors, delays, or redundancies. The introduction of an integrated internal management platform combined with predictive AI tools occurred within a relatively stable organizational architecture. Existing routines were adjusted, rationalized, or enriched through new data inputs, but they were not fundamentally challenged. As one operational manager noted:

"*Our processes were already highly structured, documented, and monitored through specific performance indicators. AI was integrated into these existing routines to refine forecasts and support decision-making, but it did not disrupt them. We mainly gained precision and speed. Teams continue to work through the same major steps, just with an additional decision-support tool.*" (C1-Mng1)

The transformation primarily affected decision-making processes and information flow management. Access to consolidated data and predictive analytics enables the organization to anticipate activity fluctuations and allocate resources more efficiently. However, the underlying business model remains unchanged: revenue sources, customer relationships, and the core value creation logic have remained stable. Technological innovation functions as a catalyst for internal improvement rather than as a driver of diversification or strategic disruption. From a human capital perspective, change management relied on a gradual support strategy centered on pedagogy and the reduction of fears associated with automation. Emphasis was placed on the complementarity between technological tools and employee expertise. The HR manager explained:

"*We deliberately avoided overly disruptive language. We talked about optimization, decision support, and improving working conditions, not radical cultural transformation. It was important to reassure teams that their roles were not disappearing, that the tool was there to support, not replace, them. We organized workshops, progressive training sessions, and open discussions to address concerns and encourage adoption.*" (C1-HR1)

In this respect, Case 1 illustrates a trajectory of incremental adaptation characterized by gradual hybridization between established routines and advanced digital tools. Technology operates as an instrument of continuous improvement, strengthening operational performance without challenging the deeper logic of value creation and capture. Organizational stability serves as a structuring framework within which technological innovation is integrated in a controlled and progressive manner.

Case 2

(Industry): A Data-Driven Rationalization Focused on Performance

Case 2

is characterized by a mature industrial organization, historically structured around stabilized production routines, rigorous operational standards, and a culture strongly oriented toward performance, reliability, and cost control. The organizational environment is marked by highly formalized processes, clear hierarchies of responsibility, and a logic of continuous improvement already embedded in practices. The digital transformation is therefore not conceived as a disruption but as a coherent extension of a strategic trajectory centered on operational excellence. The transformation director explains this orientation:

"*Predictive maintenance was primarily a lever to reduce machine downtime and optimize equipment availability. We operate in an industrial efficiency logic: every minute of downtime has a measurable cost. AI has strengthened our anticipatory capacity, but it does not challenge our model. We are not changing our business; we aim to produce better, more consistently, and at lower cost*." (C2-Dir1)

Technology is thus mobilized as an instrument to optimize productive assets. The main objective lies in improving equipment reliability, reducing unexpected breakdowns, and optimizing maintenance cycles. The logic is decisively exploitation-oriented: maximize the performance of existing resources rather than redefine the value proposition or explore new markets. The introduction of a data-driven model, supported by industrial sensors, real-time data collection systems, and predictive maintenance algorithms, was implemented without any substantial modification of the organizational architecture. Production units, hierarchical lines, and overall decision-making structures remain unchanged. The transformation occurs within the existing framework. The AI project leader notes:

"*We injected data into processes that had existed for a long time. Maintenance teams had their routines, schedules, and KPIs. We simply enriched these practices with predictive analyses and real-time dashboards. The overall architecture of the company hasn't changed, but the tools available to the teams have become much more precise and responsive*." (C2-CP1)

While the business model remains stable (same clients, products, and distribution channels), decision-making mechanisms evolve significantly. Increased availability of real-time data changes daily trade-offs and the timing of decisions. Maintenance, previously mostly planned according to standard cycles or triggered after an incident, gradually becomes anticipatory. An operational manager explains:

"*Even though the business model remains the same, the way we make decisions has fundamentally changed. We no longer rely solely on experience or monthly consolidated historical data. We consult real-time indicators, predictive alerts, and failure probabilities. This changes our relationship to risk and our prioritization of interventions*." (C2-Mng1)

The transformation primarily affects micro-routines and information governance. Data flows become central to activity coordination, subtly redefining relationships between technical, maintenance, and production functions. The boundaries between human expertise and algorithmic recommendations are reconfigured without triggering a major redistribution of organizational power. This case thus illustrates a technology-driven modernization focused on intensive exploitation of existing capabilities. Digital innovation strengthens the robustness of the production system and improves measurable performance, but it is not accompanied by a reconfiguration of revenue sources or a redefinition of the value proposition. The transformation represents systemic optimization and deepening of the prevailing industrial logic rather than a structural change of the business model.

