Digital Adoption: Realizing Value via a Change-Management Framework

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Overview

Today's business climate is defined by continuous change, innovation, an increasingly competitive landscape, and a global pandemic. As companies strive to balance maximized growth with cost optimization, they also face new regulations, savvier customers, nationwide disruptions, and the transformative effects of new technologies.

As companies turn disruptions into opportunities through the adoption of new technologies, they also need to transform their products and services to engage end users in new and compelling ways. In addition, companies face the daunting task of transforming while dealing with legacy applications, structures, and assets on a massive scale. Combined with organizational dynamics (e.g., change resistance), this task requires strong leadership from business and IT, along with the adoption of a robust management framework to mobilize and sustain a multi-year business modernization journey.

Organizations often transform as a result of specific “Trigger Events.” These events can be internally or externally generated and require a transformation or change in operations as responsive actions. This transformation must be carefully managed for the desired outcome (i.e., the “change”) to be successful and sustainably adopted. This white paper describes the level of integrated change management required to achieve a successful and sustainable transformation.

Trigger Events
A Trigger Event is a specific event that has a material impact on the operations of the business enterprise. Acquisitions and divestitures, new (and more innovative) competitors, major projects such as an ERP implementation or restructuring plan are internal Trigger Events. Major societal events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and material economic changes (e.g., the great recession) are external Trigger Events.

Transformation Response
Many Trigger Events result in reorganization, downsizing, upskilling, and digital platform development. Such triggers tend to create uncertainty, unease, and fear and require a transformational initiative response. Due to COVID, one key global focus in 2021 is the need to
accelerate the transformation of digital products, services, and platforms. While the impetus for digital transformation is typically to drive cost optimization and growth, the risk is that employees may feel insecure about their jobs and livelihoods. They may also be concerned that they lack the necessary experience or skills to adequately perform their new responsibilities.

**Integrated Change Management**
Integrated Change Management is the discipline of aligning Trigger Events with Transformational Responses to improve transition-management and ensure successful adoption of the transformational response and enable and sustain continuous growth.

Looking at Change Management in an integrated fashion is a holistic method for driving adoption and sustainability of the desired outcome. Whether driving top-line performance via customer experience improvements, expanding geographically via acquisition, or restructuring bottom-line improvements, an Integrated approach to Change Management will help ensure your organization’s success.

Trigger Events that materially change the way an organization operates require an integrated response and management. These include:

- Mergers, acquisitions and divestitures
- Corporate restructuring
- Industry disruptions
- Geopolitical situations
- Global pandemics
- Organizational initiatives
- Innovative technology implementation

Key elements of effective Trigger Event management include a Transformation Response that achieves:

- Process optimization: Boosting efficiency and effectiveness
- Organizational leverage: Deploying the right resources to the right locations
• Technology integration: Providing the digital tools to support transformation

ICM actions and results include:

• Communication: announcing what is happening
• Education: describing why it is happening
• Training: explaining how change will impact jobs and functions
• Leadership: establishing the change tone from the top
• Adoption: managing a successful outcome with tangible measures
• Sustainability: developing a Continuous-Improvement framework
**Integrated Change Management Components**

The following Integrated Change Management actions are critical to achieving a successful transformation:

**Communication**
It’s all about the **Message**, your **Audience**, and the **Delivery** vehicle and frequency. Get MAD about communication. Developing and maintaining a Communication Plan throughout the initiative is critical. Tailoring that same message for different audiences (in varying levels of detail and delivered at different frequencies) will require some thought. Further, adapting as an initiative evolves will take finesse. The overall objective of communications is to help your audience understand and keep them updated on what is happening.

**The Message**
Develop a messaging plan on a rolling-outlook basis. What do you need to communicate immediately post-Trigger, one week out, one month out, one quarter out? Having critical messages thought-out in advance—and adjusting as required—will allow for an efficient message plan. The messaging plan should map to transformation activities and reinforce critical information. It may be necessary to evolve the messaging and message plan over time.

**The Audience:**
Communications must cut across the entire organization but tailor-fitting the message to each audience is critical. Understanding the needs of each audience segment will make the communications to each constituency group more effective. For instance, line workers who are directly impacted may require a different level of detail or nuance than the Management Team.

