

DESIGNING GROWTH SYSTEMS THAT COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISES RELY ON



ENTERPRISE GROWTH IS STALLING — AND THE CAUSE IS STRUCTURAL

Across industries and geographies, enterprise leaders are confronting a consistent pattern. Transformation programs are active, technology investments are substantial, and capability is not in question — yet measurable growth remains elusive.

The evidence is clear. Research conducted across 4,000 business leaders in eight countries found that 37% of digital transformation projects fail to achieve their stated objectives, at an average program cost of \$10.9 million each. Of those that reach completion, 73% of leaders report an inability to demonstrate return on investment.

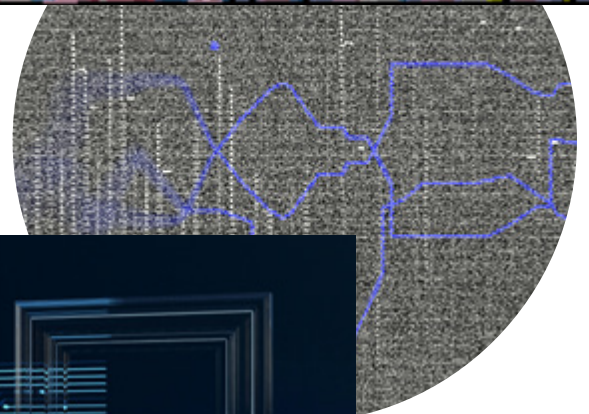
The data points to a structural problem: strategy, technology, customer experience, commerce, content, and data are being managed as separate functions with separate mandates. When these functions do not operate as a connected system, investment accumulates without producing proportionate growth.

That is the problem the Growth System Diagnostic was designed to solve.

37%

- OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS FAIL TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES — AT AN AVERAGE COST OF \$10.9M EACH.

Source: *Unlocking the Power of Digital Transformation*, 2025.



WHAT IS THE GROWTH SYSTEM DIAGNOSTIC?

The Questions Enterprise Leaders Ask



The Growth System Diagnostic is WPP Enterprise Solutions' structured methodology for assessing how an enterprise's core growth functions are organized, connected, and performing. Rather than adding capability to an already fragmented system, it maps how strategy, customer experience, commerce, CRM and loyalty, content, and technology and data platforms currently fit together — and where the gaps between them are costing the business growth.

The objective is to design, build and operate a growth system that reliably converts investment into outcomes. This means using existing data, insight and operational intelligence to:

The Diagnostic was developed in response to three recurring questions that enterprise leaders ask — questions that rarely get resolved by a single technology platform or transformation program:

Where, specifically, is growth being blocked?

Across organizations studied, functions are frequently active but unconnected. Without a system-level view, value leaks at the boundaries between teams and is difficult to attribute or recover.

Do our core growth functions operate as one integrated system?

Customer experience, commerce, CRM, content and platforms are commonly managed as adjacent workstreams rather than as a unified operating model. As a result, cumulative investment does not produce proportionate commercial return.

How do we establish a credible measure of system-level impact?

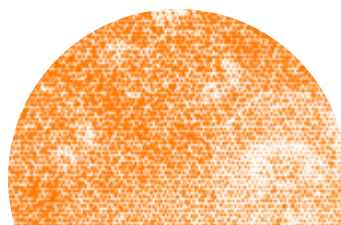
Absent a clear measurement architecture, the contribution of individual functions to overall growth is difficult to isolate or prove, which limits confidence in future investment decisions.

The Growth System Diagnostic is structured to address all three.

62%

- OF BUSINESS LEADERS REPORT THAT DATA SILOS SIGNIFICANTLY HINDER TRANSFORMATION PROGRESS.

Source: VML Enterprise Solutions, *Unlocking the Power of Digital Transformation, 2025.*



THE GROWTH SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

(Delivered by WPP Enterprise Solutions)



1. Design: Growth System Strategy & Architecture

Effective growth system design begins with a clear-eyed assessment of how an organization's core functions are currently structured and where they break down. WPP Enterprise Solutions works with leadership to define a growth system vision aligned to commercial objectives, establish the operating model and governance that connect strategy, experience, commerce, CRM, content and platforms, and identify where structural fragmentation is acting as the primary constraint on growth.