Case 3

(Banking): Strategic Repositioning in Response to Competitive Pressure

Case 3

is situated in a highly competitive environment, characterized by the rapid emergence of agile fintech players, increased regulatory pressure, and accelerated evolution of customer expectations regarding immediacy, personalization, and omnichannel experiences. Unlike the previous cases, digital maturity is more advanced: the organization already possessed solid digital infrastructures, established data teams, and a partially innovation-oriented culture. Therefore, the transformation is not only an optimization effort but an explicit strategic repositioning. The CEO clearly articulates this competitive challenge:

"*If we did not personalize our offerings and our customer relationships, we risked losing an entire generation to fintechs. Young customers constantly compare experiences; they expect real-time recommendations, seamless journeys, and simple, contextual interactions. It was no longer a matter of improving what existed but of remaining relevant in a rapidly changing market.*" (C3-Dir1)

Here, competitive pressure acts as a central trigger for transformation. The challenge is no longer merely cost reduction or internal process improvement but the ability to renew the value proposition and strengthen customer engagement. Personalization becomes a strategic lever for differentiation and loyalty. The implementation of an integrated financial services platform, supported by recommendation algorithms and behavioral scoring, has led to a deep redefinition of the customer relationship. This is not merely the addition of a technological layer to existing products but a reconfiguration of how needs are detected, anticipated, and addressed. The AI project manager explains this shift:

"*We didn't just add an algorithm to our existing systems. We rethought the customer relationship around data: collection, analysis, activation in real-time. Every interaction becomes a source of learning. Offers are no longer designed solely upstream by marketing teams; they are dynamically adjusted based on behaviors and usage.*" (C3-CP1)

Data thus becomes the core of the value proposition. It structures product design, informs commercial decisions, and enables much finer segmentation of customer profiles. Financial services are no longer merely standardized but modulable, adaptive, and contextualized. This evolution profoundly changes the internal value chain: marketing, IT, compliance, and customer relationship teams must collaborate more closely around shared objectives centered on user experience. Organizationally, the transformation extends far beyond technology to become a transversal strategic axis, driven at the highest level of governance. Budgetary trade-offs, investment priorities, and performance indicators are progressively aligned with metrics related to customer engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The HR manager emphasizes this cultural dimension:

"*Digital transformation has become a strategic axis in its own right, no longer just an IT project. This has changed how teams perceive our business. We are no longer simply a financial institution distributing products but an organization designing personalized experiences. This implies new skills, greater agility, and a culture more oriented toward data.*" (C3-RH1)

This strategic repositioning also entails an evolution of required skills: an increase in data profiles, strengthening managers' analytical capabilities, and fostering a culture of experimentation. Traditional boundaries between functions tend to blur in favor of more cross-functional, product-oriented teams. Case 3 thus illustrates a systemic transformation of the business model. Technology is no longer limited to supporting existing operations; it becomes the foundation of a new value proposition focused on personalization, anticipating customer needs, and long-term loyalty. The logic of value creation and capture is reconfigured around the strategic exploitation of data, marking a shift from a product-oriented organization to a customer- and experience-oriented one.

Case 4

(Distribution): A Shift Toward Ecosystem Orchestration

Case 4

represents the most pronounced trajectory of systemic transformation among the five studied cases. The company, already engaged for several years in innovation and diversification, has undergone a radical shift from a traditional distribution model (centered on its own products and channels) to an open, multi-partner marketplace logic. This transformation goes beyond the adoption of new technologies; it fundamentally affects the company's strategic role, value proposition, and relationships with all stakeholders. The CEO summarizes this strategic disruption:

"*We moved from a traditional distributor, where our role was limited to making our products available, to a true ecosystem orchestrator. It is no longer just our offering that matters, but that of our partners, the quality of interactions between them, and how we facilitate the flow of value within the marketplace. We had to rethink our core business, our performance indicators, and even our organizational culture.*" (C4-Dir1)

The platform implementation is not merely a digital tool; it profoundly redefines the mechanisms of value creation and capture. Revenue and competitiveness no longer depend solely on inventory management or internal supply chain efficiency but on interactions among actors and the ability to generate network effects. Algorithms for offer optimization, recommendations, and information flow management play a central role in this orchestration, transforming the value of individual products into systemic, shared, and co-created value. The project manager overseeing technological implementation emphasizes this shift:

"*The marketplace changes everything: value no longer comes only from our stock or traditional margins but from interactions among actors, smooth exchanges, data quality, and the trust we build between partners. We moved from an internal control logic to an external facilitation and intermediation logic. This requires rethinking processes, roles, and performance indicators.*" (C4-CP1)

This transformation is also accompanied by major cultural and organizational upheavals. The internal competition logic, focused on individual team performance or proprietary product management, must now coexist with a culture of collaboration, sharing, and co-creation. Teams are required to interact with external partners, sometimes former competitors, negotiate governance agreements, and accept that the value generated is shared rather than fully captured by the company alone. An operational manager illustrates this cultural evolution:

"*We had to learn to share value, collaborate with partners who were sometimes former competitors, and trust external actors to deliver a coherent experience together. This required a real mindset shift, new skills, and continuous learning to understand how to orchestrate the ecosystem effectively.*" (C4-Mng1)

Case 4

thus illustrates a systemic and deep transformation of the business model. Technology is not just a lever for improvement or optimization but the foundation for redefining the logic of value creation and capture. The company evolves toward an ecosystem logic, where value emerges from co-creation, network effects, and intermediation among multiple actors. This transformation simultaneously engages strategic, organizational, cultural, and relational dimensions, embodying a radical change in the company's role and raison d'être in its sector.

