

**White paper**

# The Acceleration Imperative: Why Businesses Must Prioritize Speed

**Written by:**

**Narasimha Kini**

Senior Vice President and  
Head of EXL's Emerging and  
F&A businesses

**Nikhil Anand**

Head of EXL's Finance and  
Accounting Center of Excellence



**EXL**





The ability to move faster into new business opportunities, while fending off data-driven disruptors in a competitive market is a huge differentiator.

Much has been said about the value of data in driving business and shaping customer experience recently. For the most part, companies across the board have begun addressing underlying infrastructure needs to level siloes and make data easier to ingest. Big consulting firms are quick to mention AI, ML and analytics as essential ingredients for success in a digital economy.

But one benefit often overlooked in these discussions is the speed gained by digital

modernization. Speed to market, speed to respond, speed to adjust to changing market demands. The ability to move faster into new business opportunities, while fending off data-driven disruptors in a competitive market is a huge differentiator.

As customer touchpoints become increasingly digital, a company's ability to recognize buy signals quickly, offer relevant suggestions and simplify the purchase process will be determined by enabling – and further, accelerating –



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speed. Speed has moved from being a mark of quality to being synonymous with quality. Especially in direct-to-consumer businesses, where the race usually goes to the swiftest.

### Are You Up to Speed?

To achieve speed in modern markets, organizations must enable data-driven insights that not only shape customer experience, but also build and preserve the bottom line. The faster clean, useful data can be sifted and applied in specific (one-on-one) instances, the more hidden opportunities come to light and the faster business expands. But how?

Certainly, the right infrastructure must be in place to make this happen. But also, having the right strategies, frameworks and processes around it, to leverage the power of valuable data, is essential to spinning insights into gold fast.

In our experience helping businesses worldwide modernize for effectiveness in a rapidly changing global economy, we have found three areas where speed pays. These include data driven finance, customer experience management and revenue acceleration.

### Speed Up Your Scorekeepers for Insight

Finance departments monitor the pulse of an organization. And, while measuring its vital signs requires accuracy, this accuracy has historically come at the expense of speed. By combining speed with accuracy, finance departments can go beyond historical reporting to real-time monitoring and insights, steering the business to new levels of productivity, profitability and competitive success.

Getting to this level of proficiency not only requires the right technologies, but also requires the right investments in talent. The goal should be to eliminate as much manual processing as possible, so that finance teams can spend more time on analysis and uncover insights that build the business – with speed.

Alas, the traditional finance and accounting department resource pyramid has a wide base focusing on transaction processing and a narrow top focusing on analysis and insight (the very stuff that drives business value). By inverting this pyramid, so that 80 percent of efforts are spent on insights and analysis, and 20 percent are spent on transaction processing, firms can begin to realize insights at speed, thereby creating much greater business value.

To invert the pyramid, legacy technology



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must be examined, upgraded if necessary or even replaced in some cases. This is because the quality of data finance departments often consume to make business decisions is simply not clean enough or rich enough to move the needle. External sources must be integrated to shed light on opportunities, such as identifying new sources of funds, accurately forecasting market movements, and recognizing risks in enough time to respond proactively.

A manufacturing client of ours provides one example. They had a policy of offering early payment discounts to customers

who paid ahead of their contractual payment terms. However, past due invoices often came in claiming the discounts anyway. Initial high-level analysis by the client showed that the “unearned cash discounts” amounted to tens of millions of deductions annually resulting in significant revenue leakage and margin loss. Customers either didn’t read or didn’t understand the terms and conditions, and without enough manpower to audit and collect the defaults, large amounts of unearned cash discounts added up. Often, months would pass before these unearned deductions were detected; by then it was

timely manner, collectors could then negotiate settlements and educate offenders on the policy. By accelerating the flow of information, future abuses were prevented, and the bottom line improved.

