Many companies that strive to evolve into a digital enterprise look for quick wins at the start of what promises to be a multi-year journey. Perhaps they will focus on remaking a singular sales process to bring real-time visibility to customer accounts. Or they will integrate with a business network to facilitate communication between partners and suppliers. Technology plays a key role, but it is only part of a complete organizational transformation.

To become a digital enterprise, companies need to adopt an innovation culture and mindset that is embraced by everyone in the organization. Transforming organizational culture is easier said than done, of course; with technology, the company can lay responsibility for change at the foot of the solution and go about its day. Not so with infusing a unilateral shift in mindset that is less about creating a way to solve a specific problem than it is about creating a culture to help open up the problems space and determine if the company has the right problem to solve. By adopting “design thinking,” companies can scale a creative mindset across the organization, providing employees an open, inviting platform that fosters innovation. SAP is a strong advocate of using design thinking methodologies not only for delivering products and services to customers, but also for helping customers adopt the approach to drive cultural change in their own digital transformations.

Where design is concerned, there are significant challenges to cementing a culture of creativity in an enterprise accustomed to engineering-driven change. In the consumer space, known for best-in-class design, a 1:10 ratio of designers to developers is common — it helps foster a design-minded approach. In the enterprise, however, a 1:1,000 ratio is not unheard of. Having started a design journey more than a decade ago, SAP knows the challenge of scaling a design mindset across a large organization and is well positioned to guide customers in their own organizational transformation mindset.

As SAP has focused internally on learning from firsthand experience with design thinking, the company has also been recognized as a leader in the field. The Design Management Institute included SAP in its Design Value Index, which recognizes design-led organizations, and gave SAP a Design Value Award in 2016 for SAP’s work on a cancer screening system. More evidence of SAP’s influence and impact in design include the company’s partnership with Apple to bring the SAP Fiori design language to iOS, and its collaboration with Stanford Graduate School of Business’s Executive Education Program as contributors to the Innovative Technology Leader program, in which IT executives collaborate on altering the perception of innovation in IT.

Infusing a culture of innovation has tangible benefits on the product side. Design thinking is the common denominator that envelops the SAP Fiori design language as well as SAP’s user experience (UX) tools and technologies, which you will read about in the feature stories in this issue of SAPinsider. SAP developed these UX innovations using a human-centered approach, where finding a tool to solve a problem was secondary to working collaboratively within the organization, with partners, and with customers to first make sure we were attacking the right problem. Working iteratively within this culture of innovation has led to many breakthroughs and ensures that our products deliver the most value to customers.

1 See www.dmi.org/?page=2015DVIandOTW.
2 See www.dmi.org/?page=2016DVAWinners.