



INSIGHTS PAPER

Impact for your brand & business

A photograph of a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with a small white 'IO' logo on the chest, sitting at a wooden desk and working on a laptop. He is looking down at the screen with a focused expression. The background is softly blurred, showing a chair and some indoor plants.

7 strategic considerations for building powerful platforms

Digital platforms edition



For many enterprises, digital platforms are the backbone of their business. They are not only essential for digitising business operations, they're the foundation for delivering exceptional customer experiences.

However, the journey to digital excellence is not without challenges: organisations often deal with limited agility, scalability issues, brand inconsistency, security risks and compliance demands.

In this paper, we provide *7 strategic considerations* that help you build a digital platform that delivers a standout experience. One that effortlessly aligns with your business goals.

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1. Establish flexibility and scalability at the core of your platform

Customer journeys are evolving rapidly. People interact with businesses through a variety of touchpoints: websites, mobile apps, social media, voice assistants, chatbots, Digital platforms are often **the primary tool to manage these touchpoints**.

From limitations to possibilities

Traditionally, businesses were limited by the technology behind their platform to deliver their customer experiences exactly as desired. They often had to rely on vendors to provide the required features, which especially in large suite applications tended to be a slow process. Adding a new touchpoint or new technology involved a lot of development work and integration efforts, and slowed down innovation.

Successful digital platforms today, however, offer **the freedom to modify every part of your digital ecosystem** to provide a cohesive and tailored customer experience.

Creating a flexible and scalable digital platform requires a modular approach, called **composable architecture**. A composable approach offers the possibility to connect, disconnect, scale up, replace, or improve each component independently.



A modular approach: composable

With a **composable architecture**, you can change individual components. That makes it much easier to (quickly) adapt to changing user expectations and add new features without a large overhaul. It allows developers to locate and evaluate components, replace them, understand their context, and quickly integrate them into any project.

Flexibility

By dividing a system into multiple components or building a system using multiple components, you get the freedom to choose the most suitable technology for your current requirements and replace it effortlessly when new needs or technologies emerge.

An e-commerce platform can freely implement one of the newest recommendation engines that use smart AI algorithms, thanks to its composable approach. This engine analyses customer behaviour, preferences, and purchase history and generates precise and personalised product recommendations. This level of customisation gives customers a unique and engaging shopping experience.

Scalability

But it's not only about flexibility. It's also about scalability. Scalability is essential for platforms to handle increasing user and data demands. A cloud-based infrastructure allows for seamless scaling, which means your platform will be able to accommodate growing user demands and data volumes.

After launching a successful advertising campaign, a ride-sharing platform experiences a significant surge in the number of users and drivers. The platform suddenly has to handle a higher volume of real-time requests, route calculations, and driver assignments. Thanks to a composable approach, the ride-sharing platforms can scale its infrastructure to handle the increasing demands.



Consideration:

Invest in a modular and scalable infrastructure

The composable approach is not a universal solution that can solve all problems in all situations. If you aim to plan and implement a modular infrastructure for your platform, you should carefully evaluate needs and requirements before selecting an architectural approach.

Challenges when going composable

Adopting a composable approach comes with its fair share of challenges.

- It brings increased complexity due to the wide variety of components, technologies, and services.
- Integrations are more demanding.
- The wide array of options available requires careful decision-making.
- Many organisations have to deal with legacy, are tied to long-term contracts with software providers or simply don't have the right people and in-house processes.
- Developing of technical know-how is the biggest challenge when switching to a composable approach. That's where an integration partner like iO comes in. With our extensive knowledge and skills, we are well-equipped to support you throughout the process.

Where to start?

We recommend starting with components that impact the customer experience the most. Your data sources and frontends are a great place to try a composable mindset. First and foremost, you will need an analysis set have the right expectations and validate which systems will benefit the most.

Read more: [How agile can you go? Migrating to composable](#)

Need advice on your platform's architecture?

Let us help you



“Scaling up or scaling down your sales channels, replacing the software behind your product catalogue, or using technological innovations: a composable approach offers speed and flexibility.”

