

Six-Flow Matching Model: A Comprehensive Tool for Enterprise Transformation Practices

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Abstract: Digital transformation has always been a hot topic in the field of information systems and strategic management. Although various theories have been used in the study of enterprise digital transformation, how to quickly identify the problems and propose feasible measures is a major challenge in the process of enterprise transformation. In addition, in the specific context of China, there are fewer tools available on the comprehensive study of enterprise transformation that can describe companies in the fastest and easiest way. So, Combining Six-Flow Matching hexagrams of I Ching and Bourdieu's social practice formula, we aim to propose Six-Flow Matching Model that is a comprehensive tool for enterprise transformation practice, and to explain how to use it to quickly and easily make a diagnosis and propose countermeasures for business transformation. Specifically, we not only describe the activities within the firm as information flow, material flow, capital flow, right flow, responsibility flow and benefit flow, which are matched with symbolic capital, social capital, economic capital, cultural capital, habitus and field, but also use the hexagrams to interpret the comparative results of the six-flow and propose digital transformation measures. By combining Bourdieu's social philosophy theory with the wisdom of the ancients, this study will illustrate the logic of hexagram changes to readers through the presentation of a case, and shows that Six-Flow Matching Model can comprehensively provide effective measures for the problems existing in enterprise transformation.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Bourdieu, I Ching

1. Introduction

In the last decade or so, the emergence of a diverse set of novel and powerful digital technologies, digital platforms and digital infrastructures has transformed entrepreneurship in significant ways with broad organizational and policy implications [1, 2]. Indeed, the phrase digital transformation has come into wide use in contemporary business media to signify the transformational of digital technologies for businesses (new business models, new types of products/services, new types of customer experiences), and more broadly, to indicate how existing companies may need to radically transform themselves to succeed in the emerging digital world [3, 4].

Recent research in enterprise digital transformation has tried to unpack the internal mechanism of digital transformation and these implications in more specific or

concrete terms. For example, studies have shown how digital technologies fuel new forms of digital transformation that cross traditional industry/sectoral boundaries, embrace networks, scaling and evolution of new ventures [5-7]. Similarly, studies have also documented the ways by which established some companies have tried to redefine themselves and radically restructure their transformation strategies and practices to respond to digitization [8, 9]. More broadly, studies have noted that the infusion of new digital technologies transforms the nature of uncertainty inherent in entrepreneurship [1, 10].

Importantly, digital transformation also has implications at the broader regional/national and societal levels, and has the potential to inform decision-making entities and other stakeholders. However, most companies are often overwhelmed when faced with the major strategic decision of digital transformation. We urgently need an analytical tool to

help companies judge their own situation and give suggestions for expected actions. This special issue aims to promote research that will help address the above questions - revealing the constitution and practical logic of enterprise digital transformation.

This study will introduce Professor Wang Huifen's Six-Flow Matching theory and hexagram tools, which will hopefully solve this key problem. The theory divides various activities within the enterprise into six flows, including information flow, material flow, capital flow, power flow, responsibility flow and interest flow, and combining these flows with I Ching hexagrams, the hexagrams describe the current situation of the enterprise and give suggestions for future practice.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the theoretical background on digital transformation, Bourdieu's logic of practice, and I Ching. Section 3 outlines the methodology and theoretical framework, which can help transcend the entrenched dichotomies of digital transformation research. Section 4 provides a case study to dissect its transformation according to our theory. Finally, we summarize the implications, and future research expectations for digital transformation theory and practice.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Digital Transformation

Digital transformation (DT) is increasingly establishing itself as a constant theme in contemporary academic and practitioner conversations [11]. Vial (2021) constructed a conceptual definition of DT as “a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies” [12]. Most studies discuss the mechanism of enterprise digital transformation from a micro and macro perspective. For example, Sousa-Zomer *et al.* (2020) offered a conceptual framework that links one of the dynamic capabilities for digital transformation to both its micro foundations and performance outcomes from a micro perspective with the help of dynamic capabilities [13]. Meske and Junglas (2021) investigated success factors of digital workplace transformation, thereby adding a micro-perspective to the ongoing research stream on digital transformation [14]. However, Van Veldhoven and Vanthienen (2021) contributed to our macro understanding of DT by summarizing the major developments in business, society, and digital technologies and by linking these developments together as an integral part of the phenomenon [15]. Rêgo *et al.* (2021) correspondingly identified six clusters of research themes to research digital transformation from a macro perspective [16].

