Change management tips for your digital evolution:

Getting the people part right

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A digital evolution is only as effective as the people behind it. Inevitably, your digital transformation will require some change management at all levels of the organization. Navigating that change successfully requires consideration of business, cultural and interpersonal factors. This white paper presents six tips to help you meet these challenges during your digital evolution.

Tip #1 — Know the culture

No meaningful change can occur without the full participation of groups and individuals, each of which is motivated by a complex interaction of motivations, concerns and everyday habits. Collectively, these variables make up the culture of the organization.

For successful change management during a digital transformation start by assessing the culture of the organization you're working in. Look for the different organizational values, risks and even personal hang-ups that contribute to the overall motivation of the organization's workforce. Once you know what that motivation is, make it the ultimate end goal for your digital evolution process.

For example, are you working in a commercial culture where pay raises, bonuses, promotions and job satisfaction all correlate directly with the company's bottom line? If so, emphasize how digitization will directly reduce expenses while at the same time increasing revenue generation by using real world scenarios and numerical values. Depending on the organization's fiscal pain points, you may need to show how the switch to digital records will help:

— save on office space
— decrease time spent searching for and retrieving files
— speed up business transactions and service delivery

Or is the organizational culture more about mitigating risk, such as legal, audit or public perception?. In this case when you use better recordkeeping principles to tie the benefits of digital recordkeeping to the organization's risk profile, it can be a revelation for management and staff. Be ready to demonstrate how centrally stored and remotely accessible electronic records means a faster, more reliable response to litigation, investigations or other discovery scenarios.

Tip #2 — Someone has to own it

In order for your initiative to be optimally effective, accountability should be established at the highest levels of the organization. Executive sponsorship (and ownership) is especially important if you hope to tap into those cultural values and motivators discussed under Tip #1. Having the endorsement of thought leaders will go a long way in highlighting the need for digitization processes in a fast-paced world where multiple issues and approaches constantly vie for attention.

For example, most information management professionals know that digital recordkeeping can reduce administrative costs and time to market for an organization focussed on reducing expense and increasing revenue. But that doesn't make it a priority for managers and staff whose daily business objectives are not focused on records management. Contrast that all too common situation with a scenario where the same digitization benefits are touted by a CEO, CFO or other senior leader. Having those benefits verbalized by the same person who brought forward the organizational goals in the first place is a great way to get staff on board with digitization.

Tip #3 — Leave no one out

Truly effective change must be driven from all levels of the organization. As critical as it is for senior leadership to endorse your destination, close attention must also be paid to the people who will get you there. This means engaging everyone.

It is never too early to start communicating the benefits and objectives of your planned digital evolution through any means available, including one-on-one consultations, lunch-and-learn presentations, email bulletins and social media campaigns. But effective engagement means not just talking to staff, but listening to them as well. Frontline workers, administrative staff and specialized resources all handle the day-to-day details of the world in which information is captured, used, accessed and stored. These same people can play a critical role in foreseeing practical and technical challenges which might otherwise be unforeseeable, allowing the digitization team to build in solutions remedying those same challenges.

With so much industry literature on change management emphasizing C-level leaders and frontline staff, it is easy to overlook middle management. Engaging this all too important middle layer early and continuing that engagement throughout the implementation process serves two purposes:

■ **helping to focus the link between organizational goals and digitization benefits**
   For example, making records available online can support a commercial company's goal of increasing productivity and revenue generation. A typical response to that lofty statement is, "*Great, but how exactly will it help my team meet its much more specific target of increasing daily sales calls output by x percent?*" Anticipating and answering those questions is only possible via two way engagement with middle management. Departmental and team managers can help identify the very concrete objectives their groups are working towards, as well as the quantitative variables that can help and hinder them in that work. Your job is to tailor your messaging around these objectives and variables, showing in concrete detail how digitization will help.