Choose the right migration approach for your platform:

Big Bang migration

A Big Bang migration is a method of decoupling a monolithic application by **moving the entire application to a modern technology stack in one go**.

Go for it when ... your existing platform is too outdated or complex to break down into smaller parts for incremental migration.

Strangler Pattern

The idea behind the Strangler Pattern is to **gradually replace parts** of the monolithic system with a new headless system while keeping the existing system in place.

Go for it when ... you want to take advantage of modern technology without having to go through a full system migration, reducing costs and mitigating risks.

Event-driven migration

This method **decomposes the monolith by using events**. Find business events handled in your monolith and refactor it to fire an event that can be handled in another component and remove the logic from the monolith.

Go for it when ... you want to break down the current setup and remove the complicated backend logic but keep the main part of the system up and running as you transition to the new event-driven and composable architecture.



“Every click, swipe, and interaction – digital platforms are at the heart of it all”

KIRSTEN MEEUWIS
Frontend Developer

2. Adapt your platform to work in an interconnected landscape

Successful digital platforms can **seamlessly connect with other platforms, partners, suppliers, or third-party services** such as payments, inventory, e-commerce, or social media. Information can be shared and synchronised between all these different systems in real-time.

That way, a platform can offer its users a smooth user experience.

Integration capabilities

To ensure that systems interact effortlessly, it's crucial to have strong integration capabilities. That means **having the tools and technologies in place** to facilitate data and information exchange between systems and to **effectively manage** the interfaces and connections between them.

What if you lack strong integration capabilities?

Without strong integration capabilities, you don't have the freedom to create the best experience for your customers. You will have to deal with fragmented customer information across different systems, limited personalised advertising options, or being unable to offer popular services to your customers.

Case

WORLDLINE 

An e-commerce shop wants to provide its customers with a smooth and secure payment experience without having to build a payment solution themselves. By integrating the e-commerce platform with a renowned payment service provider like Wordline, customers can easily make purchases using their preferred payment method. Transaction details are seamlessly processed, and order statuses and generated invoices are updated automatically.

[Read more about this case](#)



Consideration:

Invest in strong integration capabilities

Adopt a composable mindset

If your digital platform requires rapid delivery of new end-user experiences within tight timeframes, such as implementing a chatbot functionality or launching another new feature within three weeks, then adoption of a composable mindset is essential.

A composable mindset is built around the ability to think and communicate beyond the boundaries of departments, specialisms, and competence silos. To see common concepts and shared services, and to properly encapsulate them in a 'component'. But also, to structure the organisation in an effective way to support instead of hinder this shift.

Follow an API-first approach

For an effective integration strategy, well-defined APIs are essential. They enable seamless communication and interoperability between other systems, which is crucial for a digital platform to be successful.

Focus on building **well-designed and comprehensive APIs**: structured and clearly documented, with consistent naming conventions and error handling, keeping security in mind.

Security by design

Make sure security considerations are incorporated **from the very beginning** of the development process, such as multi-factor authentication and data encryption.

Include the right safety nets for unforeseen circumstances like automated backups, recovery mechanisms, vulnerability assessments or penetration testing.

Prioritise a smooth developer experience

A smooth experience is not just important for your target audience, but also for your development team.

You could say **the success of your integration strategy depends on the developer** because developers are more likely to choose and recommend high-quality APIs and SDKs (Software Development Kits) that are easy to work with.

Need help with your integration strategy?

Our experts are happy to help you with a custom approach.

[Let us help you](#)

3. Leverage AI for maximum business impact

Generative AI gets a lot of attention these days. When we say AI, most people think of ChatGPT. But AI is much more than that.

AI technologies such as Machine learning and Natural Language Processing are powerful tools that can **radically change the way we solve problems and create value**. They can streamline workflows, tools, products, operations, and processes and can increase efficiency.