Despite first research efforts and the frequent challenges encountered in practice, academia still lacks specific guidelines for firms on how to formulate, implement, and evaluate digital transformation strategies [17]. Authors

mainly rely on the characteristics of digital transformation and on macro or micro perspectives to understand how enterprises develop their digital transformation capacities to strategizing, but they mainly remain at a descriptive stage. They don't take into account the complete possibilities of the framework, mainly because they neglect the integrated macro and micro perspectives and relational thinking, which is nevertheless essential to understand the link between enterprises and practices. In order to reach digital transformation, none of the actors in the society can be seen in isolation, instead we need to improve our understanding of their interactions and interrelations that lead to knowledge, innovation, and value creation [18].

Therefore, in order to eliminate dualism, we quote Bourdieu's practical formula. Enterprise digital transformation is in multiple fields, which is full of struggle like other social, economic and cultural fields. The deep reason for organizational change and the conflict in the process of enterprise transformation is the change of management order and power, which involves capital struggle in multiple fields. Therefore, enterprises need to continuously accumulate capital in the field, so as to change the position of enterprises and enhance their competitive advantage. Through Bourdieu's practice theory, we study the conflicts and problems in the process of enterprise digital transformation from the perspective of practice field rather than isolated and static point of view, explain them with the generation of actor habits rather than the binary model of environment and individual opposition, and explain the role interaction and power practice in the process of digital transformation with symbolic power.

2.2. Bourdieu's Practice Formula

Bourdieu constructs a theory of practice based on relational and reflective thinking. He summarizes the key concepts of practice theory as the following formula: practice = (habitus × capital) + field [19], by which he describes the mutually constructed relationship between the three.

Drawing on Bourdieu's forms of capital and the logic of digital options, Karahanna *et al.* (2019) developed an integrative conceptual framework to identify and organize antecedents of digital advantage, which can translate to hospital performance through the creation of digital options [20]. Prieto and Wang (2010) proposed Bourdieu's theory of practice (TOP) as a useful framework for conceptualizing agents' strategizing by considering players' strategizing as based on their habitues and capitals as well as their assessments of their relevant field(s) [21]. Taking Bourdieu's "logic of practice" theory as the perspective, Wang (2015) analyzed the dilemma faced by reform and innovation of higher vocational education from four aspects: practice concept, practice tools, practice path and practice field, and puts forward the path to break the dilemma [22]. Based on Bourdieu's field theory, Liu and Liu (2021) explored the action process, action results and formation mechanism of rural elites' participation in poverty alleviation [23].

We have argued in this paper that the emphasis digital

transformation places on detailed, local and contextualized analysis which needs to introduce relational thinking—Bourdieu's practice formula. Walsham (1997) noted that challenging the rigid separation of human and non-human seems valuable—particularly where the boundaries between macro-level and micro-level force are continually negotiated and struggled, such as in strategy forming and implementation [24]. Although Bourdieu's practical logic can guide enterprise practice, it is mainly applicable to Western management. Because Chinese management practice is still in a chaotic state, Bourdieu's practical logic needs to be combined with theories related to Chinese situations.

2.3. *I Ching*

Yin–Yang is both an indigenous and traditional notion and a type of Chinese philosophy, and it could be regarded as a symbol, a dialectical logic system, a cognitive frame, or an epistemology [25]. Everything in the universe contains elements of yin and yang, with an inherent dynamic interaction mechanism that outlines the dynamic, changing state of things [26]. *I Ching* constructs a unique set of symbolic relevance system and relevance logic, which has its unique logic of causality generation [27]. *I Ching* is a symbol system made up of the simplest overlapping Yin and Yang, with mysterious and charming laws, and the hexagram symbol is the true origin of *I Ching*.

With the changing life style and the emerging industrial and commercial focus, scholars have started gradually to explore the relationship of *I Ching* to managerial philosophy [28]. The *I Ching* can provide many extremely useful insights for our management science research and modern management practice [29]. The *I Ching* can divine the future and guide actions [30] so that the enterprise can make strategy. Strategy is the life of an enterprise, and strategic thinking and principles are prominent in the *I Ching* [29]. *I-Ching's* flexible management decision-making model stresses that the decision maker can, by practicing divination, get considerable management decision-making inspiration together with reference to corresponding ancient Chinese life and management decision-making experiences (namely, the hexagram) [28].

"Yi" in *I Ching* means change. Change is not random or contrary, but changes in accordance with the law of the road between heaven and earth. It is very important for an enterprise to adapt to the changes of the times and constantly transform and upgrade. Sixth grade, which is one Yao of *I Ching*, means that ten lobbyists are not as good as one troublemaker. Therefore, we should understand that ten people who support you are not as good as one troublemaker, and in the early stage of reform and transformation, negative energy must be eliminated in the organization.

