

EPISODE 60

Why transformation isn't just a tech project

Host: *Alan Hart, Strategy, Growth & Transformation Leader, Deloitte Digital*
Guests: *Audrey Hazak, Group Chief Information Officer, Schneider Electric*

Audrey Hazak: The biggest shift has been moving … from digitization to a truly transformative role… Today, customers expect a full connected experience across every interaction. The B2C has so much influenced the B2B. As an individual, that's the experience that you would like to get … So, the conversation has evolved a lot. It's no longer about launching a tool, a platform; it's about business outcomes, customer satisfaction, growth, productivity, value creation.

Alan Hart: Today on the show, I have got Audrey Hazak. Currently Group Chief Information Officer at Schneider Electric and at the time this conversation was recorded, she was serving as the Senior Vice President of Digital Customer Relationship.

Audrey is on a mission to lead the digitization of the experience for Schneider Electric's customers and frontline employees, enabling growth, customer loyalty, and positioning Schneider as a digital experience of choice. With over 25 years of experience at Schneider,

Audrey has a deep understanding of the business, and in her current role, she oversees the combined API technology, AI, sales and marketing, quotation and pricing, cybersecurity, customer satisfaction and quality, and digital services, driving her global teams towards innovating a comprehensive digital ecosystem to deliver frictionless end-to-end experiences. On the show today, we talk about her approach to transformation, the types of people that she's looking for, the skills and the behaviors, and the tips that she has for other folks helping to drive a transformation that delivers impact. That and much more with Audrey Hazak.

Alan Hart (voice-over): Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond, where I chat with the world's leading chief marketing officers and business innovators to share ideas that spark change and inspire you to challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Alan Hart: Well, Audrey, welcome to the show.

Audrey Hazak: Thank you.

Alan Hart: I'm excited to have this conversation. I think before we get talking about business, usually we start off with something a little personal, and I hear that if I ever need ski lessons, you're the person to come to. So tell me about your ski life.

Audrey Hazak: Absolutely. Skiing has been a passion of mine for years. What I love about skiing is that it keeps you humble on top of being in the nature, which I really love because it's making the good balance and always a good break. But you can be feeling very confident one moment and then the mountain quickly reminds you that you are not fully in control. And I think with all the events that we see in the world, we don't realize each day what is happening.

But to me skiing is a great metaphor for leadership and transformation. It requires focus, adaptability, resilience. Sometimes you fall, sometimes conditions change unexpectedly, but you learn, you adjust, and you keep moving forward. So yes, I have had a few moments on the slopes that felt a bit more adventurous than planned, but they are always much funnier afterwards than they were at that time.

Alan Hart: I love that analogy. Well, you are the senior vice president of Digital Customer Relationship at Schneider Electric. Where did you get your start in your career, and what were some of the chapters along the way to your current role?

Audrey Hazak: My journey has definitely not been a traditional technology path. I start with a background in business, finance, communication, customer engagement. Early in my career, I was really focused on understanding the customers, partners, how the market is going, how they make decisions, how they interact with brands, and what creates meaningful experiences.

Over the time, I became increasingly fascinated by the role technology could play in transforming those experiences. Whatever I was touching, there was always a technology at the center, or the data at the center, which is absolutely a foundation. So that naturally led me to the digital transformation, where business strategy, customer experience, data, and technology come together.

And one thing that I have learned is that you don't need to start as an engineer to be a digital leader, even if it was a little bit difficult to my mind at the beginning. But what matters the most is the curiosity, the ability to learn continuously, and the willingness to connect technology to the real business and customer outcomes. And having a great team, great people of experts that's making the difference. So my role is about bridging those worlds, about the business expectation ecosystem, and making sure that digital delivers tangible value for customers, partners, employees, and Schneider Electric overall.

Alan Hart: Well, if you think about your organization within Schneider, can you give me a little bit about it? Like the scope and types of roles, etc. that you lead.

Audrey Hazak: Yeah. To keep it simple, the mission is make it easier for customers, partners, and front line. When I say "front line," it's really all the people in the organization that directly do business, engage with customers and partners. So to do business with Schneider Electric and make it easier, that's maybe what is in scope of my organization. And if I have a second sentence to elaborate a little bit more, the digital customer relationship organization brings together digital platforms, customer experience, data, AI, and business transformation—from marketing and sales through service and support. So we look at the experience end to end. That's what makes the difference. Instead of looking about individual touchpoints in isolation, we are ultimately creating seamless and personalized experiences that drive growth, strengthen customer loyalty, and help our teams serve customers and partners more effectively.

Alan Hart: Well, if you think back, how has the role of Digital Customer Relationship shifted over your time at Schneider?