This phase also evaluates system readiness across data, technology, and organizational design, ensuring that any subsequent build and integration work is anchored to the highest-value opportunities.

Typical client challenges we solve:

- "We have data everywhere — how do we unify?"
- "Is our data secure and compliant?"
- "Which use cases can deliver the most value?"

2. Build: Connect Platforms, Data and Journeys

Once the growth system architecture is established, WPP Enterprise Solutions deploys the technical and operational capabilities required to make it function. This encompasses integrating and unifying customer, product and marketing data across sources; implementing and configuring the platforms that underpin experience, commerce and CRM; and building the journey frameworks and content models that activate the system for customers.

The outcome is an operating environment in which data, content and technology are connected and activation-ready — a prerequisite for AI, automation and personalisation to function effectively at scale.

Typical client challenges we solve:

- "Our tools don't talk to each other; how do we fix that?"
- "How can we track and measure campaigns accurately?"
- "How do we personalize experiences at scale?"

3. Inspire: Market and Customer Intelligence

A growth system must be calibrated to real customer behavior and real market conditions. WPP Enterprise Solutions' Intelligence capability ensures that system design and investment decisions are grounded in empirical research rather than assumption. Primary research — including concept testing, usability studies and brand sentiment analysis — grounds the system in observed human behavior. Syndicated cultural and market insight identifies macro and category-level trends, competitive white space, and shifts in customer expectation that the system must be built to address.

Typical client challenges we solve:

- "Which channels are actually driving conversions?"
- "How do we prove marketing ROI?"
- "Who are our most valuable customers?"
- "Can we predict future demand or market shifts?"
- "What happens if we change price or launch a new product?"

4. Understand & Improve: System Measurement and Analytics

Growth system performance requires rigorous, continuous instrumentation. Without a measurement architecture that operates at the system level, it is not possible to determine which interventions are driving commercial outcomes, where investment should be reallocated, or how the system should evolve over time.

WPP Enterprise Solutions applies three complementary analytical disciplines:

Typical client challenges we solve:

- "Will customers like this new product idea?"
- "What trends should we design for in the next 12–18 months?"
- "What cultural trends are shaping our category?"
- "Where are the gaps in the competitive landscape?"

