

CASE STUDY COLLECTION

Adelbodner mineral water – the digital roadmap of an SME

adelbodner

Marc K. Peter



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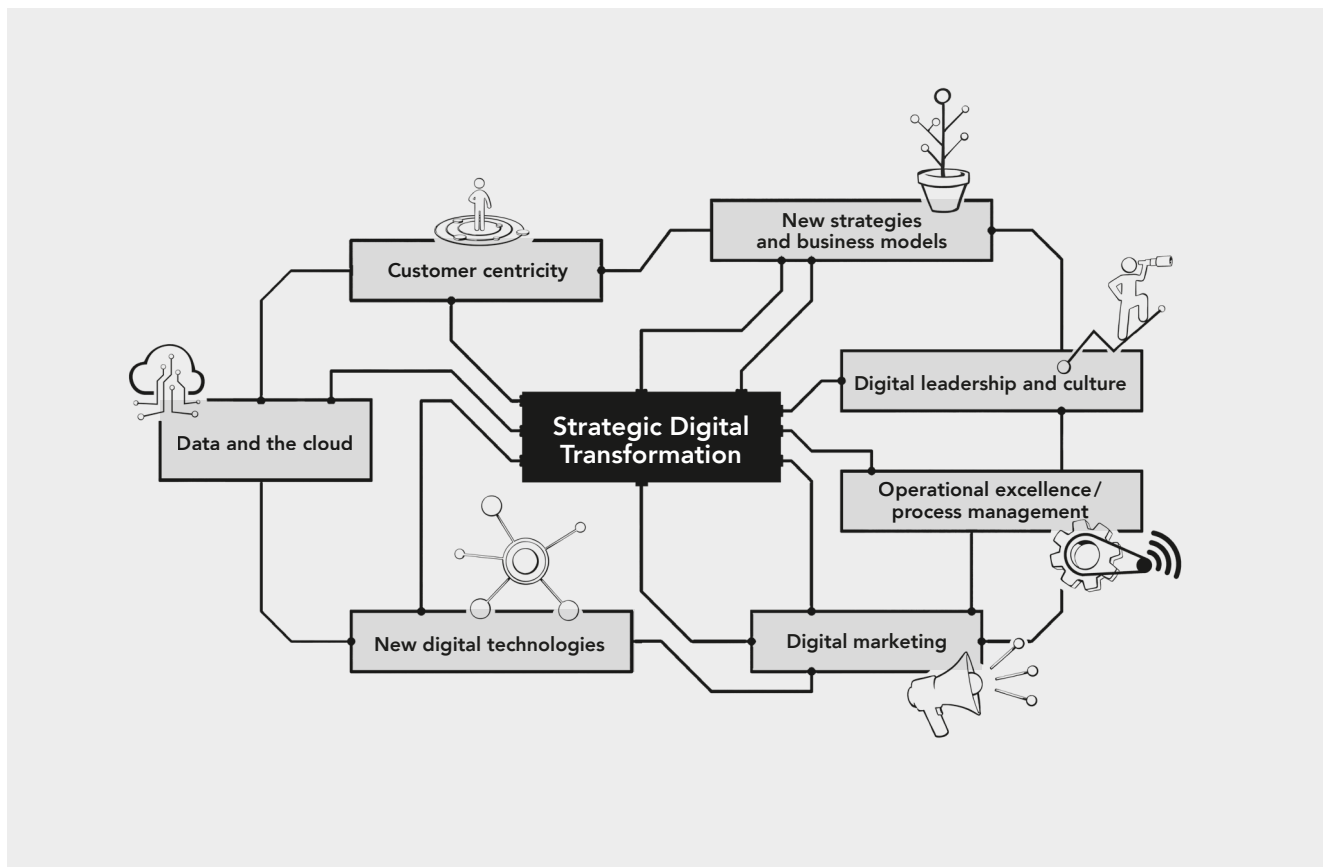
ADELBODNER MINERAL WATER – THE DIGITAL ROADMAP OF AN SME