### Satisfy Your Customers Consistently and Efficiently

Creating and delivering a customized digital experience that plays to a consumer’s individual needs is one of the only ways to stand out in today’s highly competitive environment. However, broken customer journeys across the front-, middle- and back-office often interfere in delivering a great customer experience, resulting in unhappy customers and missed opportunities. Despite investing in omni-channel platforms many organizations still struggle to truly understand and connect the root-causes of these broken journeys. It takes knowing what contacts a person has had with your business in the past, whether they were resolved satisfactorily, and what opportunities might exist to proactively solve an issue before it does occur. To be effective, these insights must be specific to the customer, contextual, integrated and near real-time. This takes speed, the kind you gain by turning data into insights, and insights into customer outcomes – fast.

For instance, we partnered with a utilities client who was struggling to process customer inquiries efficiently and needed a more seamless, automated customer journey to improve service outcomes. Customers were calling in for various reasons: dispute charges, report missing bills, receiving bills past posted due

Customer satisfaction scores went up and service costs went down as a result.



dates, reporting service outages, cancelling or moving service, etc. As calls came in, they were routed to departments where customers had to input new information with at every step. No comprehensive view of the customer was available.

So, we created a management information system that converged all customer touchpoints and issues onto a single database. Comprehensive customer profiles contained locations, contracts, past histories, payment records and other account details on a single platform shared across all departments. With a unified view of customer activity, service personnel were able to proactively address problems and suggest offerings immediately, without transferring callers to the next station in line. Customer satisfaction scores went up and service costs went down as a result.

Leverage Data for Accelerated Revenues

One of the most important outcomes of a data-driven and digitally enabled approach to sales is the ability to accelerate revenue growth by simultaneously sharpening and shortening the customer acquisition and growth lifecycle. Winning and keeping new business, expanding share of wallet, preserving hard-won accounts and growing territories requires a rapid response to customer buy signals and fast competitive reflexes as opportunities arise. This can be achieved when customer, prospect and market data is readily available in near real-time across the organization, and analytics is engaged to inform the sales effort.

With timely analytics, sales teams can hyper-target prospects and drive conversion based on motivational cues derived from customer activities.

This is especially effective online, where each click can be read and analyzed by intelligent systems that proactively turn browsing into buying and buying into upselling, fast. Indeed, using a combination of analytics and customer demographics, entire customer encounters can be reconstructed and leveraged to deliver a positive, revenue-generating experience, often without involving human intervention.

We recently helped a large B2C customer improve online shopping results by upgrading ecommerce capabilities for analytics-based engagement and optimized customer pricing. Prior to the upgrade, customers were offered a set price for goods searched, without presenting options or offers for upsell. After the upgrade, the system was able to read customer data, anticipate preferences and push add-on sales for discounts, thereby expanding the ticket on each visit and reducing bounce rates.

Put Speed to Work for Success in a Digital Economy

By modernizing and enriching data, re-architecting data flows and delivering

hyper-personalized customer experiences, businesses can leverage analytics to improve speed, build revenue and expand share of market. In fact, developing these capabilities sets a business up for ongoing improvements through continuous monitoring, helping organizations understand which improvements would create the greatest impact for data generation and capture, and enhancing performance that drives business forward.

Moving forward, market dominance will belong to those companies that leverage data to improve competitive advantage the fastest. Prioritize speed; the race belongs to the swiftest.

About EXL

EXL (NASDAQ: EXLS) is a leading operations management and analytics company that helps our clients build and grow sustainable businesses. By orchestrating our domain expertise, data, analytics and digital technology, we look deeper to design and manage agile, customer-centric operating models to improve global operations, drive profitability, enhance customer satisfaction, increase data-driven insights, and manage risk and compliance. Headquartered in New York, EXL has approximately 31,000+ professionals in locations throughout the United States, the UK, Europe, India, the Philippines, Colombia, Australia and South Africa. EXL serves multiple industries including insurance, healthcare, banking and financial services, utilities, travel, transportation and logistics, media and retail, among others.

For more information, visit [www.exlservice.com](http://www.exlservice.com).

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## UNITED STATES (GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS)

320 Park Avenue, 29th Floor

New York, New York 10022

T +1 212.277.7100 F +1 212.771.7111

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To find out more, contact us



[exlservice.com](https://exlservice.com)

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