5. Operate: Embed the Growth System and Sustain Performance

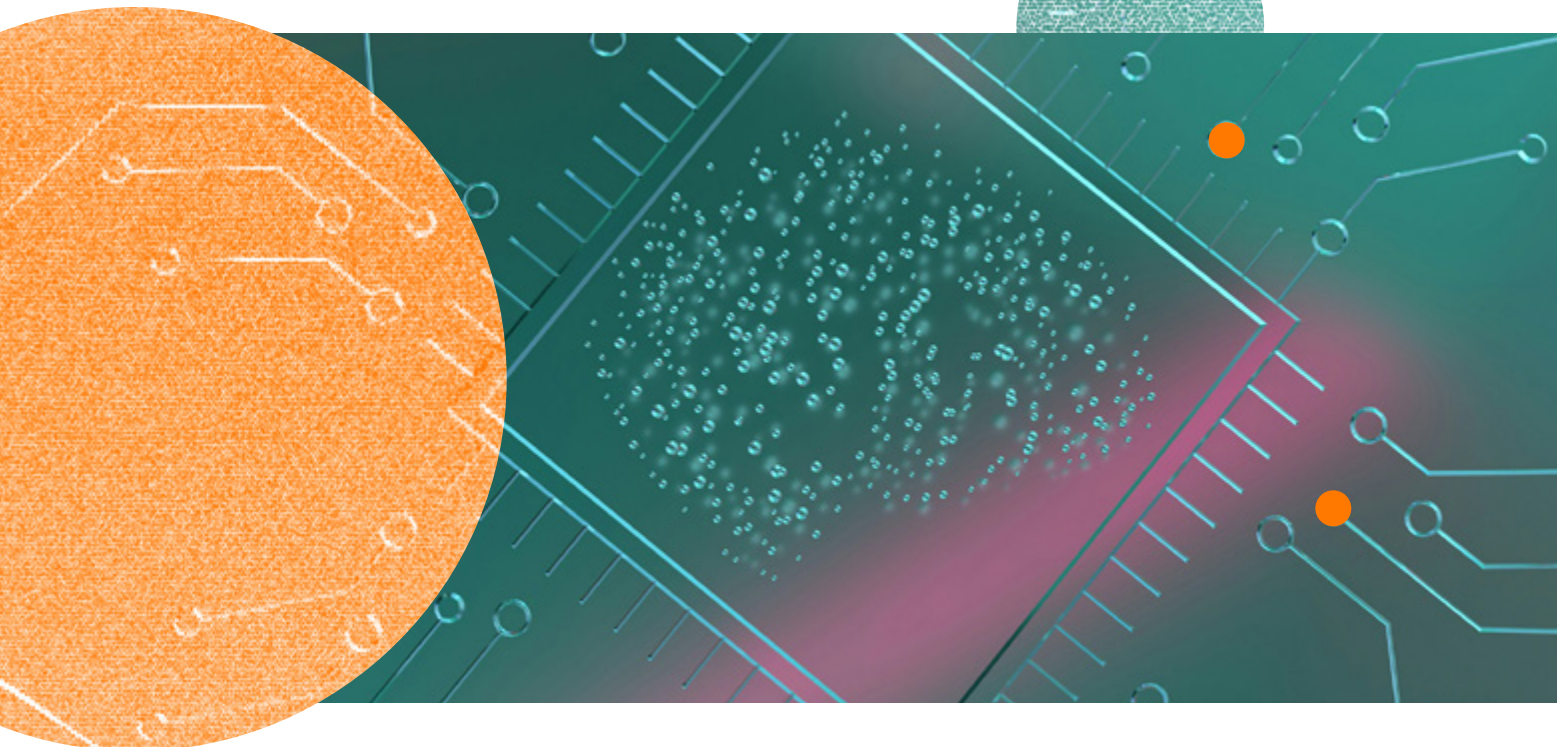
A well-designed growth system only delivers sustained value when it is embedded into the organization's ways of working and owned by accountable leaders. WPP Enterprise Solutions works alongside client leadership to manage stakeholder alignment, reshape operational processes, and establish the governance structures and performance rhythms that keep the system running and improving after initial deployment.

This ongoing operating partnership is what distinguishes a growth system from a one-time transformation program. It ensures that the investment made in design and build translates into compounding commercial performance over time.

Typical client challenges we solve:

- "How do we get senior stakeholders to buy into and champion AI across the business?"
- "Which parts of our organisation are missing out on the benefits AI could deliver?"
- "How do we integrate AI into our ways of working so it becomes part of our culture, not just a tool?"





WHY THE GROWTH SYSTEM APPROACH WORKS

Unlike conventional transformation programs or point-solution deployments, the growth system approach is distinguished by four characteristics:

End-to-end — It connects strategy, experience, commerce, CRM and loyalty, content, platforms and data into a single operating model, from initial system design through to daily execution and continuous improvement.

Outcome-accountable — Every phase of the engagement is tied to measurable commercial outcomes — revenue, margin, retention, cost to serve — not activity metrics.

Cross-disciplinary — Strategists, technologists, experience and commerce practitioners, data scientists, and client growth specialists work from a shared system view, not parallel workstreams.

Designed to compound — The growth system is built to absorb new AI capabilities, platform changes and market shifts without requiring wholesale redesign, so performance improves over time rather than degrading between transformation cycles.

THREE ACTIONS ENTERPRISE LEADERS CAN TAKE NOW

- **1. Map the growth system you currently have**

Conduct a structured assessment of how your core growth functions — strategy, experience, commerce, CRM, content, technology and data — are organized, resourced and connected. Identify where ownership is unclear, where handoffs are breaking down, and where investment is not producing proportionate return.