Case organisation profile

- **Organisation name:**
Mineralquellen Adelboden AG (Adelbodner)
- **Country:** Switzerland
- **Description:** Adelbodner is a traditional small business that is bottling high-quality mineral water directly from a spring in the Swiss mountains
- **Number of employees:** approx. 60
- **Website:** www.adelbodner.ch

Case organisation

Mineralquellen Adelboden AG, known under the brand name 'Adelbodner', is a traditional Swiss company that has been bottling high-quality mineral water since 1948. The spring itself has been known since 1559 and was originally used as a healing spring. Located in Adelboden in the Bernese Oberland, the company operates the only mineral water source in the canton (state) of Bern. The water comes from one of the highest-altitude springs in Europe and flows through deep rock layers which, over many years, has naturally enriched it with valuable minerals. It is bottled untreated directly at the source to preserve its original purity and quality.

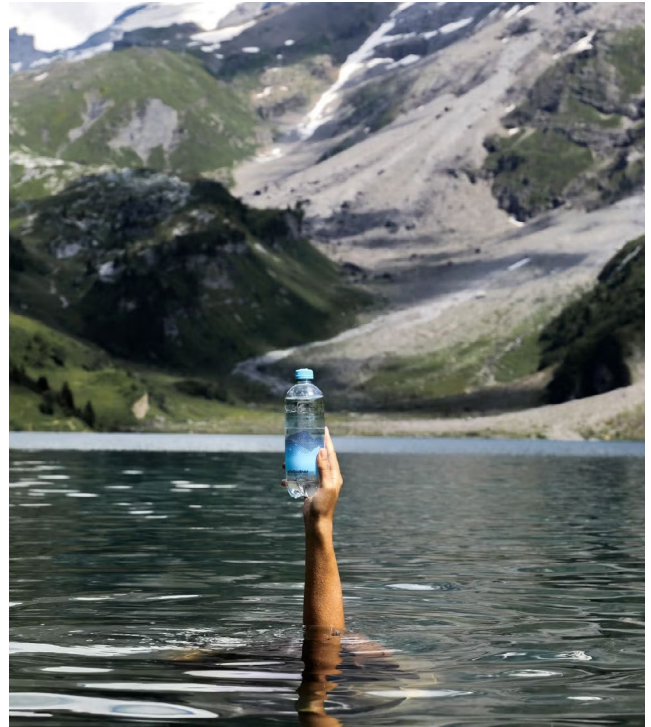


The Adelbodner case study covers all seven action fields of digital transformation.

Adelbodner's product range includes classic mineral water in still and sparkling varieties, as well as a wide selection of refreshing beverages. These include apple spritzers, elderflower drinks, various iced teas and the product lines 'Adello' and 'Echo', which are enhanced with natural flavours and herbs such as mint, thyme or lavender. The products are available in various sizes, including modern PET bottles and elegant glass bottles for the hospitality industry. Adelbodner produces around 35 million bottles of water per year and, with that, has a market share of around 5% in Switzerland.

In recent years, the company has invested heavily in modernising its infrastructure. In 2024, a new PET bottling plant was commissioned and the glass bottling line was renovated. The brand image was also redesigned under the motto 'Vital, sporty, Swiss' to emphasise the connection between tradition, health and activity. Sustainability plays a central role as Adelbodner uses 100% renewable energy, including electricity from its own solar power system, and uses recycled PET.

In 2023, the Mineralquellen Adelboden company was taken over by the AQVA Holding AG, which includes prominent Swiss athletes such as Roman Josi, Mark Streit, Yann Sommer and Stan Wawrinka as shareholders (see box below). This acquisition marks another step in the company's sustainable and forward-looking development (Adelbodner, 2025a).



Adelbodner mineral water originates from the untouched mountains of the Swiss Alps which has flowed for years through deep rock layers, far from any environmental influences. To preserve its original quality, the mineral water is bottled untreated and directly at the source (Adelbodner, 2025a).