Case 5

(Healthcare): Technological Hybridization at the Core of the Care Model

Case 5

stands out due to the smaller size of the company and its already highly technological positioning, with a strategic focus on artificial intelligence and telemedicine. Unlike previous cases, the transformation does not represent a disruption of the existing model but a strategic extension of an already innovative and digitalized model. Technology is integrated at the core of the service offering, making AI a constituent element of the value proposition rather than merely an optimization or improvement tool. The CEO explains this vision:

"AI is not an additional tool or support for certain decisions. It is fully integrated into our care model, structuring our clinical approach and how we interact with patients. Our algorithms do not replace medical reasoning but enrich it, making it more precise and personalized." (C5-Dir1)

The transformation focuses primarily on two complementary axes: expanding access to care and improving clinical follow-up quality. Telemedicine, combined with algorithmic assistance, enables reaching geographically distant patients while ensuring continuous, individualized monitoring of medical conditions. Medical data thus becomes a strategic asset, feeding predictive models, therapeutic recommendations, and personalized care pathways. The AI project manager emphasizes this dimension:

"*Telemedicine has allowed us to significantly expand patient access, especially for those who are remote or have mobility constraints. But it's not just about volume: it has also enabled us to improve clinical monitoring through continuous collection and analysis of medical data. We can detect trends, anticipate complications, and adjust treatments in real-time. Data becomes a pillar of our medical practice*." (C5-CP1)

This transformation follows a hybridization logic rather than technological substitution. AI and digital tools assist and complement human expertise rather than replace it. Algorithms enhance diagnostic accuracy, care planning, and monitoring, but the physician's central role remains, ensuring quality and trust in the patient journey. An operational manager explains this complementarity:

"*The algorithm does not replace the doctor; it assists them. It provides recommendations and analyses that enrich clinical judgment, but the final decision remains human. This is truly a hybrid logic: technology and medical expertise work hand in hand, maintaining human-added value while leveraging data processing and analysis capabilities*." (C5-Mng1)

Case 5

thus illustrates a stabilizing transformation, where technological innovation is fully integrated into daily practice and company strategy. Human expertise remains central but is enhanced by advanced digital tools, creating a dynamic of continuous improvement and personalized services. This trajectory demonstrates that a smaller organization can generate significant impact by combining digital innovation, strategic use of data, and a human-competence-based model.

While disruptive technologies are a common catalyst across all five cases, their appropriation and strategic embedding vary significantly according to sectoral context, initial digital maturity, and leadership intentions. These differences shape distinct trajectories of organizational transformation, which can be analyzed through initial configurations and the reconfiguration of value mechanisms.

Table 3
Typology of Transformation Trajectories

Trajectory Type	Trajectory 1: Incremental Optimization	Trajectory 2: Partial Strategic Reconfiguration	Trajectory 3: Systemic Ecosystem Transformation
Cases	Case 1, Case 2	Case 3, Case 5	Case 4
Dominant logic	Exploitation	Exploitation + Exploration	Exploration and orchestration
Main trigger	Efficiency-seeking	Competitive pressure / strategic opportunity	Strategic disruption and platform logic
Degree of business model change	Low	Medium	High
Value proposition	Improvement of the existing	Enrichment and personalization	Complete redefinition
Revenue sources	Unchanged (indirect gains)	Strengthened / diversified	New logics (commissions, network effects)
Organizational architecture	Stable	Partially adjusted	Deeply reconfigured
Ecosystem openness	Limited	Moderate	Central
Strategic role of technology	Operational support	Strategic lever	Core infrastructure of the model
Main risk	Strategic underexploitation	Organizational misalignment	Complexity and loss of control
TBM transformation level	Incremental adaptation	Partial transformation	Systemic transformation

Source: Our results

1. **Activation Modalities of Dynamic Capabilities in TBM Trajectories**

Case 1

illustrates a trajectory of gradual adaptation within a historically structured organization, characterized by highly formalized processes and an administrative culture oriented toward stability. The transformation, centered on predictive AI, primarily serves as a lever for operational efficiency, aiming to improve service quality and reduce costs without challenging the underlying business model. As the CEO points out:

"We were not trying to change our core business, but to execute it better. Predictive AI came as a performance improvement tool, not as a strategic revolution" (C1-Dir1).

The micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities appear in the detection of technological opportunities and their pragmatic integration into existing routines. The AI project manager emphasizes that AI systems are embedded in already well-structured processes, allowing teams to optimize their functioning without disrupting established routines (C1-CP1). Decision-making remains concentrated with operational managers, and resource mobilization is targeted to support process improvement. Practice stabilization relies on gradual support and reassuring communication. The HR manager explains:

"We talked about optimization, not radical cultural transformation. It was necessary to reassure teams that their roles were not disappearing" (C1-RH1).

Organizational tensions are limited, and performance gains manifest as improved efficiency and service quality, showing that even incremental transformation can activate dynamic capabilities when aligned with human capital and existing processes.

Case 2

occurs within a mature industrial context, structured around production routines and a performance-driven culture. The implementation of predictive maintenance and data-driven tools improves the exploitation of existing assets without altering the overall organizational architecture. The Transformation Director states:

"Predictive maintenance was primarily a lever to reduce machine downtime. We are in an industrial efficiency logic, not a model disruption" (C2-Dir1).

Dynamic capabilities are expressed through enhanced decision-making mechanisms based on real-time indicators and collaboration between operational managers and project leads (C2-Mng1, C2-CP1). Mobilized resources combine technological investments and AI-specific skills, relying on teams experienced in production management. The main challenges lie in cultural adjustment and coordination between exploitation and innovation, as the Digital Project Manager notes:

"The main tension was maintaining control over processes while integrating new real-time data" (C2-CP2).

The transformation yields noticeable improvements in efficiency and responsiveness while maintaining a stable business model, illustrating dynamic capabilities activation within a modernization rather than disruption framework.

Case 3

highlights a transformation driven by competitive pressure and evolving customer expectations. Facing fintech emergence, the organization mobilizes transformation as a lever for strategic differentiation, with data at the core of value creation. The CEO explains:

"If we did not personalize our offerings, we risked losing an entire generation of clients to fintechs" (C3-Dir1).

The implementation of financial service platforms and personalization algorithms has profoundly reshaped the customer relationship, placing data as the driver of the value proposition and enabling anticipatory service (C3-CP1). Dynamic capabilities are activated through weak signal detection, collaborative data interpretation, and mobilization of human and technological resources for service personalization. Leadership and HR actions are essential to stabilize the transformation:

"Digital transformation has become a strategic axis, not an IT project. It changed how teams perceive our business" (C3-RH1).

Teams gradually adopt new practices, enabling finer customer orientation and rapid adaptation to market changes. This trajectory illustrates how the combination of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring can lead to a TBM focused on customer value creation and strategic differentiation.

Case 4

represents a radical transformation, transitioning from a classic distribution model to an orchestrated marketplace logic. Value no longer resides solely in the company's products but in partner interactions and network effects. The CEO explains:

“We moved from a traditional distributor to an ecosystem orchestrator. It’s not just our offerings that matter anymore, but those of our partners” (C4-Dir1).

Dynamic capabilities activation manifests in continuous strategic monitoring of partners and the ecosystem, coordination of complex information flows, and resource reallocation toward platform management and inter-organizational governance (C4-CP1). Cultural change is substantial: teams must collaborate with partners, sometimes former competitors, as an operational manager notes:

“We had to learn to share value, to work with partners who were sometimes our former competitors” (C4-Mng1).

Leadership plays a central role in communicating the vision and mobilizing teams, enabling gradual and lasting appropriation of new practices (C4-RH1). This trajectory illustrates a systemic transformation where activated dynamic capabilities simultaneously affect the business model, organization, and culture, placing the company in a co-creation and intermediation logic.

Case 5

presents a trajectory of strategic extension within a smaller company already positioned in AI and telemedicine. The transformation does not constitute a rupture but strengthens the existing value proposition by expanding access to care and improving clinical follow-up. The Transformation Director emphasizes:

“AI is not an additional tool; it is an integral part of our care model” (C5-Dir1).

The micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities are mobilized through medical data analysis, coordination between clinical and technological teams, and implementation of algorithmic assistance tools to support physician judgment (C5-Mng1, C5-CP1). The model relies on human-technology hybridization rather than substitution, ensuring adoption and stabilization of practices:

“The algorithm does not replace the physician; it assists. It is a hybridization rather than a substitution” (C5-Mng1).

The transformation illustrates the consolidation of dynamic capabilities in an already digitalized model, with tangible effects on access to care and patient monitoring while preserving human expertise at the center of value creation.