■ **ensuring participation and resource commitment**
   By working hand-in-hand with departmental managers and team leaders, you can help them carve out time for staff to contribute to digitization tasks, all while increasing their sense of ownership in the final outcomes.

Tip #4 — Face the fears

If you've successfully applied Tip #1 and assessed the culture of your organization, you will know too well the different concerns and anxieties staff on all levels feel about the pending digital transformation changes. Use these concerns to your advantage by listening to all worries and concerns of staff, and then integrate them directly into your key messaging. This will show that you are listening, thereby increasing buy-in.

One example of the fears associated with digitization is privacy. For everyone from senior management to front-line staff, not to mention end customers, the idea of critical records and sensitive information being available via an electronic network brings to mind sensationalized stories of hackers, large scale data corruption and abuse of privacy rights. All of those things can happen if privacy,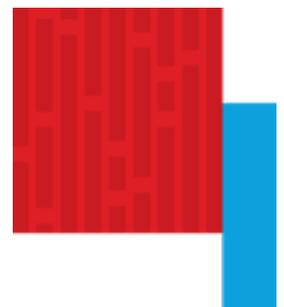 confidentiality and security are not built directly into information systems and digitization processes. Once those things are built in, privacy can be enhanced rather than compromised.

In communicating the benefits of your new and improved system, be sure to emphasize the different security and integrity controls which help make up the value add of digital recordkeeping. Key features and benefits to emphasize include:

- **Centralization:** Consolidation of information into one central, authoritative record, removing the risk associated with accessing, copying and shipping physical record media from across different sources and geographic locations.
- **Accountability:** Ability to assign business owners and track chain of custody for records, thereby enforcing accountability for information at the collection, file, document and data element level. Assignment of rights and permissions: By controlling and tracking exactly who can access, read, edit or delete a record, a secure electronic system can limit access to authorized personnel who need it to perform necessary business functions.
- **Audit trails:** Just because an authorized system user has the right to access a given record does not mean they should. System audit trails allow an organization to track every individual who viewed, altered or otherwise touched a given record. This is a powerful investigation tool, not to mention a serious deterrent against inappropriate behaviour.
- **Retention management:** A well configured electronic records management system can track retention periods and apply records disposition workflows, ensuring that personal information is only retained as long as necessary to meet authorized business purposes.

Of course, privacy is just one example of how a successful digital evolution can solve rather than add problems. Is middle management worried about cost? Focus on the savings which digitization can help realize, and be ready with hard figures showing how those saving outweigh the costs of the digitization itself. The same principle works for frontline staff concerns about the time burden, as time savings have long been observed as a key justification for digitization. No matter what the concern, there is always an opportunity to turn negatives into positives and make them a key part of your change management strategy.
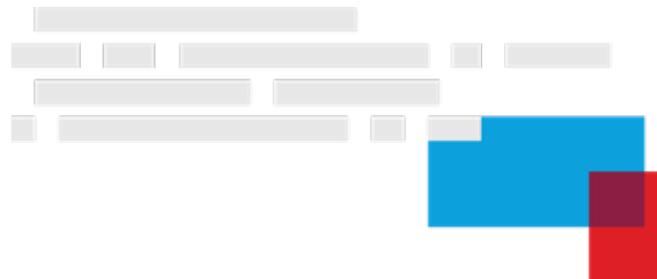
Tip #5 — You have to start somewhere

A pilot implementation has long been considered a critical component of any system development life cycle. While a records digitization project is no exception, it also exemplifies the key role that pilot can play in the change management process. By demonstrating the proof-of-concept for the records digitization, a successful pilot implementation will provide many of your key messages as your advocate for change. But how exactly do you pick a department, team or other group which will make for a successful pilot and help draw change forward?

Things to look for:

- **Support:** Middle management is overtly receptive to the idea of digitization, supportive of staff participation and willing to dedicate person hours and other resources necessary to optimize that participation.