The investors behind AQVA Holding AG, which acquired Mineralquellen Adelboden AG in 2023, include a group of prominent Swiss athletes and business figures. The six key sports investors are:

- **Roman Josi** – professional ice hockey player and captain of the Nashville Predators
- **Severin Lüthi** – long-time coach of Roger Federer
- **Yann Sommer** – Swiss national football team goalkeeper
- **Mark Streit** – former NHL player and Swiss ice hockey legend
- **Christian Stucki** – Swiss wrestling champion (Schwingerkönig)
- **Stan Wawrinka** – Swiss tennis player and three times grand slam winner.

In addition to these athletes, several well-known figures from the Swiss business world are also involved:

- **Peter Boss** – chairman of the group management board at v.FISCHER INVESTAS
- **Jürg Burri** – founder of the food direct sales company Rüedu
- **Lionel Hofstetter** – former global director of product and brand at Breitling
- **Ben Küffer** – founder of the Swiss watch brand Norqain.

Together, they formed AQVA Holding AG with the goal of building a strong presence in the Swiss beverage industry and promoting locally sourced water. Their involvement also prevented a potential acquisition by foreign investors, which had been speculated prior to the deal (Forster, 2023).



Adelbodner advertising with its Swiss athlete investors

In May 2025, PEAQ Nutrition (part of the AQVA-GROUP) launched its latest product, PEAQ Hydration (see Instagram link below). This new Swiss performance water, co-developed by sports stars Yann Sommer, Stan Wawrinka and Roman Josi, is the first Swiss functional beverage without sugar, based on pure mountain spring water – served in an endlessly recycla-

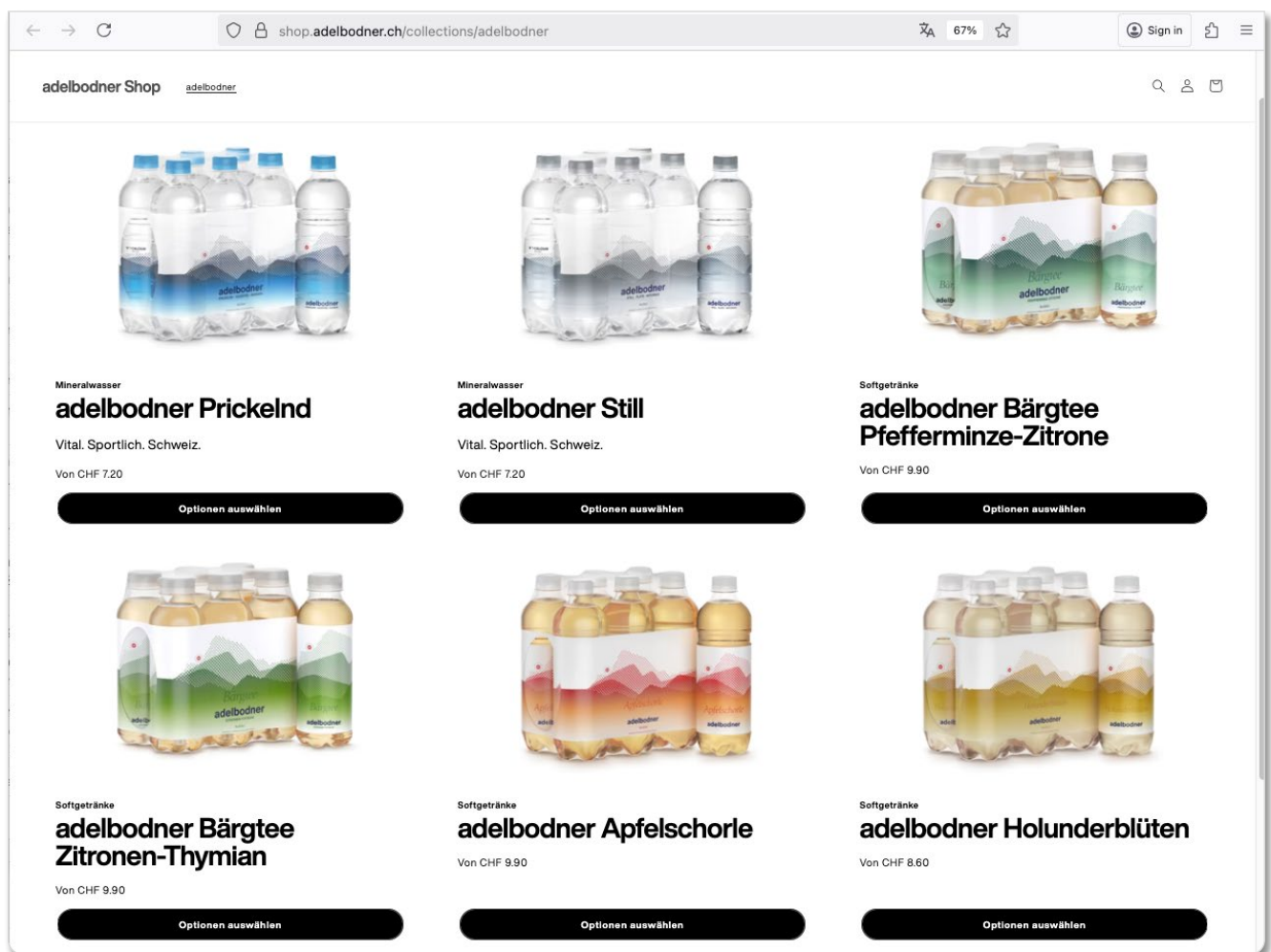
ble aluminium bottle. It was launched in 930 retail stores of Swiss retailer Coop and is the official hydration product of the Swiss national football teams. AQVA's claim is that: 'PEAQ sets new standards at the intersection of sports, lifestyle, and sustainability.'