3.3 Human Capital Architecture and Strategic Alignment with Disruptive Technologies

The five cases confirm that the success or failure of TBM-based transformations primarily depends on the architecture of human capital and its strategic alignment with disruptive technologies. Even when companies invest heavily in AI, digital platforms, or data ecosystems, the appropriation, coordination, and mobilization of skills determine the depth and sustainability of the transformations. The results presented here illustrate how HR practices, leadership, and team engagement serve as the main levers to activate dynamic capabilities and manage organizational tensions.

3.3.1 Skills and Training: Anchoring TBM in Human Capital

In incremental transformations such as Case 1, the mobilized skills were primarily technical and operational. The AI project manager notes:

“We monitor AI tools applied to our sector, but the approach is very pragmatic: we test what can improve our existing processes” (C1-CP1).

Human capital here is structured to integrate technology into existing routines. The HR manager emphasizes:

“We talked about optimization, not radical cultural transformation. It was necessary to reassure teams that their roles would not disappear” (C1-RH1).

Aligning skills with performance objectives prevents the introduction of new technologies from becoming an organizational vulnerability.

In Case 2, industrial modernization relies on mixed skills: technical expertise in predictive maintenance and the ability to interpret real-time data. The operational manager explains:

“Even if the business model remains the same, the way we make decisions has changed. We rely much more on real-time indicators” (C2-Mng1), while the AI project manager notes that the organizational architecture was not disrupted: *“We injected data into existing processes”* (C2-CP1).

Human capital thus structures the integration of technologies and limits risks of misunderstanding or resistance.

Cases 3

and 4, corresponding to strategic or systemic TBMs, show that success depends on broader and multidimensional skills. In Case 3, the AI project manager states:

“We did not just add an algorithm. We rethought the client relationship around data” (C3-CP1), and the HR manager adds: *“We had to train our teams in data exploitation and service personalization, which entails new work practices and performance metrics”* (C3-RH1).

In Case 4, the CEO emphasizes relational and organizational skills:

“We moved from a traditional distributor to an ecosystem orchestrator. It’s not just our offerings that matter anymore, but those of our partners” (C4-Dir1).

The platform project manager adds: *“Teams had to learn to manage inter-organizational flows and multi-stakeholder interactions”* (C4-CP1), while an operational manager highlights cultural change: *“We had to learn to share value, to work with partners who were sometimes former competitors”* (C4-Mng1).

These testimonies show that human capital is not limited to technical skills; it includes the ability to adapt, collaborate, and co-create value in complex environments.

Finally, Case 5 illustrates the importance of human-technology complementarity. The Transformation Director states:

“AI is not an additional tool; it is an integral part of our care model” (C5-Dir1). The AI project manager adds: *“Telemedicine has allowed us to expand patient access but also to improve clinical follow-up through data”* (C5-CP1), and the operational manager notes:

“The algorithm does not replace the physician; it assists. It is hybridization rather than substitution” (C5-Mng1).

Here, skills must integrate both technical mastery and domain expertise, illustrating that technology alone is insufficient: the human capital architecture structures value creation.

3.3.2 Leadership and Change Management: Lever to Stabilize TBM

Leadership plays a central role in articulating strategy, technologies, and human capital, particularly in the face of inherent TBM tensions (efficiency versus experimentation, automation versus augmentation, agility versus stability). In Cases 1 and 2, leaders mainly reassure and sponsor projects:

“We were not trying to change our core business, but to execute it better” (C1-Dir1); *“We are in an industrial efficiency logic, not a model disruption”* (C2-Dir1).

Leadership supports skills development and stabilizes routines without generating excessive tensions.

In Cases 3 and 4, where transformations are systemic and strategic, leadership becomes a vector of vision and cohesion:

“Digital transformation has become a strategic axis, not an IT project. It changed how teams perceive our business” (C3-RH1).

In Case 4, the CEO stresses the importance of mobilizing teams within an ecosystem:

“Digital transformation is promoted by top management as a strategic axis” (C4-RH1), while operational managers facilitate cultural appropriation (C4-Mng1, C4-Mng2).

These testimonies confirm that leadership is essential to orchestrate alignment between TBM, human capital, and disruptive technologies.

In Case 5, leadership supports the gradual integration of AI and telemedicine:

“AI is integrated into the care model and guides work organization” (C5-Dir1).

The HR manager implements training and coaching initiatives to strengthen appropriation and the sustainability of practices (C5-RH1). Leadership thus acts as a regulator of tensions between technological innovation and maintaining human expertise.

Team engagement is directly linked to the activation of dynamic capabilities. In Cases 1 and 2, practices are gradually integrated, with adoption relying on existing routines and reassuring support (C1-RH1, C2-RH1). In Cases 3 and 4, engagement is more complex, requiring cultural and collaborative learning, active participation of managers, and redefinition of interactions among teams and partners (C3-RH1, C4-Mng1). In Case 5, human-technology hybridization facilitates adoption: teams perceive AI as an assistant rather than a substitute, supporting sustainable adoption and continuous practice improvement (C5-Mng1).