- **2. Prioritize two to three system-level interventions**

Rather than launching broad transformation, identify the two or three structural changes most likely to produce measurable commercial impact within 90–180 days. Typical candidates include unifying data around a high-value customer journey, redesigning a cross-functional operating model, or establishing system-level measurement for the first time.

- **3. Define the measurement architecture before deployment**

Establish how the impact of system changes will be measured prior to implementation. This is the prerequisite for demonstrating ROI, making credible reinvestment decisions, and building organizational confidence in the growth system over time.



CASE STUDY

DESIGNING A GROWTH SYSTEM FOR A MISSION-DRIVEN EDUCATION ORGANIZATION

The Opportunity:

A mission-driven organization in the education sector had made significant investments in data collection and technology over several years. Despite this, leadership lacked a coherent view of how its systems were performing as a whole, which data assets were underutilized, and where the greatest opportunities for improved student and program outcomes resided. The organization sought a partner that could bring structure to a fragmented operating environment and establish a credible path to measurable impact.

The Solution:

WPP Enterprise Solutions applied the Growth System Diagnostic to map the organization's current state across strategy, data, technology, and operations, and to identify the highest-value interventions.

Design — Growth System Strategy & Architecture:

The engagement began with executive alignment sessions to establish shared definitions of success and a common framework for evaluating system readiness. A structured assessment surfaced three primary constraints: fragmented student and program data held in incompatible systems, a technology environment that lacked integration across operational functions, and an absence of clear ownership for data-driven decision-making at the leadership level.

Build — Connect Platforms, Data and Journeys:

Rather than initiating new data collection programs, the team focused on making existing historical datasets usable and connected. Student and program records were cleaned, unified and standardized. AI models were applied to surface patterns previously hidden by fragmentation, providing leadership with a reliable foundation for evidence-based decisions.

Understand & Improve — System Measurement and Analytics:

High-value use cases were identified and prioritized according to their alignment with organizational objectives — including predictive models for student engagement and program outcomes. An MVP scoping process and model lifecycle management approach were established to ensure that initial pilots could mature into repeatable, scalable programs rather than isolated experiments.

Inspire — Market and Customer Intelligence:

