



Adam Warne

CIO AT [N BROWN GROUP](#)

Adam Warne joined N Brown Group in April 2018 as chief information officer after leading the technology capability at AO World PLC for 10 years.

N Brown Group: Transforming for Agility

How would you describe N Brown's major strengths before it embarked on its digital transformation?

As a well-established retailer, home to the brands Simply Be, JD Williams, Ambrose Wilson, Jacamo and Home Essentials, and with a long history and millions of loyal customers in the UK and Ireland, N Brown knows that its success rests on combining that legacy with modern tools and practices. We wanted to take our existing customers on a journey and continue to serve them while attracting new customers as well.

We've always been an entrepreneurial business, but new competitors are always disrupting the scene and customer behaviours also change over time. Once customers experience something new, they start expecting it from all retailers. So it is essential that our brands meet and exceed those customer demands and expectations at all times. Rolling out high-quality mobile apps is a good example of how we do just that.

How did you go about setting your transformative objectives?

As we have such an extensive product range, one priority was making sure it was easy for our customers to find the products they wanted. Another objective of the transformation was business change. We wanted to set the business up as one that is ready to rapidly evolve and can keep doing so over time.

From a technology perspective, a modern front end with powerful cloud-hosted services behind the scenes was the ideal setup for us. We were keen to deliver effective product curation and distinction between brands, and this has been enabled by working with TCS, our transformation partner, on this journey. They are not just a technology partner; they have helped us both transform and grow, working together with us to improve our operating model.

What were the main obstacles you encountered on this journey?

The first was legacy technology. We've been investing in technology since the 1960s, and some of it has been very successful and extremely robust, but it's been challenging to replace because it goes quite deep within the business.

The second was the cultural journey. It's a success story now, but moving from being a catalogue retailer to a digital retailer is not just about technology. It requires a fast-paced way of thinking.

The third was to deliver transformation in a context that is constantly evolving. This is where having an agile approach instead of fixed multiyear projects really paid off. In having a transformation partner such as TCS that puts agile working at the heart of everything they do, we were able to create a scalable growth model to thrive in this increasingly volatile industry space.

What are the achievements you are proudest of, and what do you think remains to be done?

I'm really proud of the way our colleagues have adapted to and embraced the new way of working. We needed everyone to be more flexible, more determined and more open to change to achieve our growth ambitions. Seeing the way my colleagues have worked collaboratively and with like-minded associates at TCS to rise to these challenges together has been fantastic.

Realising our objectives despite the pandemic has been a truly great result, and doing all of that without losing our identity, our culture and values or our behaviour and purpose is something I'm really proud of.

What "good" looks like is always being on the front foot and never needing a huge transformation again. I suppose you could say that constant evolution is what remains to be done.

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N BROWN



Shekar Krishnan

TCS UK RETAIL HEAD

Shekar Krishnan is head of retail for TCS in the UK and Ireland, where he has been enabling retailers to leverage digital technology to grow and transform their business and deliver improved customer experiences and business outcomes. He previously held multiple global leadership roles across the retail and insurance sectors.

Customer-First Approach Drives Transformation

Your organisation has a history of improving, transforming and growing. In what way do you think this was an effective match for the N Brown project?

TCS's primary goal as a digital transformation partner is to truly understand the business we're partnering with. We wanted to build on the beliefs N Brown have for their business and help them realise their long-term vision within a constantly changing industry landscape. Our engagement and relationship with N Brown began not as a vendor but as a growth and transformation partner delivering technology solutions and enhancing business outcomes.

The engagement was a stepping-stone for N Brown to constantly evolve their business as well as customer propositions. Creating a collaborative environment and building trust amongst the teams was a key factor in this evolution. Our experience in enabling agile ways of working helped the teams to respond fast to changes in business priorities.

The key to our success was based on designing a future-proof solution architecture, bringing the best-in-class technology and domain expertise and then developing these at the scale and speed required to deliver business value with quality. "Collaborate - Consult - Curate - Construct" was the guiding tenet of our engagement.

How did you go about picking the winning solutions for N Brown's specific problems?

We approached this engagement from the perspective of the end customer. Seamless, engaging and conducive journeys for great shopping experience, intuitive product discovery, fast and easy checkout, and feature-rich mobile-native apps are the core elements of the solution. To provide the desired customer outcomes, we wanted to simplify the process and eliminate the need to click multiple buttons.

The human-orientated design of the transformation journey provides a lot of information about customers, allowing you to appreciate their experiences and help their journey become more meaningful.

What were the top challenges you had to overcome?

N Brown's legacy background was a challenge. Nonetheless, it was clear they wanted to move in the right direction; N Brown never said: "This is the way we've always done it, and we will keep doing it that way." They were ready to embrace change.

The second challenge was technological evolution. In the early stages of this project, cloud computing was not yet mature, so launching a programme of this scale within a framework that was undergoing rapid change was an issue, but we overcame it by evaluating all the pros and cons in detail.

Changing business needs proved to be another obstacle. Customer behaviours can and do change, especially during a pandemic. To manage continuous change, we needed to put continuous improvement at the heart of the strategy.

What stands out to you as the biggest success of this partnership?

The cultural alignment we achieved was a huge success. We always felt we were not a vendor but a partner. Our objective throughout was to make it better for the end customer, and we worked shoulder-to-shoulder to deliver that outcome. With 95% of our associates now capable of remote working, we have created our own "DevOps everywhere" operating model powered by TCS's Secure Borderless Workspaces (SBWS™), which will last beyond the pandemic. I am happy that the operating model and partnership mindset have helped us successfully deliver this complex digital transformation programme and set a solid foundation for future business initiatives.

To learn about TCS's N Brown Digital Transformation, [click here](#).

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