Comparing with western models, one particular value of *I-Ching* lies in its nonlinear approach to decision making [28]. *I Ching* is suitable for studying the chaotic state of Chinese management practice. This is because that the evolving environment related to a problem is no barrier to *I-Ching's* approach which accommodates consideration of change as

the problem-solving activity progresses [28]. The advantage of *I Ching* is that it can change its mind and flow, especially reflecting the flow of capital in Bourdieu.

Therefore, we combine *I Ching* and Bourdieu's social practice formula, we aim to propose Six-Flow Matching Model that is a comprehensive tool for business transformation practice, and to explain how to use it to quickly and easily make a diagnosis and propose countermeasures for business transformation. Besides, the six-flow matching practice logic can express the hexagram of conflict and resistance in enterprise transformation.

3. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

3.1. *Bourdieu's Practice Formula*

Pierre Bourdieu who is one of the most influential sociologists in the world, believes that the social world exists in the image of subject and object duality, and thinks society is an organic structure composed of practitioners, fields, capital, and habits. Bourdieu summarizes the key concepts of practice theory as the following formula: practice = (habitus × capital) + field [19].

$$practice = \begin{pmatrix} \text{symbolic capital} \\ \text{social capital} \\ \text{economic capital} \\ \text{cultural capital} \end{pmatrix} capital^4 \times habitus + field$$

Habitus is a transformable, enduring dispositional system that is a tendency to perceive, feel, act and think in certain ways. Habitus comprises both naturalized and dynamic components [31], so individuals are usually internalized and incorporated into themselves unconsciously because of the objective conditions and social experiences of their existence. Bourdieu defines "field" as a structured social space, but also a configuration or network of relations with a specific distribution of power. In Bourdieu's theory, the field is seen as a space of struggle for agents using capital. Bourdieu classified competing capital in social space into four major categories, namely, economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Economic capital refers to capital that can be immediately converted into money and institutionalized in the form of property rights. Cultural capital includes the values of the organization, managerial capabilities, informational capability. Social capital is the actual or potential collection of resources associated with having a more or less institutionalized network of mutually known and recognized enduring relationships. Symbolic capital represents the individual's honor and reputation, and it has a legal effect, which can give the recognized person the social status [32].

3.2. *The Enterprise Micro Practice Formula*

We found that enterprise management has symmetrical beauty, and this symmetrical beauty is achieved by matching enterprise information flow, material flow and capital flow

(Figure 1).



Figure 1. Symmetrical beauty of digital transformation.

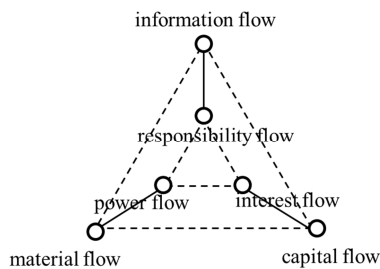


Figure 2. Six-flows matching diagram.

After in-depth study of enterprise digital management mechanism, we find that the symmetrical beauty of enterprise management is only a superficial phenomenon. The matching of information flow, material flow, and capital flow is only the specific event that we can see and perceive. Therefore, we introduce critical realism to explore the matching mechanism of responsibility flow, power flow and interest flow after the

matching of information flow, material flow and capital flow, so as to explore the symmetry mechanism (Figure 2).

Information is the external expression and symbol of human beings, material is the flow of information object, and capital is the fundamental driving force to promote material flow. As internal control performance, information flow corresponds to responsibility flow. The transfer of power flow leads to the transfer of material flow and the size of interest flow determines the trend of capital flow. Enterprise is not only tangible material space and social space, but also intangible mechanism function space. The interaction among information flow, material flow, capital flow, responsibility flow, power flow and interest flow have become the performance and control mechanism of daily practice.

The practical logic formula is a quite useful guideline for the diagnosis of enterprise digital transformation. Therefore, we combine Bourdieu theory with the six-flow matching, and propose a new formula of enterprise digital transformation.

$$\begin{pmatrix} \text{information flow} \\ \text{material flow} \\ \text{capital flow} \\ \text{responsibility flow} \end{pmatrix} \text{flow}^4 \times \text{power flow} + \text{interest flow} = \text{Enterprise digital transformation} =$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} \text{symbolic capital} \\ \text{social capital} \\ \text{economic capital} \\ \text{cultural capital} \end{pmatrix} \text{capital}^4 \times \text{habitus} + \text{field}$$

The digital transformation of enterprises is also in a specific social field, and the internal conceptual structure is the same as other social fields. Therefore, this formula can be used for analysis and research, we can get rid of the single perspective of chasing economic capital to analyze the transformation of enterprises, and provide a more socially meaningful thinking framework.