Audrey Hazak: The biggest shift has been moving—and we see that very often on the market—moving from digitization to a truly transformative role. And transformation is absolutely critical. A few years ago, many organizations were focused on digitizing individual processes, touchpoints. Today, customers expect a full connected experience across every interaction. The B2C has so much influenced the B2B. As an individual, that's the experience that you would like to get, whether that's in your own environment or in your professional life, that's exactly the same. So the conversation has evolved a lot. It's no longer about launching a tool, a platform; it's about business outcomes, customer satisfaction, growth, productivity, value creation. What matters for me as an individual, as an organization. And of course, data, cybersecurity, AI have

become absolutely central to everything that we do. And there [are] no longer these separate topics. Everything is absolutely foundational capabilities, and this is how the role has evolved—connecting the dots and creating purpose.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, I like that notion that you just mentioned around B2C and the experiences we have as people out in the world actually has influenced how B2B people feel they need to have an experience that caters to them. Meaning we don't split our lives, right? Like the experience we have in our consumer life mirrors what we expect to have in our B2B life as well.

Audrey Hazak: Exactly. That's no [longer] two separate worlds. It's really the same, and what you experience and the best that you experience, you expect that for everything that you are doing. And then you keep in mind this type of interaction. It's super frustrating when you reach any website that you would like to get some information or to buy something or whatever, and you have been interrupted in the middle of your research, you're losing everything that you've done already. So all of that should be the day-to-day for B2C, and it's what we have definitely accelerated because that will be the game changer.

Alan Hart: You mentioned AI. AI is almost in every conversation I have lately. How is AI changing the way you attract talent and how you do the work and how you organize yourselves?

Audrey Hazak: AI is fundamentally changing how [the] organization operates. And at Schneider Electric, we are using AI to enhance both customer and employee experiences. But the most important is ensuring that we deliver the personalization. And the personalization is where it's making a big difference. When you really feel that the application is interacting with you, that's making the difference.

So the personalization that is helping to make smarter decision-making, that's making better choices [for you] as an individual, that's what is different. And in terms of the impact on the talent, we see that we have to rethink the way that we position our people, the skills, the competencies, and what we are looking for, in order to make sure that we get the proper technical skills because these remain absolutely important. We look for people that are adaptable, curious, comfortable working alongside AI, and being data-driven, because you need to make sure that you position all the time the understanding of the data as really at the center. The decision has to be made with the data. You have to engage by knowing what is happening. So that's super important. In terms of organization, this is becoming a little bit more cross-functional, more agile, more focused on platforms and capabilities than the traditional type of things. And this AI should amplify the human potential and not replace it. And we see it. We are going through a different cycle, or different inspiration, and the way that we observe that transformation and that change is now very clear. That's an indication of the human potential.

And successful organizations will be the ones that combine the human judgment, the creativity, and the empathy with the power of the AI.

Alan Hart: Very well said. I mean, as I talk to more and more folks like yourself, I do see this emergence of the all of the behaviors and traits that you mentioned—the data-driven, having some level of tech skills, but more importantly, maybe being adaptable humans, curious, and good consumers of machine information, right? Meaning we interrogate, not just assume that it's correct, right? The coworking between the AI and the human to enhance human potential, like you said. I think all of those traits are unique to this world that we're moving into. I don't know if you agree?

Audrey Hazak: Yeah, fully agree. And that's the trend. We have to ensure that we position ourselves there. That's the right game to play. That's clearly what we are looking for.

Alan Hart: Well, as you carry that forward, what does this mean for the future of customer experience for Schneider and your business?

Audrey Hazak: The customer expectation continues to rise. Because we see it, as I was mentioning, there is no more [separation of] your personal life [from] your professional life. The way that you act, the way that you consume, the way that you behave is exactly the same. You are an individual. So the customer expectation continues to grow. That's what we observe.

And what we do expect is the interaction to continue to be much more personalized, to be much more seamless. You know, you have to travel across the entire company without knowing which application it is, what is the background behind, etc. Everything should be transparent. You don't want to bring that level of complexity to our customers and partners. This should be absolutely transparent and regardless of the channel that they are using. Very often, you release it and the company, "yeah, but it's because of this, because of that." They don't care, the customers.

The AI allows us, at that stage, to move from connecting the dots—moving from the reactive engagement to the proactive engagement, which makes a big difference. Big, big difference. And instead of simply responding to a customer request, we can anticipate the needs and provide more relevant experiences. And that's making the difference. So while the technology enables this evolution, the customer experience remains fundamentally human.

And I'm insisting on that because if anyone in this world thinks that the human will disappear, the human will be the added value, will be the thing that really matters the most in the future. And the goal is not just the efficiency; you have to create the trust, the relevance, the value in every interaction that you have with your customers and partners.

