

As Harmonic's Head of Delivery, Mark Reynolds helps CEOs and senior leaders to shape their organisations and get the best from their people.

Mark has extensive experience of building, deploying and overseeing the delivery of wide-ranging solutions for major UK programmes in the private sector, defence, nuclear and rail markets. He has particular expertise in financial services, having worked on programmes in the payments, integration, regulatory and digital arenas for HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander and Lloyds Banking Group.

Here Mark reflects on his eight years at Harmonic, the impact of technology on business growth and the rewards of being a transformation partner for diverse organisations.



Why did you join Harmonic?

Before I joined Harmonic eight years ago, I worked in financial services and built a reputation for delivering some of the most challenging programmes for the most ambitious banks. I gained experience of working with consultants on the client side, as well as working as an independent consultant myself.

Joining Harmonic enabled me to increase my impact across a variety of clients, deploying broader solutions than I could as an independent consultant within a single organisation. It gave me the opportunity to help the organisation grow into what it is today and shape its core values. Harmonic and I are passionate about our clients and their success, and this drives every member of our teams.

As one of Harmonic's longstanding leaders, how has the business changed?

The past eight years have been incredibly exciting for Harmonic and it has been a great privilege to play a leading role in the journey the business has been on. We have established a deep presence in markets such as rail, services and the private sector. Our team has grown substantially in terms of strength, maturity and expertise. We have developed our capability, adding new offerings and approaches.

All of this means we are helping more clients achieve their goals with greater surety and pace than ever before.

How has the environment within which Harmonic operates changed in this time?

Technology has been a dominant change driver for many decades now and that shows no sign of slowing down. It is no longer enough to use technology to optimise existing business models. Instead, businesses need to radically reshape their products and capabilities to meet the growing and changing expectations of their customers.

Recent global events have dramatically accelerated this shift. Customers now have far higher expectations in terms of how businesses respond to climate change or add social value to the communities in which they operate. Global markets are becoming increasingly competitive as geopolitics are more volatile than at any point since the Cold War. Brexit has created uncertainty in the UK and abroad, but with it, opportunity. Covid-19 has transformed lives across the globe more than any other single event in recent times, driving demand for online services, cashless transactions and remote working, amongst many other areas.

In short, the world today is very different to the world even 12 months ago, and certainly 8 years ago when I joined Harmonic. This presents some genuine threats, but also some hugely exciting opportunities for organisations that are ready to make bold decisions for their future and the future of their customers.



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What do you believe are the particular opportunities in the technology space?

New technology is making online development simpler and cheaper. This creates opportunities for an ever-growing number of providers to deliver products designed around specific demands and circumstances. Already we are seeing personalised technology products built to help consumers with everything from saving for significant life moments to reducing their carbon footprint. There is no doubt that this potentially has great benefits for consumers. However, the proliferation of choice is creating complexity. New platforms offer simpler ways to integrate, manage and exploit the digital world. The race is now on to see which providers retain the primary customer relationships as platforms for others, and which become disintermediated utilities.

New players are unencumbered by historic infrastructure and business models, but have fewer existing customers so need to establish credibility and market coverage fast if they are to compete. Established, larger players will need to learn how to be agile and harness the power of digital to serve customers' needs in new ways if they are to retain their market position and avoid becoming commoditised as supporting infrastructure in a broader ecosystem.

As technology budgets become increasingly stretched, how can businesses maximise investment impact?

Reshaping business models will require investment. Lots of businesses have already had to invest hard to remain compliant as they move away from standard operations in offices, call centres and high streets. This has tended to have a disproportionate impact on larger organisations, creating strain on technology budgets and a level of change fatigue for leaders and their teams. However, businesses simply can't afford to invest to stand still. The current climate must act as a catalyst for more fundamental change in how they operate if they are to flourish in the coming years. Maximising the impact of any investment is therefore more crucial than ever.

Three components underpin impactful investment at this time.

Firstly, put the customer at the heart of what you are doing. Most organisations think this is what they are doing, but in fact they find it hard to leave centre stage themselves.

Secondly, identify where you are clinging to old ways of working due to an emotional pull, or out of habit. Bring in diverse and disruptive voices who will not start from your existing operating model, will challenge without fear, and will highlight how changes can drive efficiencies.

Finally, keep the time between idea and reality as short as possible to minimise costs and maximise returns. This requires a structured, pacy delivery approach, bringing together experts from customer, regulatory and technology backgrounds. Set clear intentions up front, define high-quality solutions, and build continual measurement and release into the whole delivery lifecycle.

What are your key strengths as an individual and how do these help you deliver for your clients?

Seeing clients do the extraordinary is what drives me. I believe passionately that this can only really be achieved through diverse partnerships, where the power of the whole is substantially greater than the sum of the parts. I have a track record of building and leading high-performing teams across clients, partners and suppliers. Alongside a questioning, independent and pragmatic approach, this allows me to agree ambitious goals with clients and our teams and then deliver against them.

Outside of work, I love spending time walking and exploring with my family. Life balance is an important part of our organisational wellbeing at Harmonic, and I see its impact reflected in my own creativity, energy and productivity.

What do you see on the horizon for Harmonic as a business?

Just like our clients, we need to stay ahead of the change curve. Focusing our offerings and capabilities on our customers' changing needs will be more vital than ever to ensure we remain relevant. As a supremely agile organisation that adapts quickly and is instinctively customer-centric, we are well positioned for this.

I am excited that our growing range of clients are increasingly looking to us as a transformation partner who will challenge their operating models and use data-driven, objective insight into their delivery performance to revolutionise or fine-tune their organisation. More than ever, yesterday's ways of thinking will not deliver against the opportunities of today. By listening, disrupting, collaborating and solving, I look forward to what the Harmonic team can achieve as we continue to transform together with our clients.

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