Innovation Enablement

Achieving Long Term Transformational Success w/ PLM in Life Sciences, Part 7

by Dave Hadfield

In this blog series, I provide insights as to why PLM has true potential to be so transformational for life sciences companies. In the last two parts of this series I explored two of three important business benefits that could be realized through this truly transformational opportunity - risk reduction and cost reduction. The final benefit I am planning to cover at great depth is my favorite of all: innovation enablement.

Innovation Enablement

I recently had the privilege to help facilitate an innovation workshop for one of our clients. Seeing the innovation process first hand is truly exciting. The overpowering excitement it brings, the endless amount of possibilities it provides, and the opportunity to make new and better products are the compelling aspects of innovation that draws us to it. Let's face it, innovation can be fun, but it can also be hard to find the time and data to do it well.

Sometimes people say "Dave, I get that PLM is helpful at organizing information, but can it really help with innovation? Isn't innovation about ideas? Computers can't have ideas, can they?"

The reality is that today's computers aren't coming up with ideas. We are making some in-roads with artificial intelligence as a society - think of IBM's Watson that won jeopardy and has been promised to soon be integrated into our medical diagnosis. Perhaps one day Watson could actually formulate new ideas. But for now, what we can do is help our innovators practice their art better.

How does PLM help with this?

First, to recap, what I am talking about is a lot of smart (automated) and interconnected processes that the innovator has available to them. Not just a few things that track parts and documents, but all the information that explains the product's journey through its invention, design, testing, commercialization and post-market performance.

Once we have this, PLM does several things for the innovator:

- **It gives the innovators time back to innovate.** Instead of spending the time trying to find data (something I hear that a lot of companies do), they have time to focus on what they love: imagining and designing great products and developing the supply chain, assets and processes to realize those products.
- **It gives them data to feed ideas.** Imagine that all customer feedback data (results of marketing studies, complaint information, CAPAs, social feedback, etc.) was always made available to our engineers and marketers. This data would be integrated directly at the part, process and product level in real time.
- **It allows them to leverage past ideas for future work.** Much of innovation is about enhancing what we know. But so often knowledge is lost from one project to the next and it becomes a tribal art-form to carry that knowledge forward. What if when we try things we can more reliably carry those lessons forward to the next team with relevant and related ideas?
- **It provides an innovation framework** for our innovators, such as phase gate to efficiently capture data to help us get organized for gate reviews.

I am quite sure there are many other ways that smart, connected processes enabled with PLM could help drive innovation. These are just a few examples that come to mind. By recycling our knowledge, we can solve new problems at speeds previously unimaginable and inform our stakeholders (at stages and gates) with solid rationale based on trusted data.

More In This Series

The Missed Opportunity and How We Can Overcome It

- PLM, the Great Missed Opportunity in Life Sciences
- PLM Pioneers
- Adoption Obstacles

- It's Time to Get Excited About PLM in Life Sciences

The Business Benefits

- Risk Reduction
- Cost Reduction
- Innovation Enablement

The Basics of Technology and Strategy

- Technology Choices
- The "PLM Program" is Where We Went Wrong
- Getting to a Business Transformation Strategy (with an Emphasis on Product Innovation)

PLM Strategy

- Setting the Stage and First Release
- Beyond the First Release
- Automation Initiative Prioritization and Grouping

Solving Coming PLM Strategy Problems

- Time and Cost
- Upgrades
- To Build or To Buy?
- Vendor First or Strategy First?

Making it Real – People, Governance and Methodology

- Transformational PLM is Hard – It's Time to Rally the Troops
- Amazing PLM Governance
- Ten Traits any PLM Team Must Have
- Three Characteristics of a Successful Implementation Methodology

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What's your view? Add your question or comment

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