According to the corporate micro-practice formula introduced above, the six flows of corporate micro-practice correspond to the four capitals, habits and fields proposed by Bourdieu. Symbol is used to refer to or represent other things. It is an intermediary between sender and receiver, carrying the information sent by both sides of communication to each other. Therefore, symbol capital corresponds to information flow. Actors with more social capital means that they have the advantage of controlling and invoking material such as various resources, so social capital corresponds to material flow. Economic capital refers to the money and material materials that produce goods and services, so economic capital corresponds to capital flow. Cultural capital corresponds to capital flow. Cultural capital

corresponds to responsibility flow. This is because that cultural capital is often positively correlated with responsibility and individual's cultural literacy affects his sense of responsibility. Habitus are directly related to their position, so habitus corresponds to power flow.

3.3. Six-Flow Matching Hexagrams of I Ching

Based on years of enterprises consultation, diagnostic research, and research I Ching, we combine Six-Flow Matching Hexagrams of I Ching and Bourdieu's social practice formula to generate six-flow matching hexagrams of the I Ching.

The six-flow matching I Ching hexagram diagnostic tool arranges information flow, material flow, capital flow, responsibility flow, power flow and interest flow from top to bottom to form a hexagram. Each flow represents a Yao, Yin Yao represents that the flow is not rich, and Yang Yao represents that the flow is rich. Different Yin and Yang Yao of the six Yaos form 64 different images of the hexagrams, which correspond to the 64 hexagrams of I Ching (Figure 3).

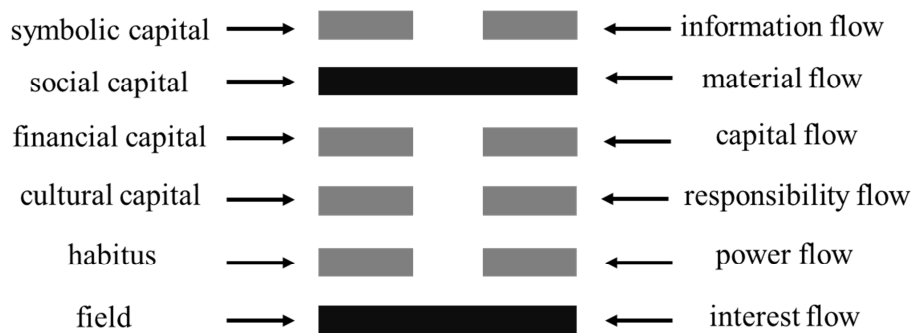


Figure 3. Enterprise Hexagram - Take Tun hexagram as an example.

4. Method

The specific diagnostic steps for Six-Flow Matching Model regarding corporate transformation practice are as follows.

First, symbolic capital, social capital, economic capital, cultural capital, habitus and field are arranged and combined from top to bottom to form six-flow, and then then each flow is judged to be the Yin Yao or Yang Yao (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Yang Yao and Yin Yao.

Second, comparing Six-Flow Matching Model obtained in step 1 with the hexagram of the I Ching, we can get the hexagram of Six-Flow Matching Model in the practice of enterprise transformation, and then refer to the

corresponding hexagram to explain the current situation, characteristics and trend, so as to formulate regulations and countermeasures.

5. Case

K Company is a high-tech enterprise that develops, produces and sells NTC (NTC refers to temperature measuring high-precision negative temperature coefficient thermistor) series products. It is composed of two subsidiaries responsible for sales business and production business. With the continuous development of the company, the number of customers and orders is increasing. In order to improve the efficiency of order management, K Company purchased the financial module and supply chain module in ERP system, which are mainly used for sales order management. The daily order management process diagram of K Company is shown in Figure 5, which corresponds to the "Jie Gua" in the hexagrams of I Ching.

