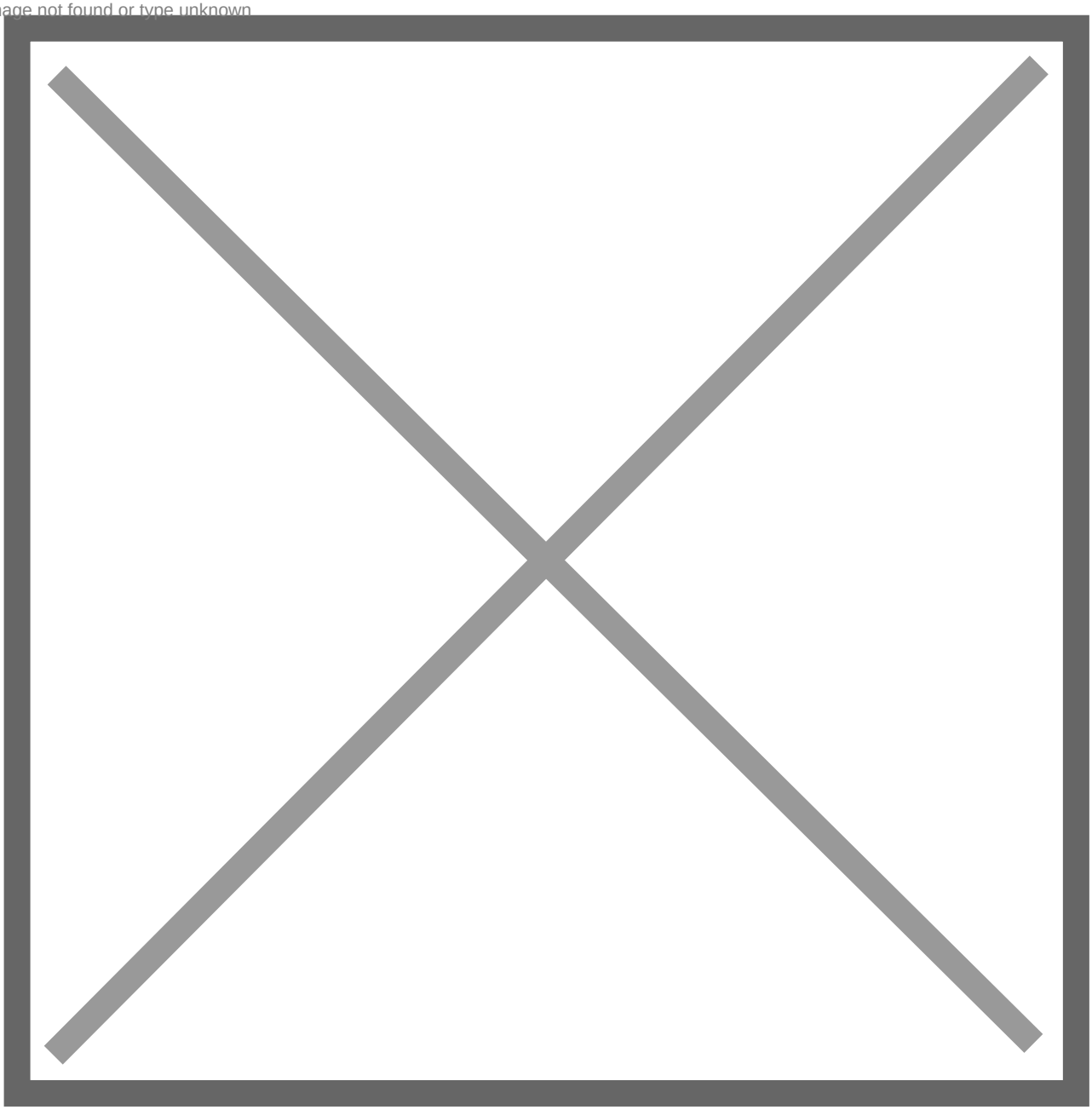
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Does 'Digital First' mean 'Digital Only'?