A customer support team often has to handle large volumes of incoming requests from customers. AI can assist in this process by creating personalised answers and solutions throughout the customer journey. Information that is stored in different databases (CRM systems, ticketing systems, order management systems) can easily be made accessible through Large Language Modelling (LLM). LLMs can extract relevant information from different systems, analyse customer queries and requests and accurately interpret their intent.

AI is not a gimmick but a valuable technology that you can use to optimise your business operations in a very targeted way.

A lot of businesses still see AI as a black box. Its complexity and lack of transparency can lead to timidity and restraint. However, AI offers a lot of unique opportunities and possibilities and has the potential to move your business and platform forward.

Consider integrating AI into your key business processes and content systems to optimise efficiency and use generative AI in your tool stack for optimal value.

What if you don't invest in AI?

You may fall behind competitors who leverage AI to streamline their processes and gain a competitive edge. Without AI-driven insights, decision-making may become less informed and less agile, making it difficult to adapt to changing market dynamics in the long run. Especially when you're competing with AI-driven businesses.



Consideration: Integrate AI into your business

Do you want your business to get ahead of the curve? Then you should learn more about AI and apply your findings.

Experimentation is the only way to learn how and when AI can deliver value to your business operations. Embrace its power and foster a mindset that combines innovation and ethical considerations.

Where to start?

Start by **learning to understand what AI can do** and then think about **how that can add value** to your platform, organisation, or processes.

For example, increasing employee efficiency, reducing costs through automation, increasing revenue or providing a better customer experience for users. That path is, of course, different for every business.

Read more: [How to create business value with AI](#)

The adoption of AI is not a gradual process

Digitally mature organisations with previously deployed composable architecture can set up AI applications and integrate them into their digital ecosystem relatively quickly.

However, if your company's DNA does not yet include composability and agility, the leap to AI will be particularly difficult. And you simply do not have years to catch up.

The first step towards using AI effectively is knowing exactly what you can do with it. So, keep up with all the latest developments around AI.

[Our AI dossier is a great place to start.](#)

Strategic AI workshops

Find out more about the possibilities of AI for your organisation in a practical workshop.

[Learn more](#)



*“Focus on integrating
AI into key business
processes is crucial if
you want to maximize
your business impact.”*

JUSTIN VAN GROOTVELD

Lead Developer & AI-evangelist

4. Prioritise compliance and mitigate risks

Digital platforms and tools are essential parts of your daily operations. Not only do they co-determine whether you get to remain operational as an organisation, but they often contain sensitive data.

This presents several challenges:

- Hackers keep trying to find innovative ways to steal user data or invade privacy.
- Users demand transparency in how their data is being collected and used.
- The public expects platforms to take a stance on important social issues.
- Regulators and lawmakers are becoming more proactive in addressing issues like data security, consumer rights, and fair competition online.

Digital platforms need to be **proactive** in tackling these challenges and actively implement compliance measures.

This shows your (potential) customers that you follow the rules and care about keeping their data safe – which in turn leads to a better **brand reputation**.

What if you don't get your platform's affairs in order?

This can result in legal consequences, financial penalties, reputational damage, and loss of user trust. If your platform, for example, appears to have inadequate security measures and suffers a data breach, you could face public outrage, damaging your reputation.



Consideration:

Proactively address governance and compliance challenges

The specific actions you need to take may vary depending on your platform's size, industry, or regulatory landscape. However, there are a couple of steps you can take.

Program and Product Management

Create and implement processes, workflows, and accountability structures to **include governance and compliance requirements in the development and maintenance** of your digital platform.

For example, create a clear roadmap that outlines compliance milestones and assigns responsibilities to make sure you're up to date with regulations. Or appoint a data protection officer to check compliance with privacy regulations.

SDLC

Integrate security measures **throughout the software development process** of your platform, from design to deployment. Conduct security assessments and code reviews and carry out vulnerability tests. Include these measures in a Secure Software Development Lifecycle (SSDLC).

A SSDLC is a set of policies, best practices, tools and processes that address different challenges developers face at every stage of the development lifecycle. An SSDLC gives developers a structured way to think about and address the security impact in every stage of the development process.