The new PEAQ product line and its athlete ambassadors Yann Sommer, Roman Josi and Stan Wawrinka (June 2025).

Its private-label strategy offers third parties to procure mineral water under their own brand from Adelbodner. Their promotional claim is: 'Design your label and the cap of the PET bottle in sizes 50cl, 100cl, and 150cl according to your needs. The bottle shape and the mineral water source are predefined, but you are free to give your creativity full rein when designing the label.' (Adelbodner, 2025b).

Adelbodner products are available via the company's online shop, various distributor-run online stores, over 1,000 retail outlets – including Coop and Migros – and via beverage wholesalers serving sectors such as gastronomy.



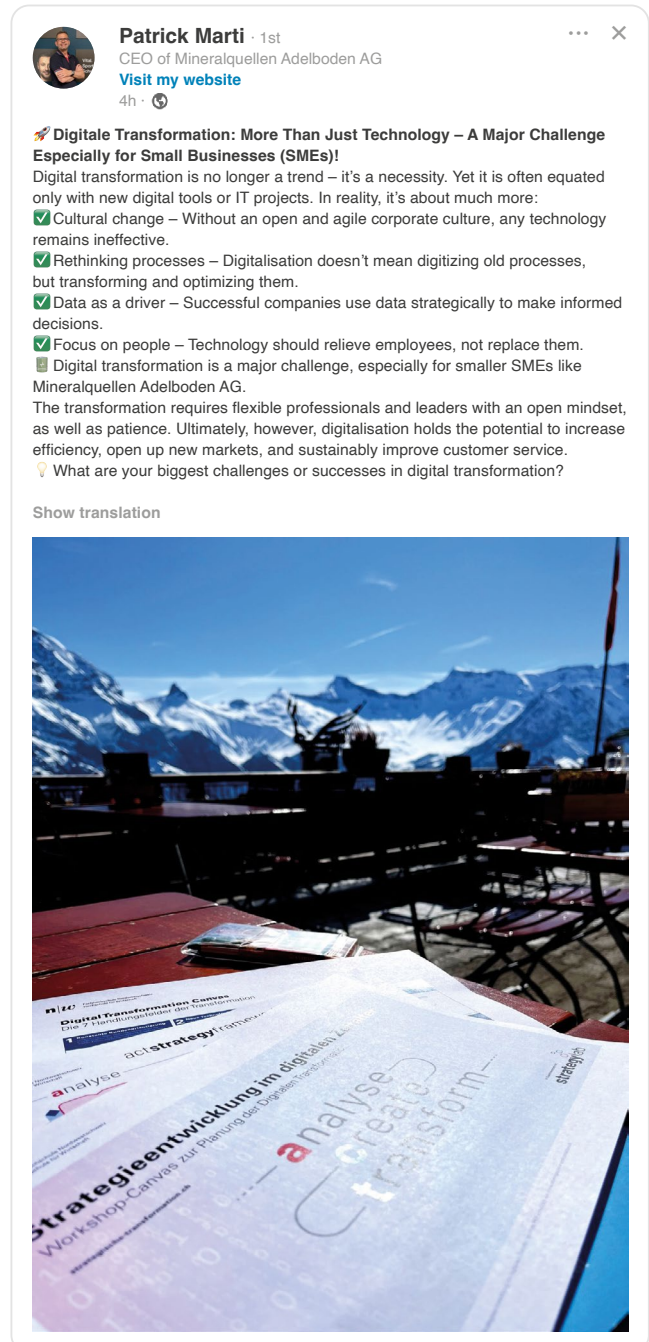
Adelbodner online shop (Adelbodner, 2025c).