Alan Hart: I love that—the notion of the human will matter no matter what, and that trust and relevance at the end of the day is what you're trying to achieve through these experiences. That makes a lot of sense.

You've been on this journey and driving a transformation. I tend to find that there's an inordinate amount of tech debt or old ways of doing things that are ingrained in systems. How do you deal with that and move forward—in some ways, leaving that behind?

Audrey Hazak: Yeah, I completely agree. And really, the tech debt is a headache, you know. And when you start the journey and when you look about your environment, when you realize the magnitude of the tech debt, and this has been for years that you were doing—and we were doing a lot in Schneider Electric doing acquisition—and you just combine and you sum all of all these kinds of things. The tech debt is one of the biggest challenges organizations face today, because it often limits both speed and innovation. And also you have to multiply the organization that is taking care. This is increasing your own cost, this is increasing the practices that you have to put in place.

In order to monitor everything that is happening and making sure that you are not exposing the company because cybersecurity is also extremely important and top of the agenda of any company. So the challenge is always to find the right balance between investing in the future with all the fancy new tools that are happening each day, popping up. And with the AI and the agentic, we see that's even amplified there.

And at the same time, simplifying the current landscape. So you have always this balance of investment and simplification, and to take care of this past history and the massive amount of things that the company is having. So at Schneider, we put a very strong focus on reducing the complexity, modernizing the architecture, and consolidating the platform where it makes sense.

And the simplification is not only a technology discussion, and very often I'm trying to emphasize that because people think that everything is happening with the digital, but it's first the processes, the governance, organizational habits, the way that the company is orchestrating—and the complexity is coming first from these business habits or business things that have been developed.

We have first to make sure that we transform everything around the business and we simplify. The digital is there maybe to accelerate, but then to support all that transformation. And the tech depth is absolutely instrumental if you want to be serious, if you want to have the right application landscape, the right architecture, the right data flow.

Everything is interconnected to that simplification, so this should be on the top of any agenda of any digital folks in the world.

Alan Hart: I know. I agree. I have this analogy of a four-legged chair, and on those four legs you have people, process, data, and technology. And the thing that binds them all together is kind of the culture and the governance of those things. And you named all of them. So my four-legged chair still works, and you have to get them right; otherwise, your chair is going to wobble, right? So, yeah.

Audrey Hazak: Exactly.

Alan Hart: Well, you've been driving this transformation. I'm curious as you think about speaking to other leaders looking to drive a similar type of transformation, what are some of the keys or advice you would give them?

Audrey Hazak: The first piece of advice is to start with business issue, business pain points, and customer, and not the technology. Too often I see people—and I'm sharing when I am in some seminar, in some meetings with some others, outside—they are much more looking at the technology. OK, what the application is doing, have you seen this new product, how you will interact with that, etc. But very, very few discussions about what we try to achieve, what we try to solve, what we try to bring, in a business sense. And so the technology is an enabler, but the transformation should always be anchored in solving real customer and business challenges. And for me, that's any transformation that we want to drive is to understand first, where are you? OK. What [are] the problems that you tried to solve? And what's the magnitude of that problem also? Because sometimes you are really focused on very small things. You have to size. And to size, you can only do that with some data. And that is why really positioning—and I like your four-legged example of your chair—because that's exactly that. The data is a pillar. And you need to master your data. You need to understand, you need to characterize, and then you can make the decision.

Then, after you have clearly identified this real customer and business challenges, the second will be absolutely clear on the outcomes that you try to achieve. What you want to solve, what you try to achieve. Is it customer satisfaction? Is it a better growth? Is it efficiency? You need to be very clear because it's also helping to drive in the right direction.

The direction of a transformation is absolutely critical. The people who follow will be with you only if you really create the purpose. What you speak about is extremely important to get the buy-in and to get the right level of energy, and bringing the people with you in the transformation.

The third recommendation will be to invest as much in people, communication, and change management as you do in technology. Very often we think that OK, buying a new tool and then the job is done. Absolutely not. The tool is 10–20 percent. That's all. Eighty percent of the change, of the transformation of the value that you intend to bring is coming from people,

communication, and change management. So this is absolutely important. And you don't have to wait for perfection, because very often people would like to go to the end and make sure that everything in the house is super clean and then we can go. No, learn fast, test, adapt, keep moving forward.

Transformation is a journey, not a one-time initiative. So that would be my recommendation to any leaders that try to drive transformation.

Alan Hart: Those are great lessons. Well, one of the things we like to do is get to know you a little bit better. We know you're a ski pro, can offer lessons to those like me that are challenged on the slopes. But my favorite question to ask everyone that comes on the show is has there been an experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Audrey Hazak: One of the most defining aspects of my career has been the opportunity to work across different functions, industries, cultures. This has been so rich that it is what I am today. And I feel extremely thankful and honored. It has been so great—extremely demanding, but at the same time, this has [brought] me a lot. All these experiences and the people that I have worked with and what the people are doing, I have learned so much around all the transformation that was happening.

