A Case for Use Cases

PART 1

Building a Future

Welcome back to another Thought Leader Q&A Corner. This time, we're featuring **Meredith Whalen, Chief Research Officer at IDC**.

As the need for companies to digitally transform increases, Meredith and her team have developed a strategy for growth focusing on use cases. At Tech Data's Partner Summit 2018, where we gathered with more than 400 industry thought leaders for three days of engagement and knowledge sharing, we sat down with Meredith to discuss use cases. The theme of her keynote presentation at the event, use cases are valuable tools for effective sales.

Hear Meredith's insights on use cases in our three-part, exclusive series.

To begin, can you broadly define **use cases** *for us?*

Simply put, **a business use case is a discretely funded project that supports the goals of the program**. For our intent and purpose, it must also include technology. In organizational planning, use cases sit under programs; programs sit under strategic priorities; and priorities support the business mission for an organization. Think of use cases as the cornerstone of goal setting and planning for a business' growth.

We've identified more than **650** specific, actionable use cases for **17** different industries. There are three more industries we're looking at next – those being transportation, capital markets and media. Part of defining these 650 use cases is developing a standard taxonomy, so that we're speaking a commonly shared language with clients and can quickly get down to business.

I should note the use cases we've defined are entirely in the digital transformation space. There are thousands of use cases out there, but what we chose to do is home in on those that are focused on digital transformation. We realized as a supplier community, the greatest opportunity is going to surround digital transformations, so that's where we at IDC narrowed our scope.

Can use cases act as guidelines for anyone in a particular industry?

Absolutely. We found the shared top priorities for companies in these industries and we distilled them for their supplier markets. We also talked to customers so that we can direct companies toward the use cases they'll find most valuable

For each use case, we follow a process. **We start by creating a definition for exactly what the use case is and what it entails. We then identify the technologies included in the use case and calculate how much money will be expended on technology and services.** Our industry analysts conduct the research to support the use cases, assess which technologies are being analyzed and identify the key vendors.

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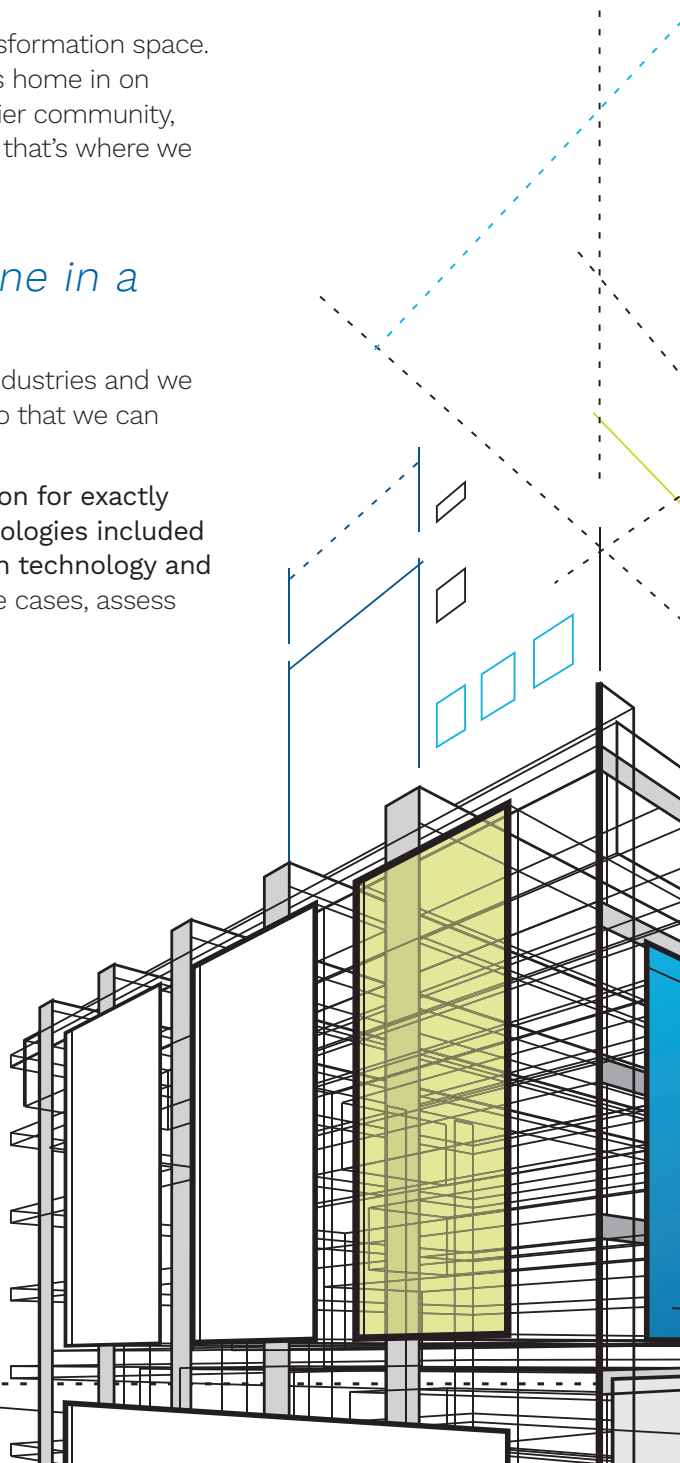
What are the guardrails for applying use cases? Does IDC have a thought process for deployment that vendors and retailers should consider?

We need to think of use cases in terms of how they fit into a roadmap. We don't want customers to operate from a laundry list of projects. Ultimately, **use cases should follow a logical thought process in terms of the order they're implemented**. That process might involve deploying "easy win" use cases at first to gain trust with business colleagues or starting with use cases that lay the foundation for more complex projects.

For instance, in a retailer's effort to gain a holistic view of its inventory, it may need to re-platform its systems to the cloud. The next use case may be to move inventory based on trends, weather or stock outs. This would require an IoT-based use case. The ultimate use may be a blue-sky scenario – for example printing inventory on demand at the retail outlet. That's down the line in what we call horizon three. While it's not yet feasible to reach horizon three in mass-scale, what's feasible, right now, is to imagine the possibilities.

*Want to hear more about how use cases can help you imagine what's possible? Come back to LevelUp over the next few weeks for even more of our interview with **Meredith Whalen**, Chief Research Officer at IDC.*