- **Right-sizing:** On one hand, massive collections of paper files can mean biting off more than you can chew for your initial outing. Conversely, a group with too few records will not provide ample opportunity to impact daily business and demonstrate the value add that digitization provides. In selecting a pilot site, ensure the volume and complexity of the group's record holdings are the right size to ensure success within a reasonable time period while still showing a significant impact.

- **Need:** An ideal pilot group is one with an admitted problem that only improved records management can solve. This problem should be rooted in outdated and/or ineffective recordkeeping but also have clear financial, legal or operational impacts. Some scenarios to look for are as follows:

  — Medium to large file collections stored onsite by a group which is complaining of office space shortage and/or high rent costs.
  — Group widely known to have performed badly in a litigation, audit or other high-risk situation because they could not produce necessary records.
  — Group which is underperforming in terms of response time or output AND expressing frustration with the time it takes to locate and retrieve records.

If these three criteria sound conflicting, that is because they are. The key is to select a pilot group for which that conflict isn't insurmountable. A group with disorganized records can be an excellent candidate for a pilot, as long as that disorganization is the direct product of disinterested management and apathetic staff. In other words, if the records are a mess because no one in the department could possibly care about recordkeeping, then you should start somewhere else. Those groups will need to be tackled in the foreseeable future, but doing so will be much easier once you already have a successful pilot under your belt.
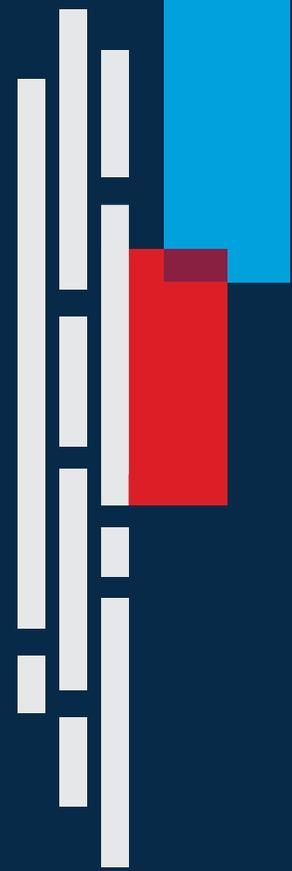
Tip #6 — Celebrate every success

Whether you've just completed a pilot implementation or experienced a positive outcome at some other stage of the digital evolution, effective change management requires that you celebrate every success. No, this isn't about office parties and free cake (although those are good, too). It's about quantifying and communicating the positive impacts of digitization at every opportunity.

It is especially important to communicate measurable impacts not just to recordkeeping practice but also to the business itself. Consider the example of a customer claims department which successfully consolidated and digitized 15,000+ paper files from across different office locations. Typical records management benefits of such a move might include:

— The ability to search for and locate information from across different organizational units and geographic locations, as opposed to manually browsing the one or two file rooms at your immediate disposal.
— Instant access, as opposed to waiting for a physical file to be transported from some other floor, office building or city.
— Multiple search capabilities. Unlike traditional paper filing, which is organized by one identifier (customer name, account number), an electronic records management system allows you to combine different search parameters and broaden or narrow search scope as needed.

These and other features lead to immediate records management improvements worth celebrating, such as decreased retrieval time and more comprehensive search results.. Other impacts worth celebrating are those affecting the business and its customers. For example, the most powerful change management programs are those based on positive, business-centric messages like this:

> *By reducing file retrieval time, digital filing allowed staff to resolve customer claims* **thirty percent faster***. Management has forecasted this improvement to reduce the company's claim processing cost by x dollars over the next three years. Meanwhile, surveys show a* **forty percent increase** *in customer satisfaction rates compared to the same time last year. Management expects that this will increase both customer retention rates and word-of-mouth marketing,* **directly increasing company revenue***.*

TAB can help.

A digital evolution brings all kinds of change to your organization. TAB offers a wide range of change management support services including education, training, consulting and communications.

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