At iO, we have a broad range of reliable strategies to stay ahead of security threats. To provide our teams with the right tools to prevent, detect, mitigate and respond to security bugs, we have created our own Secure Software Development Lifecycle (SSDLC).



Automation within CI/CD

People make mistakes. By automating parts of the development process, you can **reduce human error**. Consider automation within your CI/CD (Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment).

For example, you could automatically integrate code changes with the existing codebase. The application is then automatically built and tested to ensure it functions correctly. If the tests are successful, the new version can be automatically deployed to production. This way, you can actively – and automatically – address compliance challenges.

Quality assurance

Digital platforms should prioritise quality assurance: a high-quality digital platform contributes to your brand image. It helps your target audience trust your organisation, allowing you to build strong relationships with relevant people in the long term.

Sustainability and accountability

Engage in ethical practices that align with user expectations on social issues, diversity, and sustainability. Do you want to learn how to take a stand on the things that truly matter to you? [Discover our 5 dos and don'ts for your brand's social positioning.](#)

Identify risks on your platform

[Book a technology & security audit](#)



5. Provide an inclusive digital experience

We sometimes hear: “People with a disability aren’t a part of our target group.” But if you look at the numbers, that assumption is most likely incorrect. Many people have limited digital capabilities:

- 2.5 million adults in the Netherlands have difficulty with **reading, writing, arithmetic and/or essential digital skills**.
- Your target group will likely contain some **disabled people**, ranging from visual or auditory impairments to not fully understanding texts or click paths.
- The **environment** in which someone visits a website can also limit accessibility. For example, not everyone watches instructional videos with sound in public or shared spaces.

With the 2025 European Accessibility Act (EU legislation on digital accessibility), digital accessibility is becoming the standard. ATMs, financial services, e-commerce websites, and online shops are required to ensure digital

accessibility. Government websites and apps have been mandated to comply with these regulations since 2020.

However, digital accessibility is crucial for all digital platforms, regardless of the industry.

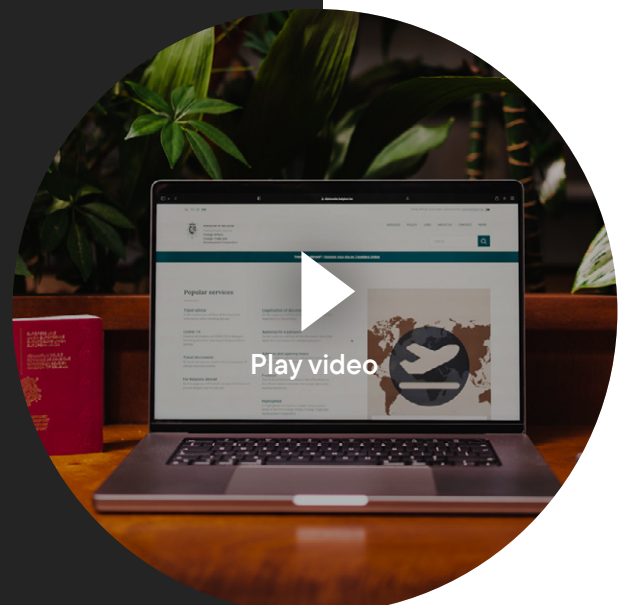
By not including accessibility as a success criterion in the (further) development of your platform, you limit access to your content and products for a large group of visitors. Inaccessible platforms can lead to frustrated users, negative feedback, and damage to your brand reputation.

Case



KONINKRIJK BELGIË
Federale Overheidsdienst
Buitenlandse Zaken,
Buitenlandse Handel en
Ontwikkelingssamenwerking

How do we make our content accessible so that every Belgian can find the information they need quickly and easily? For the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, we created a website that focuses on accessibility and presents the most important information in a crystal-clear way.



Consideration:

Prioritise digital accessibility

One of the key advantages of prioritising digital accessibility is that it ensures everyone within your target group can access and use your platform effectively. It not only benefits some users but enhances the experience for all.

By making your information accessible, you **assist users with disabilities** and **help search engines** to better understand and index your content, increasing your visibility in search results.