**The Delivery:**
It’s important to vary the delivery of communications. Consider a portfolio of delivery options that includes a communications portal, emails, in-person roadshows, and webcasts. All have a place in your communications plan and frequently changing the vehicle for each audience will help keep the communications fresh.
**Education:**
Education may take many forms, depending on the specifics of the trigger and the organization’s response. But, allowing employees to understand the “Why” of a Trigger Event and its response is fundamental to their ongoing acceptance. Typically, the education requirements will be customized based on the specific audience (similar to communications). In many cases, education will serve as a precursor to training as the initiative (or program) progresses.

Mergers will likely result in consolidation (particularly in back-office and support roles); Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementations will likely result in new processes and procedures. Ensuring employees understand why the change is occurring (and why it’s necessary) is a critical step towards driving adoption, acceptance, and sustainability.

**Training:**
Training is the “How” of the equation. Organizations make significant investments in transformation initiatives. These always result in new processes, procedures, tools, organizational constructs—and many other changes. Once your employees know what is happening, and why, they must also understand how it will impact their day-to-day functions.

Digital Adoption Platforms (DAPs) facilitate the end-user training process and make training collateral a scalable and sustainable asset. From providing specific user-intelligence to creating documentation that allows for hands-on trial and error learning, DAP’s are a critical factor in the deployment of successful end-user training programs.
Leadership:
One key benefit of Integrated Change Management is the strengthening of Change Leadership. There is a huge difference between Change Management and Change Leadership. Change Management is focused on the what, why, and how of the event. Change Leadership is the tone set from the top levels of the organization to drive awareness and support for the changes being made, allow for adoption, and reinforce the need for long-term sustainability. Change Leadership allows the benefits of event-based efforts to be realized and improved over time.

Adoption:
Any initiative that fundamentally changes the enterprise is a significant undertaking. Ensuring your monumental efforts and investments are accepted and adopted will allow the return to be realized. An ICM framework enables the enterprise to provide the requisite hands-on training that nurtures understanding, adoption, and change-reinforcement. This ultimately sets the foundation for becoming a "learning-based organization" and allows for continuous improvements.

Sustainability:
Change is constant; technology is always evolving, and at faster cycle rates than ever. Thus, sustainable change means your improvement initiatives are never truly finished. Positioning your organization through an effective ICM framework allows for long-term continuous improvement and organizational agility.

High-performing teams will drive efficiency and effectiveness into every single business operation across your enterprise. Change sustainability will allow for long-term continuous improvement!
Conclusion

Businesses are evolving every day. They buy competitors, create new products, markets and channels, implement fresh technologies and restructure operations to drive top-line and bottom-line improvements.

These initiatives have a huge impact on the mid-level and line employees who manage the business. Uncertainty, fear, and a lack of skills and understanding are all real issues executives must address to ensure sustainable changes are accepted and adopted.

An Integrated Change-Management framework establishes the elements necessary for communicating, educating, and training affected employees. Results include improved change leadership, adoption, and a continuous improvement framework for the future. In addition, an ICM framework approach helps ensure the investments in initiatives create value in terms of customer experience improvements, revenue growth, profit improvements, and shareholder value.

We can help! Whether you are struggling with the adoption of new systems or solutions or you are putting together an entire plan due to a trigger event, we provide the strategy and framework to maximize adoption and return-on-investment. Anexinet’s Integrated Change Management framework ensures initiative investments create value by establishing the elements necessary for communicating, educating, and training affected employees. Our strategists help your organization pursue a holistic method for making this happen.

Our multidisciplinary teams of strategists, designers, technologists and data experts imagine, create, and deliver flexible digital strategies that respond to transformational change.

Contact us now to launch your Integrated Change Management plan.

Contact Anexinet
End Notes

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Rob Sullivan, Client Partner at Anexinet, has over 30 years of combined business experience as a Consultant to Executives and as a Chief Financial Officer in Industry. He has managed organizations, led teams, and consulted to small businesses as well as Fortune 1000 companies.

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