6th Sep,2021

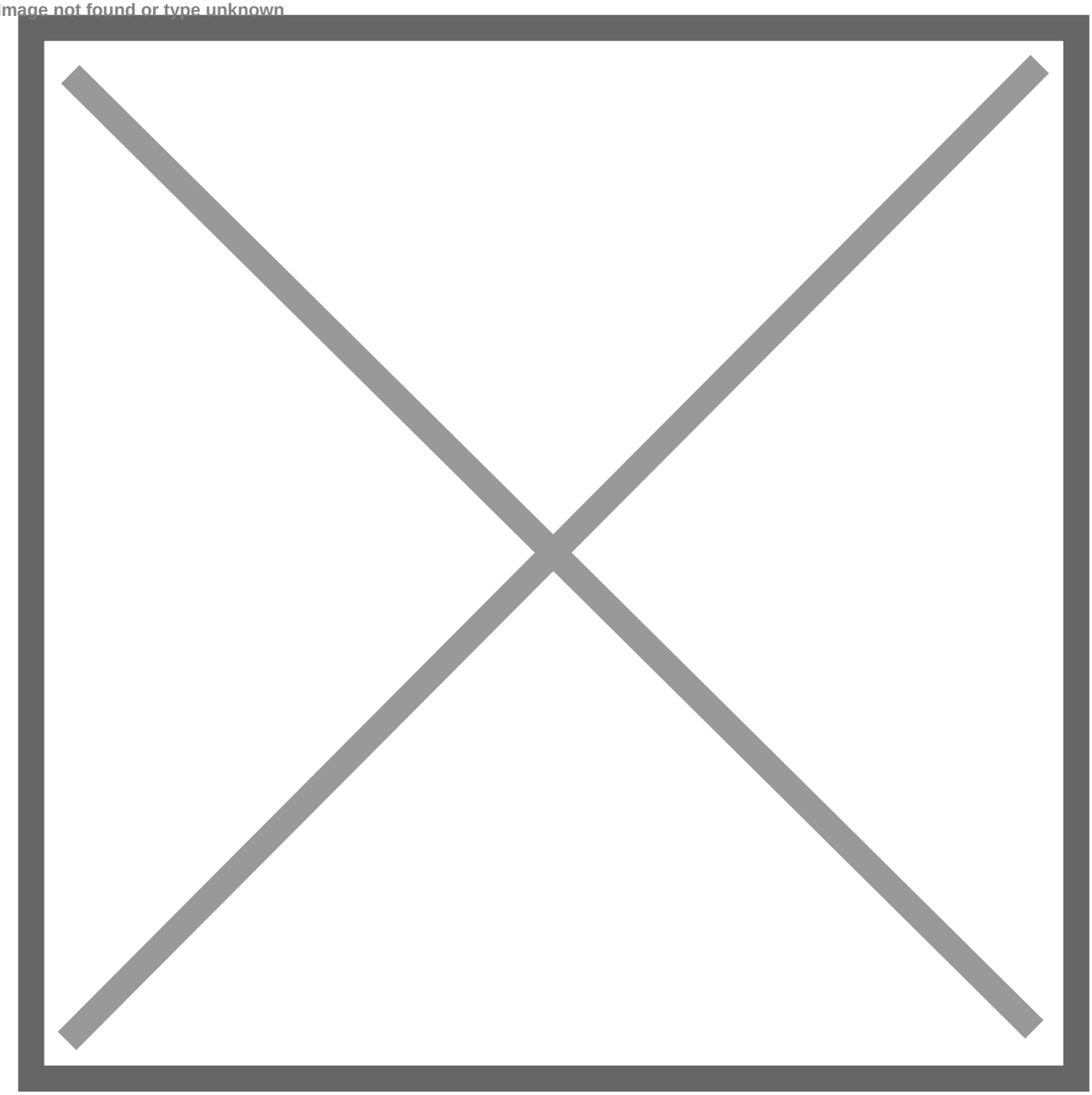
Think about how digital has overwhelmed our lives! We all bet on digital as the only means to stay connected and rebuild businesses and services during the pandemic. Governments and businesses are quickly catching up with this tempo of change created by digital technologies. *But in this digital craze, are we ignoring a legacy that has sustained our ecosystem?* We have embraced 'digital first' as a game-changer. What about a 'digital only' service? **Are we ready?**

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Taking a 'digital only' approach can be risky. Take a look at what happened to the Government's ambitious plan to have a faceless transaction with the Income Tax (IT) portal. Since the portal's launch, there have been glitches. Users are unable to file returns or receive refunds. Chartered accountants are clueless. The citizen experience is distressing, to cut the long story short. There is nothing wrong with the Government's intent- it hoped to create digital delight and make the portal easier to use for taxpayers. However, the fact remains that no one anticipated this- neither the Government nor the implementing company. This is how the flip side of the digital strikes when we don't have a Plan B in mind if a digital solution doesn't work.

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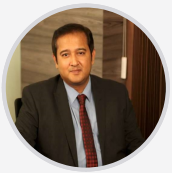
Such a scenario results in a digital dropout. Restoring the confidence in digital takes much effort and planning anew.

I am a techpreneur of over two decades- a believer in digital breakthroughs in G2B and G2C services. In the same vein, I don't believe that an abrupt switch to digital means completely removing physical touchpoints in delivery. Think about what it would be like to be an investor. Through a seamless portal built by the Government, you can secure land and get all permits in a few clicks. Then, the portal goes down. You go back to your old ways of running your job through multiple government outlets. What if the officer claims that all services are digital-only and denies offline delivery? Phew!

Somewhere, I feel the Governments tend to be inflexible while balancing digital adoption with offline service delivery. This balance is the spirit that epitomizes good governance. Digital public service delivery by the Government is massive change management, and it takes time to build citizen's confidence.

We don't need an encore of this investor story or the IT portal experience I narrated above, whether it is the case of an investor or a citizen. The best digital experience is the one that is omnichannel. Being 'digital first' isn't being 'digital only'. A human touchpoint has and always will have value.

This blog was first published on Priyardarshi Nanu Pany's Medium Account.



AUTHOR:

Priyadarshi Pany

Managing Director & CEO

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