Overall, these cases show that strategic alignment between human capital and disruptive technologies is a sine qua non condition for TBM success. Incremental transformations (Cases 1 and 2) require pragmatic alignment between existing skills and operational objectives, while systemic or strategic transformations (Cases 3, 4, and 5) demand a redefinition of roles, interactions, and culture. Human capital thus becomes the central vector of value creation and capture, stabilizing new practices, managing organizational tensions, and ensuring TBM sustainability.

Table 4
Strategic alignment on disruptive technologies

Case	Skills Mobilized	HR Actions Implemented	Leadership	Team Engagement and Adoption	Strategic Alignment with Disruptive Technologies
1	Operational and technical skills in AI	Progressive training and support, reassuring communication	Sponsor of optimization, focused on continuity	Gradual adoption of new routines, low resistance (C1-RH1, C1-Mng1, C1-Mng2)	Technology integrated into existing processes, continuous improvement, no disruption of the business model (C1-Dir1, C1-CP1)
2	Technical and analytical skills for predictive maintenance, data interpretation	Targeted training, coaching on use of data and real-time indicators	Leadership focused on control and performance, operational support (C2-Dir1)	Gradual adoption, appropriation of data tools, supported by managers (C2-RH1, C2-Mng1)	Technology leveraged to optimize industrial efficiency, pragmatic alignment with the existing business model (C2-CP1, C2-CP2)
3	Data science, customer relationship management, service personalization, strategic management	Intensive training, support for data utilization, new performance indicators	Mobilizing leadership, cross-functional strategic vision, executive sponsorship (C3-Dir1, C3-RH1)	Complex adoption, cultural and collaborative learning, adaptation of business practices (C3-Mng1, C3-Mng2)	Strengthened strategic alignment: data becomes the core of the value proposition, partial transformation of the business model (C3-CP1)
4	Inter-organizational skills, partner collaboration, ecosystem management	Training on multi-actor interactions, cultural and behavioral support	Strategic and mobilizing leadership, intensive communication (C4-Dir1, C4-RH1)	Gradual adoption, learning cooperation and value-sharing, cultural adaptation (C4-Mng1, C4-Mng2)	Systemic transformation: the platform restructures value creation and capture, human capital central to managing the ecosystem (C4-CP1)
5	Technical and clinical skills, human-technology hybridization	Training and coaching on telemedicine and AI, support for integration into clinical practices	Leadership oriented toward progressive transformation, support for adoption (C5-Dir1, C5-RH1)	Sustainable adoption through human-technology hybridization, complementary role of teams and algorithms (C5-Mng1)	Full strategic alignment: AI integrated into the care model, stabilization and extension of the existing TBM (C5-CP1)

Source: our results

3.4. Mechanisms for Balancing the Structuring Paradigms of TBMs

Transformations based on TBMs generate inherent organizational and managerial tensions due to the reorganization of business models, the introduction of disruptive technologies, and the redefinition of human roles. The analysis of the five cases shows that the success of TBMs does not depend solely on technology, but on the organization's ability to identify, regulate, and balance these tensions through targeted HR practices, appropriate leadership, and intelligent structuring of human capital.

Efficiency vs. Experimentation: In Cases 1 and 2, focused on incremental optimization or industrial exploitation, the main tension lies between improving operational efficiency and the possibility of experimenting with new practices or technologies. In Case 1, the CEO explains: *"We were not trying to change our business, but to execute it better. Predictive AI came as an improvement tool, not as a strategic revolution"* (C1-Dir1). Operational managers confirm that existing processes were adjusted but not disrupted (C1-Mng1, C1-Mng2). The balancing mechanism here relies on the gradual institutionalization of changes, reassuring communication, and targeted training, allowing innovation to be integrated while preserving stability and performance. In Case 2, this tension manifests in the use of predictive maintenance and data-driven models. The operational manager highlights: *"Even though the business model remains the same, the way we make decisions has changed. We rely much more on real-time indicators"* (C2-Mng1), while the AI project manager adds: *"We injected data into existing processes. The overall organizational architecture has not changed"* (C2-CP1). HR practices mediate this tension by training teams on digital tools while maintaining existing routines, stabilizing the TBM and limiting the risk of failure.