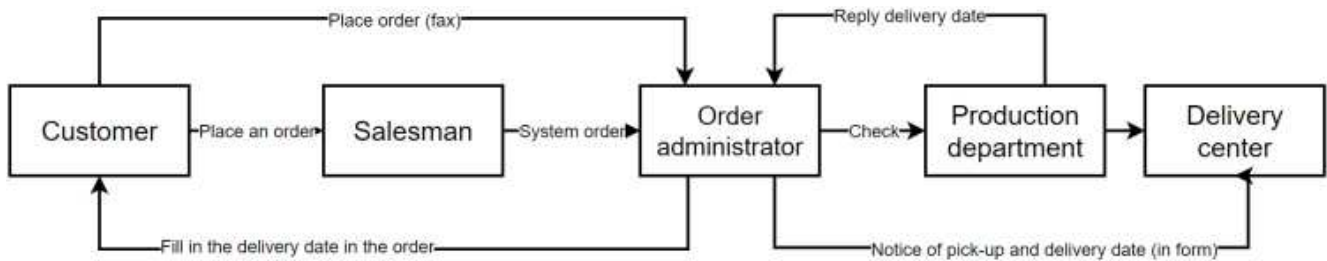


Figure 5. Order management flow chart.

“Jie Gua”: The corresponding situation is that the information flow, material flow, responsibility flow and interest flow are Yin Yao, while the capital flow and power flow are Yang Yao. First, when placing an order, the salesperson will not know the inventory or material situation in advance, but directly place the order in the system. Therefore, when receiving the order, the order administrator needs to call all relevant personnel by telephone to inquire about the relevant information of the product, including whether there is stock and whether there is enough stock Raw materials, when to hand over goods, etc. Second, the way for the production supervisor to reply to the delivery date is not to directly enter the date in the system order, instead, the order manager will send the new orders to the production supervisor in the form of a tables 2-3 times a day. The production supervisor fills in the delivery date in the form and sends it back to the order administrator, and then the order administrator manually fills in the date into the system and relevant registration forms. Third, after the order has a delivery date, it enters the production stage, but there is no progress to query in this part. After the delivery date is determined, there is only the last link: delivery. Therefore, in the whole production process, if the salesman wants to know the production progress, he can only follow up by telephone, QQ, WeChat and so on.

We try to use the logic of hexagram change to diagnose the digital transformation of K Company. From the surface, the problems faced by the enterprise are the fuzziness of material flow in the production department itself and the lack of information flow between salesperson and production department. In fact, material flow and information flow correspond to different solutions. The power flow corresponding to the former is clear, so it can be solved only by introducing a new material management system. The latter is because the responsibility flow corresponding to the information flow is not clear, so there is no need to change the system, but can be solved by increasing the cultural capital of salesperson and production manager through training. When the ERP system has viewable and editable affordance for the salesman and the manager of the production department respectively, the order administrator only needs to check the order.

6. Conclusion

Enterprises can actively respond to future opportunities and challenges by realizing digital transformation. Due to the duality of existing literature on how to realize digital transformation, we put forward a comprehensive and overall

framework in order to eliminate dualism. We construct a new comprehensive Six-Flow Matching Model, which reveals the key of operation decision-making to effectively diagnose enterprise operation, and provide solutions according to how to realize digital transformation. Bourdieu's practical formula can guide the practice of enterprises, but it is not suitable for the situation in China. This is because there is a chaotic state in the management practice of Chinese enterprises, so we combine the thought of I Ching to solve this problem. We not only identify the six-flow of digital transformation to provide analytical tools and theoretical frameworks for the six-flow, but also point out the key mechanisms to realize digital transformation, including the change of hexagrams and the flow of information and material. Through the demonstration of a real case, our insights not only contribute to the existing research on digital transformation, but also reveal what organizational capabilities can do to promote and realize the practice of enterprise transformation.

By developing a six-flow and capital lens to explore digital transformation, we think this paper provides several contributions. First, the six-flow identify in this illuminating case study can help enterprise understand what digital transformation can do and how digital technology can enable digital transformation. Second, we contribute to the digital transformation literature by providing insights on how to implement the Six-Flow Matching Model. Third, combined with Bourdieu's practice formula, the three mechanisms for organizations to achieve digital transformation are more consistent with the six-flow matching theory. We describe the different capitals that have evolved from enterprise transformation and provide a new and comprehensive way of guiding the realization of digital transformation.

In developing a framework centered on the six-flow, capital, and hexagram, our primary goal is to illuminate the potential for future research to take a more holistic approach to consider the impact of digitization and believe that such research can provide important insights for practice.

To conclude, we open the blackbox about the mechanics of digital transformation and encourage IS and strategic researchers to undertake further investigations. Through our findings, we hope that researchers can find a different approach to further research associated with the practical pathways and strategic implications of digital transformation. As new digital technologies are constantly transforming business activities, processes and models, organizational changes at present have inevitably become strongly entangled with digital technologies [33]. More generally, the six-flow lens provides a theoretical

perspective can be used to explore the potential value and effective use of technology in digital transformation.

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