Where to start?

In short, we can break digital accessibility down to four points that you should always keep in mind:

- **Observation:** is all the information on my website clear and visible to visitors?
- **Operation:** are all components in the interface operable for all types of visitors?
- **Understanding:** is the information and the user interface understandable?
- **Robustness:** is the content sufficiently robust? Does it live up to online standards so it can be interpreted by a wide range of users? We call these user agents, for example, a browser, printer, projector, or screen reader.

The [W3C website](#) is home to the [WCAG 2.1. accessibility guidelines](#). You will find explanations of how you can improve your platform accessibility based on the above four points. A lot of these are technical points that a digital agency can help you with.

A good start is to carry out an Accessibility Audit that gives you insights into the stumbling blocks that hinder your visitors and will give you useful tips about improvements you can make.

What if you don't invest in accessibility?

Neglecting digital accessibility can have significant consequences for your digital platform. Failure to comply with accessibility standards may result in legal consequences, such as fines or legal action. And by excluding users with disabilities, you limit your potential audience and miss out on valuable market opportunities.

Do you know how accessible your digital platform is?

[Book an accessibility audit](#)

“How can organisations handle the challenge of digital vulnerability that affects nearly half of the population? E-inclusion offers a solution: designing for real people, not just personas.”



DAVID DE BLOCK
Public Services Director

Webinar

Re-watch the webinar *‘E-inclusion: how to leave no one behind in the digital world’* by David De Block.

[Watch the e-inclusion webinar](#)

6. Ensure a consistent brand experience

When your digital platform grows in size and complexity, different teams or individuals will work on different touchpoints and sections of the platform.

People that work on the mobile app may interpret the visual identity differently than those who work on the intranet: think of inconsistent typography, different colour palettes on different sections of the platform, a great variety of UI elements (buttons, forms) or the brand logo that might vary in colour.

These discrepancies can weaken the overall branding and impact the total experience.

Brand consistency with a design system

A **design system** helps you build your own library that houses all of your brand's digital elements, across various touchpoints.

Within this library, you'll find a collection of well-established components that accurately reflect the brand's identity, including website elements, buttons, animations, and fonts. All touchpoints are linked to this design system so that changes are active everywhere.

Brand guide or design system?

A traditional brand guide provides guidelines for the visual identity and expression of a brand.

A design system is more than just visuals. It includes various elements like components, patterns, and principles used to create digital products or experiences. It also offers a library of reusable components, UI patterns, coding guidelines, and interaction guidelines.

You could say that it focuses on providing the necessary **tools** and **processes** for a consistent user experience on your platform.

At iO, we often work for businesses in the financial industry. Our team has developed a design system specifically for banking apps, which we've seamlessly integrated into our BankingRight framework. That combination allows us to efficiently create and enhance apps for banks and asset management providers such as Knab, Optimix, and Aruba Bank. At a fraction of the cost and time.

[Have a look at our work](#)

Consideration:

Standardise the design process with a design system

If you are considering a design system for your digital platform, there are several key factors to consider:

1. The true advantages of a design system materialise when a platform **has reached a particular size and scale**. If your platform is still in its early stages or relatively small, your focus might be more on rapid prototyping and iterating rather than investing resources in a comprehensive design system.
2. A design system is not a ready-made product like a brand book. It's a continuous, dynamic process. Treat the design system as a **living document**. Over time, you'll come across **inconsistencies**, need to do iterations, and you'll have to adapt it accordingly to user feedback and evolving needs.
3. The real win does not lie in merely creating a design system, but in getting designers, developers and stakeholders **to adopt the system for everything they do**. Make sure it's incorporated to their day-to-day and that everyone is familiar with following the guidelines and using the components.
4. Ensure that the design system prioritises **accessibility**, considering the needs of users with disabilities. It should provide guidelines and best practices for creating inclusive designs.

A successful design system leads to high quality, consistent designs, and better user experiences. All essential ingredients for an even better customer relationship!