Automation vs. Augmentation: In Cases 3 and 5, the main tension concerns the introduction of technologies that can automate certain functions while preserving human expertise and value creation. In Case 3, the AI project manager explains: *"We didn't just add an algorithm. We redesigned the customer relationship around data"* (C3-CP1), while an operational manager notes: *"Data guides our decisions, but human expertise remains central"* (C3-Mng1). Leadership and HR practices manage this tension through intensive training, support mechanisms, and collaborative routines, allowing teams to perceive AI as an augmentation tool rather than a substitute. In Case 5, AI integrated into telemedicine also illustrates this tension. The operational manager states: *"The algorithm does not replace the doctor; it assists them. It is a hybridization rather than a substitution"* (C5-Mng1), while the transformation director confirms: *"AI is an integral part of our care model"* (C5-Dir1). Balancing mechanisms rely on co-design of practices, clear role definition, and valuing human expertise, ensuring that automation strengthens rather than undermines the model.

Agility vs. Stability: In Case 4, focused on systemic transformation toward a marketplace model, the critical tension lies between the agility required to orchestrate a complex ecosystem and the stability needed to secure value flows between partners. The CEO summarizes: *"We moved from a traditional distributor to an ecosystem orchestrator. It is no longer only our offer that matters, but that of our partners"* (C4-Dir1). An operational manager adds: *"We had to learn to share value, to work with partners who were sometimes our former competitors"* (C4-Mng1). Balancing mechanisms include redefining routines, strengthening inter-organizational skills, and strategic communication, enabling teams to navigate flexibility and reliability simultaneously. In Case 3, this tension also appears in the personalization of the customer relationship: *"Digital transformation has become a strategic axis, not an IT project. It has changed the way teams perceive our business"* (C3-RH1). Teams must be both responsive and structured, which requires HR practices and leadership capable of maintaining the balance between agility and operational stability.

3.5. Discussion of Results and Theoretical Implications

The cross-case analysis of the five studied cases highlights a continuum of organizational transformation trajectories induced by disruptive technologies, ranging from incremental adaptation to systemic transformation. These findings allow for a reassessment and refinement of several major theoretical frameworks on digitalization, innovation, and organizational change.

Cases 1

(public services) and 2 (industry) illustrate a logic of gradual adaptation, where technologies, notably AI and digital platforms, function as levers for internal optimization. These trajectories support James March's (1991) work on the tension between exploration and exploitation, showing that historically stable organizations favor the consolidation of existing routines over radical experimentation. They also align with Orlikowski's (2007) sociomaterial perspective, which argues that technologies are embedded in existing organizational practices and co-constitute routines rather than

automatically driving transformation. Within this framework, technologies can enhance operational efficiency and decision-making accuracy without disrupting the business model or organizational structure (Leonardi, 2011). This observation highlights the resilience of stable structures to disruptive innovation and the possibility of incremental change that nevertheless generates significant performance gains.

Case 2

illustrates a data-driven modernization, where AI and real-time data collection modify micro-routines and the timing of managerial decisions without major structural transformation. This logic aligns with the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, 2007), where value resides in the ability to integrate and leverage data to adjust routines and increase operational flexibility. Transformation manifests more on a cognitive and informational level than on a structural one, confirming Zahra et al.'s (2006) distinction between knowledge acquisition, assimilation, and exploitation in the strategic orientation of organizations. These findings underscore the importance of information governance and decision-making architecture as performance levers, without necessarily impacting the underlying business model.

Cases 3

(banking) and 4 (distribution) illustrate transformations in which disruptive technologies become central to redefining the value proposition and the business model. Here, data and digital platforms structure the value chain and profoundly reshape customer and partner relationships. These results extend work on architectural innovation (Henderson & Clark, 1990) and open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), which emphasize that the strategic impact of technologies can reside as much in the recomposition of value architectures as in the introduction of new products. In Case 4, the ecosystem orchestration logic aligns with Jacobides et al. (2018), where value is co-created and shared, requiring deep cultural and organizational transformation. These observations confirm that technological innovation can catalyze systemic transformation, redefining not only internal processes but also the organization's strategic role and inter-organizational relationships (Adner, 2017).

Case 5

(healthcare) highlights a hybridization logic in which AI enriches human expertise without replacing it. This dynamic aligns with the work of Autor (2015) and Brynjolfsson & McAfee (2014), who emphasize the complementarity between human and technological capabilities. The findings show that an organization can generate significant strategic impact by embedding digital innovation at the core of its practices without compromising the centrality of human expertise, a dimension often overlooked in analyses focused solely on technological disruption.

Overall, the results propose a continuum of transformation trajectories, from incremental optimization to systemic transformation and ecosystem orchestration. The main theoretical insights are as follows: contingency role (initial digital maturity, industry context, and competitive pressure strongly shape the transformation trajectory, confirming classical frameworks by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and Mintzberg (1979)) ; socio-technical dimension (transformation cannot be analyzed solely from a technological perspective but involves organizational trade-offs, cultural change, and a reconfiguration of value creation mechanisms, consistent with Trist and Emery (1973) and Leonardi (2011)) ; Hybrid and systemic trajectories: Transformations demonstrate that the strategic impact of technologies depends on their capacity to transform governance, cross-functional relationships, and the business ecosystem, echoing research on dynamic capabilities and systemic innovation (Teece, 2007; Jacobides et al., 2018; Adner, 2017)).