Adelbodner's digital roadmap

In 2024, Patrick Marti, who joined the company in 2015 as Adelbodner's CEO, initiated a new digital strategy under the project name 'From the Source to the Cloud' – a word play describing the firm's value chain advancements from their spring (water source) to the cloud IT infrastructure.

At the beginning of 2025, Patrick conducted a survey among the management team to determine their expectations for digital transformation. The conclusion was that no concrete projects had yet emerged, but that digital transformation must be supported by the board of directors and management, so he utilised the seven action fields of digital transformation to organise the many topics and develop the strategy as pragmatically as possible. He realised that there are repetitions throughout the strategy because most action fields are interconnected.

On 4 March 2025, while still working on the digital roadmap together with his management team, he posted the following on LinkedIn while on holiday in the Swiss mountains (mock-up, translated from the original post in German):



LinkedIn post from Adelbodner CEO Patrick Marti (Marti, 2025a).

On 11 March 2025, the CEO released a second post on LinkedIn, referencing the seven action fields of digital transformation (mock-up, translated from the original post in German):



LinkedIn post from Adelbodner CEO Patrick Marti (Marti, 2025b).

And, finally, on 4 June 2025, Patrick Marti posted on LinkedIn his vision for Adelbodner in the digital age (mock-up, translated from the original post in German):



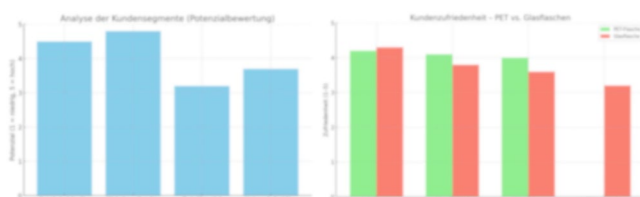
LinkedIn post from Adelbodner CEO Patrick Marti (Marti, 2025c).

Action fields of digital transformation

At the heart of the Swiss Alps, Mineralquellen Adelboden AG is undergoing a profound transformation – one that blends tradition with innovation and nature with digital intelligence. This journey is not merely about adopting new technologies; it is about reimagining the company's role in a rapidly evolving world. The digital roadmap, based on the seven action fields of digital transformation, outlines a strategy that reflects a commitment to sustainable growth, operational excellence and human-centred innovation.

1. Customer centricity

The transformation begins with a clear focus on the customer. Customer centricity is a principle that guides the digital initiative. A customer segmentation analysis and a customer survey on various bottle materials provided the foundation for understanding evolving consumer needs, a data-driven approach to identifying key customer groups and their expectations. This insight informed future product development, service personalisation and communication strategies.