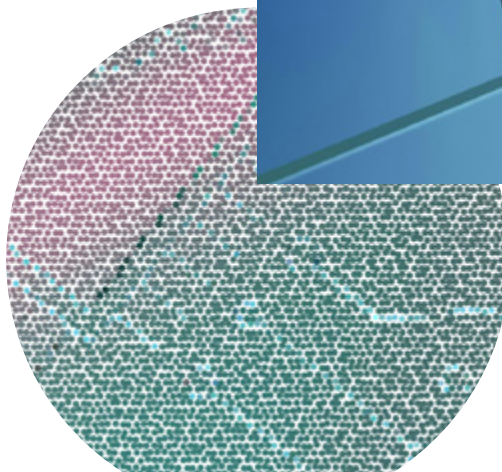
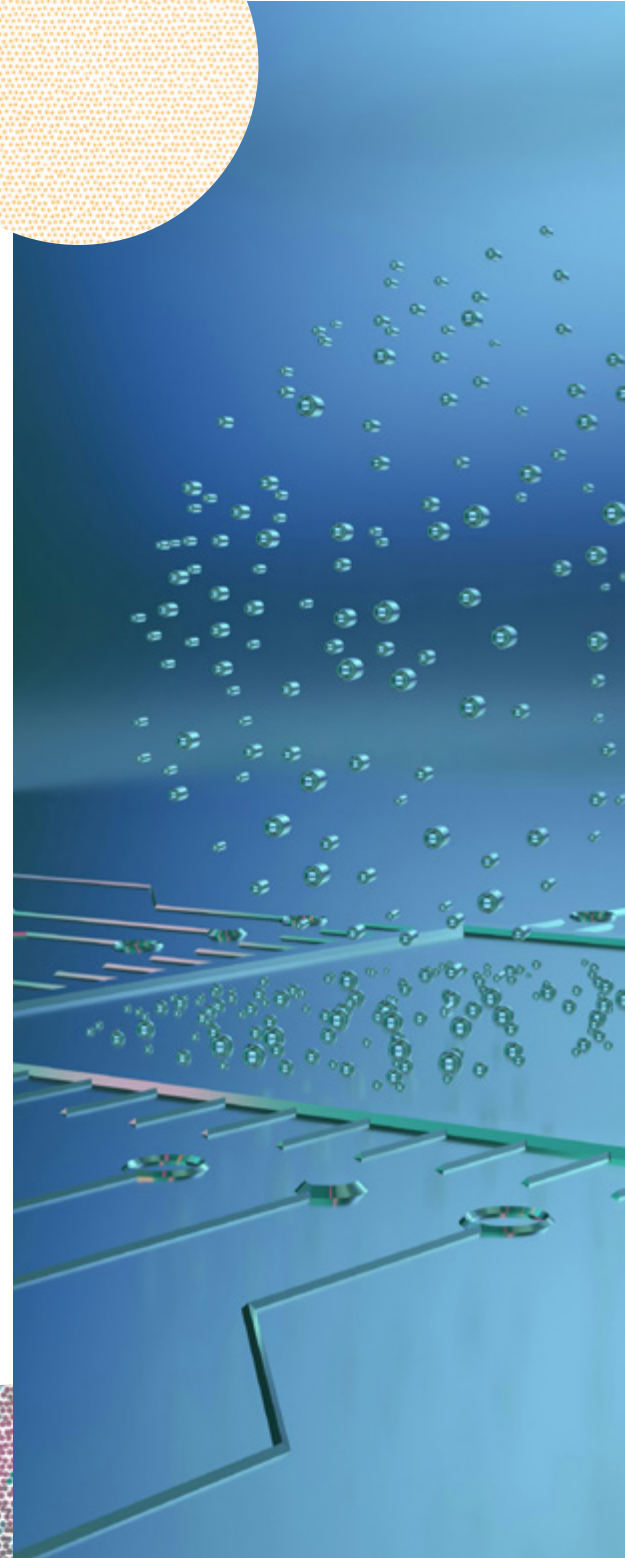
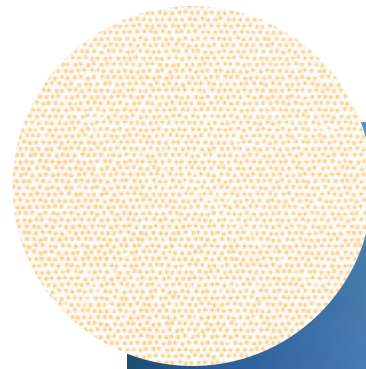
Cultural and sector-specific insights were layered onto the analytical work to ensure that use cases were not only technically viable but relevant to student needs and consistent with emerging trends in the education sector. This grounding in observed behavior ensured that AI adoption was driven by genuine need rather than technological availability.