These findings enrich the literature on digital transformation by providing a nuanced and contextualized typology: innovation can be incremental, performance-oriented, systemic, or hybrid, depending on the combination of internal and external factors. They demonstrate that the strategic significance of disruptive technologies relies on an organization's ability to rethink its practices, models, and value relationships in an integrated and coherent manner. The overall results

reinforce the idea that TBM-based transformations are complex socio-technical phenomena, where human capital serves as the central lever to activate dynamic capabilities, stabilize practices, and ensure sustainable transformation. The results show that technology alone does not transform the organization: it is the architecture of human capital, HR practices, and strategic leadership that structure value creation and determine the long-term success of TBMs.

Conclusion

This research aimed to understand why, despite massive investments in disruptive technologies (AI, digital platforms, data ecosystems), organizational transformations often remain incomplete, fragile, or strategically misaligned. Based on a multi-case analysis of companies engaged in AI-driven transformations, the study highlights that the primary explanatory factor for these failures is not technological, but human. The results systematically show that the success of transformative business models (TBMs) depends on the alignment of three dimensions: (1) the strategic reconfiguration of value creation and capture, (2) organizational dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, transforming), and (3) human capital architecture (skills, leadership, incentives, and culture). This integrative configuration goes beyond dominant approaches, which often reduce transformation to mere technology adoption, reaffirming that disruptive technologies become truly transformative only when anchored in dynamic capabilities mobilized by strategic human resources.

Field results also reveal three structuring managerial tensions: efficiency versus experimentation, automation versus augmentation, and agility versus stability. These tensions are not minor dilemmas but inherent contradictions in TBMs, requiring continuous organizational arbitration. The study shows that these arbitrations are primarily achieved through HR practices, which function as coordination, learning, and cultural governance mechanisms. In other words, HRM ceases to be a functional support and becomes a structural lever of transformation, capable of making organizations not only performant but also adaptive and antifragile. In this sense, the article contributes to a critical re-examination of TBM research (Kavadias et al., 2016; Kumar & Kotler, 2025) and digital transformation studies (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Kane et al., 2015), emphasizing that HR architecture constitutes the “missing link” between technological disruption and sustainable transformation.

From a theoretical perspective, this research makes three major contributions. First, it enriches the literature on transformative business models by explicitly integrating human capital as a structural variable rather than as a mere support resource, thereby overcoming the dichotomy between technology and organization. Second, it uniquely articulates approaches from business model innovation (Amit & Zott, 2001; Teece, 2010; Zott & Amit, 2010), dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat & Peteraf, 2015), and strategic human resource management (Barney, 1991; Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2001; Boxall & Purcell, 2016) to formalize the concept of “transformative business models integrating HR architecture.” Third, by identifying managerial tensions and showing how HR practices arbitrate them, the study sheds light on explanatory mechanisms that have been insufficiently theorized in the literature on digital transformation and TBMs.

From a managerial standpoint, the implications are direct and demanding. Leaders must stop treating digital transformation as an isolated technological project and instead view it as a holistic organizational transformation requiring the simultaneous redesign of strategy, capabilities, and HR architecture. It becomes imperative to develop talent management systems capable of supporting experimentation, strengthening analytical and collaborative skills, building adaptive leadership, and redirecting incentives toward sustainable innovation. Organizational culture must evolve toward continuous learning, acceptance of experimental failure, and inter-functional co-creation. For public policymakers and institutional actors, these findings suggest that digital transformation policies must be accompanied by skill development initiatives and inclusive governance mechanisms to prevent technological disruption from exacerbating organizational and social inequalities. Overall, this research advances understanding of organizational transformation in contexts of technological disruption by demonstrating that TBM success does not reduce to the adoption of disruptive technologies but depends on deep strategic alignment among economic reconfiguration, dynamic capabilities, and

human capital architecture. By repositioning HRM as a central lever of transformation, it provides a conceptual framework and operational guidance for building high-performing, adaptive, and sustainable organizations in a world marked by uncertainty and complexity.

This research nonetheless has limitations. The qualitative multi-case approach, while appropriate for exploring complex mechanisms, limits the statistical generalizability of the results. Future studies could combine quantitative approaches to empirically test the proposed relationships, particularly the impact of HR architecture on TBM performance and sustainability. Similarly, a longitudinal perspective would capture the evolution of dynamic capabilities and HR architecture over time, as well as the conditions for organizational antifragility. Finally, integrating contextual variables (sector, size, regulation, national culture) and other mechanisms (data governance, transformational leadership, perceived organizational support) could refine understanding of the conditions for successful technological transformations.

Declarations

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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