Action field of customer centricity (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

2. New digital technologies

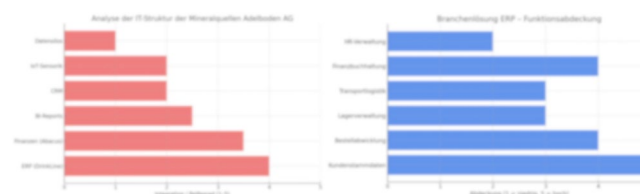
The second action field reviewed the available new digital technology and allowed the development of a technology roadmap for the organisation for 2026 to 2038. Here, Adelbodner will leverage digital platforms, for example a performance dashboard that visualises real-time production metrics, energy usage and maintenance schedules. This digital transparency empowers teams to make faster, more informed decisions. Other future technology areas are predictive maintenance and the development of a B2B platform, which facilitates streamlined ordering, logistics and customer interaction for business clients.



Action field of new digital technologies (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

3. Data and the cloud

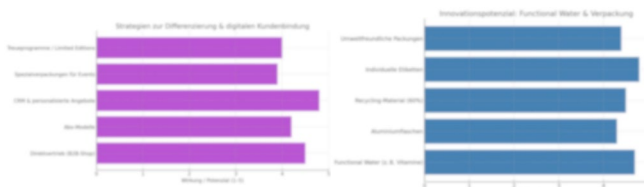
In the third action field, the focus shifts to data and data infrastructure. The analysis revealed that there are too many data silos in the organisation, and that data from, for example IoT sensors, weren't utilised. Over the past months, Adelbodner has implemented a centralised data exchange platform that enables secure, standardised and scalable data management with its partners and customers. The full implementation of the data platform occurred in 2025. This move not only enhances internal efficiency but also ensures compliance with international data standards, which is crucial for a company with growing B2B and export ambitions.



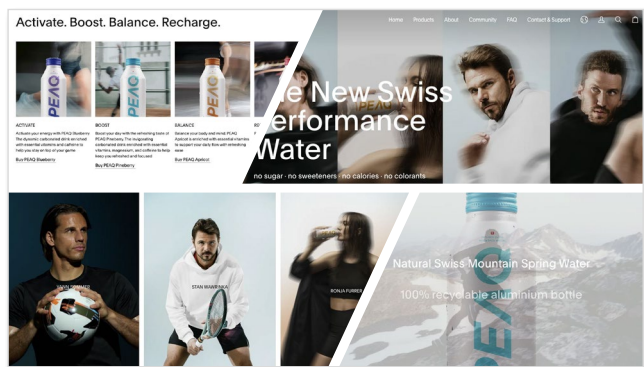
Action field of data and the cloud (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

4. New strategies and business models

Innovation continues with the development of new business opportunities and models. Various opportunities were identified, including ongoing personalised product offers and a focus on 'functional water'. One of them is PEAQ Hydration, a functional water product co-developed with Swiss sports stars and packaged in an endlessly recyclable aluminium bottle (see above). This initiative reflects a broader strategic shift: combining health, performance and sustainability into a premium lifestyle brand. The packaging strategy and product positioning suggest a move towards direct-to-consumer channels, supported by digital marketing and e-commerce.



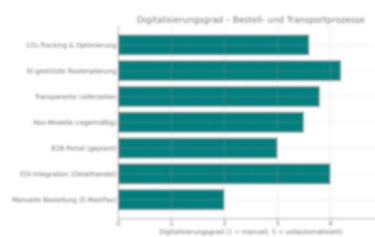
Action field of new strategies and business models (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).



Screenshots from the PEAQ website (PEAQ, 2025).

5. Operational excellence/process management

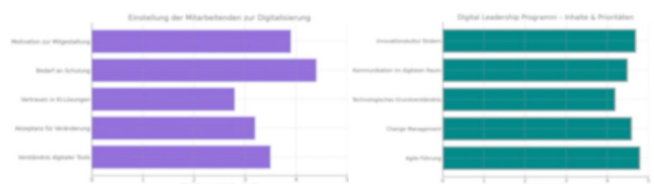
Efficiency is a recurring theme at Adelbodner. The fifth action field on operational excellence and process automation is centred on the DataFlow initiative. It includes a workflow automation system that integrates production, logistics and quality control. This initiative is expected to reduce manual tasks, minimise errors and accelerate throughput, which will be a key advantage in a competitive beverage market.