7. Make informed decisions for optimisation

A digital platform is a goldmine of data, like:

- User behaviour data (click-through rates, bounce rates, conversion rates).
- Performance data (load & server response times, error rates).
- Customer feedback data (reviews, ratings, support tickets).
- A/B testing data (comparing metrics from two or more variations of a webpage).
- Demographic user information (location, language, date of birth).
- ...

All that data is a valuable source to optimise your platform for digital excellence.

However, a **lot has changed in terms of data regulation** over the past five years. There has been a shift towards stricter compliance measures and increased transparency.

The aim of these regulations is to better protect personal data. This way, we prevent them from being used for business purposes without consent.

Therefore, it is crucial that you keep to **ethical and responsible practises** when collecting, and managing data on your platform.

What if you don't invest in ethical data management for your digital platform?

Think of inaccurate insights, inefficient operations, missed opportunities, compliance risks and competitors who may gain an advantage over you.

A logistics platform analyses data on transportation routes, historical delivery times and traffic patterns. By leveraging this data, the platform can identify the most efficient shipping routes.

Consideration:

Improve your platform by using data ethically

In a world where cookies are no longer the undisputed rulers of data collection, you should look for new ways to gain valuable insights. There are several things you can invest in to build a strong foundation for analytics and tracking.

You can think about the following initiatives, listed from simple to complex:

- **Cookieless analytics:** There are alternatives to web analytics that work completely cookieless. Two well-known examples are [Piwik PRO](#) and [Matomo Analytics](#).
- **Server-side tracking and tag management:** [Server-side tracking](#) gives you more control over the data you share with third parties than traditional client-side tracking.
- **First-party data strategy:** First-party data is data you collect from website visitors yourself. For example, by being smart about lead nurturing flows, you'll be better able to analyse on a user level. [Read more in this whitepaper 'How to develop a first-party data strategy'](#).
- **Data modelling:** Smart calculation models are often much better at extracting insights from large data sets than humans. In addition, models also become much easier to use. All you need to start [data modelling](#) is a quantity of data that is structured – and perhaps a partner like iO who knows how to help.



Learn more about ethical and responsible data management in this article:

[“The next step for analytics and tracking in a ‘privacy first’ world”](#)

How complete, accurate and privacy-friendly is your data?

[Perform a data & analytics audit](#)



*“A digital platform in itself
will not deliver a great
customer experience, but
a bad implementation can
certainly damage it.”*

JOCHEM MOLENAAR

Service Line Director Technology

Let's partner up for your digital platform

Technology agnostic

By focusing on composable architectures and remaining technology-agnostic, we make sure our solutions – from websites to complex enterprise systems – are **adaptable and aligned with your requirements**.

Experience-focused

We are **mindful of your broader customer journey**, even when focusing on a single channel or touchpoint.

We aim to contribute meaningfully to the total experience you envision, whether through one piece of the puzzle or big-picture thinking.

Long-term collaboration

We offer a flexible approach that can be tailored to your needs, whether it's *project-based*, *team-as-a-service*, or *on-site*. This means we're not just a contractor, but an integral part of your organisation.

We don't just deliver; we prioritise long-term collaboration and work closely with your teams, offering both **strategic vision and execution**.

Evidence-based outcomes

Our technical expertise, combined with research, analytics, and customer experience optimisation/CRO, guarantees that your initiatives not only make a **strong impact** but also achieve **lasting results**.

We develop detailed measurement plans and closely track key performance indicators (KPIs).

Blended expertise

Our dynamic team of architects, designers, analysts, developers, product managers and marketers **collaborate to elevate** your business with result-driven digital solutions.





About iO

iO is a *blended agency*. We blend marketing, technology and creativity because we believe that creating the ultimate customer experience requires a blend of these different skills to make an impact on our clients' brand and business.

With our solutions, we aim for experiences that matter:

Digital platforms →

Brand, Business & Experience Design →

Marketing Programs & Campaigns →

Creation & Content Production →

Cloud, Data & Integration →

Transformation & Consulting →

Experience is
everything

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