And when you start to connect the business goals, the technology capabilities, the human needs, and specificity and all of that, I can say that I grew a lot. I am rich with all of that. And the human dimension remains at the center of how I lead today. Without the people, you are no one. Without the people, your life is wah-hah—miserable—let's say, like that!

But having people around you, anyone coming from a different background, bringing you something, all that stimulation, it's absolutely fantastic. And I'm rich of all of that today, and I am probably the leader that I am because of all that experience and exposure I was having to all that very large environment, people, and all of it.

Alan Hart: Well, if you were starting this journey all over again, what advice would you give your younger self?

Audrey Hazak: Don't wait until you feel completely ready, OK? Start and be extremely curious. Many of the best opportunities come before you feel them, and you are not even fully prepared for that. But accept the challenge, go on that, and keep [yourself] open, and you will get the right level of confidence. This will come [about] with some years, with some exposure. You will find coaches, mentors that definitely will help you. Careers don't need to be linear. Some of the most valuable experiences come from unexpected moves and diverse challenges. So trust yourself more. Confidence doesn't come before action; it comes from taking action. Being in movement will be what will make the difference in the medium and long run.

Alan Hart: Well, is there something you're trying to learn more about right now? A topic?

Audrey Hazak: Without a surprise, AI! AI remains a huge area of focus, you know. It's really different. Because before that, we were having all the time in mind when you learn something, a little bit where this was starting and a little bit where this was finishing. AI has totally changed this paradigm because when you start, right after you discover something that was totally unexpected. You were not having that in mind. And this is absolutely fascinating. And it's not just the technology itself; it's how AI is transforming the organization, the skills, the leadership, and the ways of working. This is absolutely amazing. And we are living through this major shift.

Understanding the human side of that transformation is just as important as understanding the technology. And I love that. How all of this will interact, connect, live together, and how this will augment everything that we were able to do. So yeah, AI—and I'm not even a beginner! When I see the potential, I'm looking at the mountain and say, wow, that's a long journey! But really interesting.

Alan Hart: Yeah. I agree. Well, as you look out in the world today, is there anything that you're curious about, you're noticing out in the world today?

Audrey Hazak: Yeah. The curiosity maybe is much more, of course, how AI is reshaping the industry far beyond the technology, etc. That's really clear. But more broadly, I'm interested in how we maintain the human connection and the trust in a world that is becoming increasingly digital and automated. And I should also add because working at Schneider, on top of being citizens in this world, we have a specific sensitivity to any topic linked to sustainability.

So, yeah, I'm very curious how we can maintain this balance or imbalance today—human connection, trust, and this sustainability world with everything that is becoming more and more digital. So yeah, my curiosity is going there.

Alan Hart: I love that. Last question I have for you: What do you see as the largest opportunity or potential threat facing leaders like yourself today?

Audrey Hazak: The largest opportunity is the ability to combine the data, the AI, the creativity, in order to know better the customer and deliver personalized customer experiences at scale. I'm really a big fan of it. And that's something that I really focus and pay a very strong attention.

The biggest risk is becoming overly focused on the technology and losing sight of the customer. Sometimes, as I was mentioning before, sometimes we do miss the business purpose or really understanding exactly what's the problem that we would like to solve, and we are also missing to replace the customer expectation at the center. When we say the customer should be at the center, the customer *should* be at the center. Technology should never be the objective by itself. It should always serve as a customer need or a business outcome. And, for me, the

organizations that will succeed are the ones that combine customer obsession, creativity, and technology—but all of these in a very balanced way to create a little bit [of] disruption.

Alan Hart: Well, Audrey, thank you for coming on the show and sharing all your experience and wisdom about transformations and tips for others. I really appreciate it.

Audrey Hazak: Alan, my big thank you for the invitation. It has been a great pleasure. Thank you.

Alan Hart (voice-over): Hi, it's Alan again. Marketing Beyond is a Deloitte Digital podcast. It's created and hosted by me, Alan Hart, and produced by Sam Robertson. We have even more cutting-edge marketing insights headed your way. Be sure to subscribe to our channel to stay up to date on our latest episodes. I love hearing from listeners. Share your thoughts about the episode, the topic covered, or the show by commenting on this video or emailing me at marketingbeyond@deloitte.com. If you're interested in more conversations with industry visionaries, we invite you to explore other Deloitte Digital podcasts at deloittedigital.com/us/podcasts and share the show with your friends and colleagues. There, you'll find the Marketing Beyond webpage with complete show notes and links to what was discussed in the episode today. I'm Alan Hart, and this is Marketing Beyond.

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