Action field of operational excellence and process management (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

6. Digital leadership and culture

Digital transformation is not just technical – it is also cultural. The sixth action field addresses new approaches to leadership and work culture. Starting in 2025, Adelbodner will implement a comprehensive training programme to boost digital skills, including cybersecurity, AI and digital transformation. These are not generic courses, but should be topic-specific and personalised, ensuring that every employee – from production staff to management – can confidently navigate the digital landscape. This investment in people reflects a belief that technology should empower, not replace, and will help Adelbodner in implementing agile principles, boost innovation and improve collaboration and communication in the digital space.



Action field of digital leadership and culture (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

7. Digital marketing

The final action field is digital marketing. The launch of PEAQ marks a significant step in the company's digital presence. This platform is more than a marketing landing page – it will become a hub for storytelling, community engagement, marketing automation and brand building (these new digital marketing investments, especially personalised campaigns via marketing automation, will be used for the entire product portfolio). The strategy includes data-driven marketing, social media campaigns and e-commerce integration, positioning PEAQ as a symbol of Swiss innovation and purity.



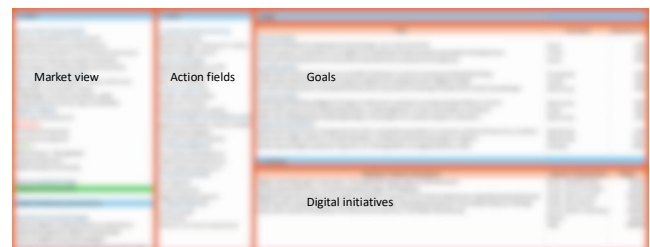
Action field of digital marketing (excerpt and visual example from the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

Adelbodner is not just simply digitalising its operations – it is redefining its future. By aligning technology with values, and innovation with sustainability, the company is setting a benchmark for how a traditional industry can succeed in the digital age.

See the figure below for how Patrick Marti has summarised all strategic digital initiatives, incorporating the current competitive situation, opportunities across the seven action fields of digital transformation, and how he sets goals and defines the digital initiatives and projects that will help the company succeed.

Patrick summarised the key learnings of digital transformation at Adelbodner to date as follows:

- Activate and include employees in the strategy development process to support cultural change.
- Identify and prioritise available digital technology.
- Focus on data and personalisation for improved customer processes and product/service offerings.
- Ensure cyber and process resilience – especially in uncertain times.
- Plan for a step-by-step strategy roadmap implementation.



Digital roadmap / digital strategy canvas of Adelbodner (excerpt and visual example of the digital roadmap / in German) (Adelbodner, 2025d).

Interview with Patrick Marti, CEO of Adelbodner

What is your current product portfolio?

Our portfolio includes first and foremost our own branded mineral water from our own spring and soft drinks (Adelbodner), and Adello as the second brand primarily for the bulk retail industry. And, as a brand-new product, our PEAQ Hydration water, introduced in 2025. In the first weeks since its launch in May 2025, we shipped over 150,000 bottles into retail stores in Switzerland – we are very happy with the go-to-market traction to date.

What are your top three strategic challenges?

First, our major challenge as a small business is to determine the future product portfolio to understand what type of drinks, flavours, bottle designs, etc. are in demand in the future. As a small business, we don't have the same research and marketing resources and specialised capabilities as those available to larger businesses.

Second, one of our challenges is the production infrastructure and to determine how we are going to produce our products in the future.

And, finally, our strategic challenge is to determine how we can grow from a regional player (a brand with regional character and limited national market share) to become a national provider of beverages.

What is the benefit of your investors who are also famous brand ambassadors?

Following the implementation of a new investment structure in 2023/2024, the business secured fresh capital for its renewal and future growth and, through the new shareholders as co-founders, we also secured influencers. They support Adelbodner and the new PEAQ functional water via blog posts to hundreds of thousands of followers (e.g. Stan Wawrinka with 1.3 million followers and Yann Sommer with 2 million followers on Instagram), photo shootings, videos and TV clips (if required), outdoor posters/billboards, etc. For Adelbodner, this is a competitive advantage and a fantastic brand story.