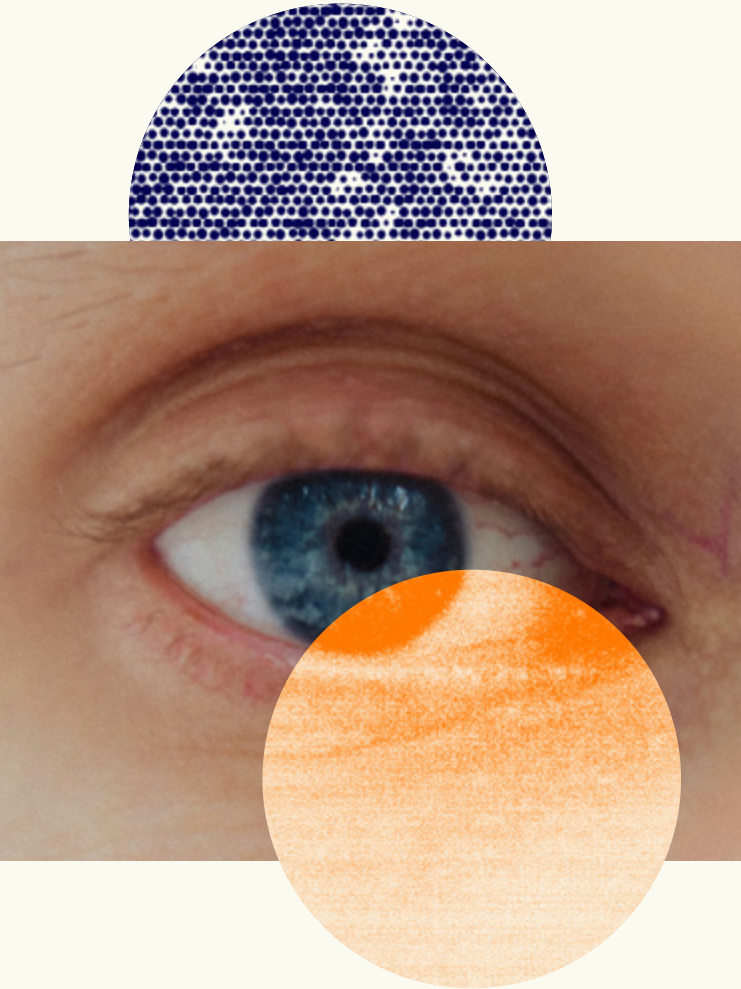
Operate — Embed the Growth System:

A structured growth roadmap was developed, balancing near-term quick wins with longer-term system development. This included a scoped approach to knowledge management improvement using retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), and a governance model designed to give leadership sustained visibility of system performance. The roadmap enabled the organization to position data and AI not as a cost line, but as a core driver of student and program impact.

The Impact:

Leadership gained a clear, evidence-based view of AI and data opportunities, gaps, and prioritized next steps. Strategic use cases were defined to guide near-term pilots and longer-term innovation, with quantified return on investment potential. By unifying historical data and embedding a structured lifecycle process, the organization established the operational foundation required to embed AI directly into student-facing programs — positioning itself as an early mover in the education nonprofit sector.





THE BOTTOM LINE

The evidence is consistent across research conducted at enterprise scale: the primary constraint on growth is not the absence of strategy, technology, or talent. It is the absence of a connected operating system that holds these elements together and makes them accountable to a shared commercial outcome.

AI has accelerated the visibility of this problem. When deployed into a fragmented operating environment, it amplifies existing friction — producing more content without the systems to distribute it, more personalisation without the data models to support it, more analytical output without the governance to convert it into decisions. The organizations that will extract durable value from AI are those that have first established a coherent growth system for it to operate within.

WPP Enterprise Solutions was formed to own this problem end to end. By combining consulting, customer experience, commerce, CRM and loyalty, content transformation, and technology and data platforms within a single operating model, it provides enterprises with the integrated growth system that makes transformation investments add up to measurable, compounding commercial performance.

To schedule a Growth System Diagnostic and identify your highest-priority system-level interventions, contact the WPP Enterprise Solutions team.

Contact: contact@es.wpp.com

Visit: enterprisesolutions.wpp.com

ABOUT WPP ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS

About WPP Enterprise Solutions

WPP Enterprise Solutions designs, builds, and operates the growth systems that competitive businesses rely on. In a world where AI is reshaping how companies drive growth, we lead clients in business transformation and marketing modernization, connecting strategy directly to execution. Our 12,000 experts in engineering and platforms, commerce, consulting, content transformation, CRM, and CX, work within a unified global operating unit across 40+ markets. WPP Enterprise Solutions works alongside best-in-class partners including Adobe, AWS, Braze, Google, Microsoft, Salesforce, and Shopify, as well as innovators in AI, to deliver growth solutions tailored to the needs of our clients' businesses. We have received distinction as a leader in Commerce Services and CX Strategy Consulting by the Forrester Wave™ reports and are designated by Gartner's Magic Quadrant™ as a Visionary in Digital Experience Services.

About WPP

WPP is the trusted growth partner for the world's leading brands. WPP combines cutting-edge media intelligence, world-class creativity, next-generation production, and transformative enterprise solutions to drive growth at scale. WPP is a publicly listed company (NYSE: WPP).

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