When it comes to IT and digitalisation, what are your top two challenges?

First and foremost, it is difficult to find talents, team members with IT capabilities, to support our strategic digital transformation. Since the completion of our new production and office buildings in 2018–2022, we implemented a new ERP system in 2022, moved to a paperless order intake process and introduced a new collaboration framework. In

2024, we implemented a new PET production system and, in 2025, we were the first in Switzerland to produce and sell aluminium bottled water. We describe this transformation 'from the source to the cloud' – as we use the water from the springs as our main input source but slowly move to the IT cloud for document storage and collaboration. All of the above requires team members with digital skills.

Second, many new topics in the digital age emerge from a strategy and management perspective, and it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint where to invest the limited funds. These new topics include, for instance, predictive maintenance and the use of AI in our business processes.

How did you plan your digital transformation?

With the selection and implementation of our ERP system and the new production infrastructure, we digitalised many of our processes from 2022 onwards. In 2024, we realised that a more holistic digital transformation is required and we found in a web search the seven action fields of digital transformation. We were looking for a framework that would provide a navigation aid.

In early 2025, we surveyed our teams and employees for a digital health check and to identify potential topics for our roadmap. We documented the findings in the framework (seven action fields) and circulated the initial draft document. The next step is a strategy workshop with the entire management team in order to finalise our digital strategy by the end of 2025 – for a subsequent presentation to the board.

How would you describe your leadership style – and what leadership style is required to succeed in digital transformation?

I have a highly situational leadership approach. For instance, if I see a problem in our production plant, I will stop my other tasks and support the team in fixing the issues. Our company, for many years, was led with traditional leadership values. I try to connect with our team and support them whenever possible, especially because many of our team members are around 30 years old – and they ask for a more modern leadership style and culture.

Until 2024, I led the company directly and, with the new co-founders on board (see above), we restructured the organisation and now have a new senior leadership team in place, consisting of finance and IT, HR, production, maintenance, quality management, logistics and supply chain management functions.

To succeed with a digital transformation initiative, the senior leadership team must 'lead from the front', be a role model and involve everyone in the transformation journey.

What is your advice for small businesses to succeed in digital transformation?

I would say that the digital roadmap or strategy should be brainstormed and discussed without any limitations – and with no fear – so all opportunities will be identified and discussed. And, finally, the CEO should identify early those in the team who are keen to collaborate and support the transformation journey; and to work with them to win as a team.



Patrick Marti, CEO.

Student questions

Discuss the following questions in your class, in your group or assignment:

1. What are the challenges of small businesses in general regarding digital transformation?
2. More specifically, what might be the challenges of a traditional business, such as a mineral water company, when it comes to the required investments for digital transformation?
3. What are the strategic assets and value propositions that have made Adelbodner successful in the past?
4. How do you evaluate Adelbodner's progress in the seven action fields of digital transformation?
5. What other strategic digital opportunities could Adelbodner pursue for digital transformation?
6. How do you evaluate the benefits for Adelbodner from its co-founders and brand ambassadors (the sports athletes)?
7. What are your thoughts regarding the CEO's LinkedIn posts? How do you evaluate these posts in light of the implementation of a digital transformation initiative?
8. What digital skills are required in a small business to successfully plan and implement digital transformation?

Additional Information

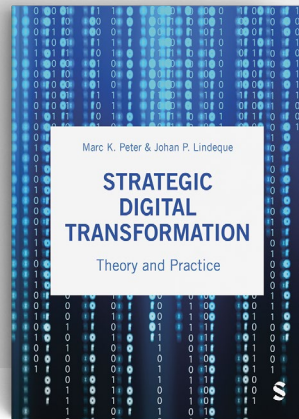
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- PEAQ on Instagram: www.instagram.com/peaqhydration
- PEAQ launch (PEAQ Movement 2025):
www.instagram.com/peaqhydration/reel/DKue9MxowwE

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