

Adoption Obstacles

Achieving Long Term Transformational Success with PLM in Life Sciences: Part 3

by Dave Hadfield

In this blog series, I provide some insights as to why PLM could be so transformational.

I don't believe any company is there yet, or at least that I have seen. If you believe I am wrong in this respect, I would love to hear about it.

So why is there a struggle to achieve PLM transformation in the life sciences industry?

The reasons can be summarized into three categories:

Lack of Awareness... :

- ... of the **Opportunity** - There is a broad lack of understanding of the opportunity at almost all levels, and I would argue that even many practitioners of PLM (consultants) fail to understand the real opportunity
- ... of the **Scope** - Many people think of PLM in terms of conventional out-of-the-box capabilities (Bill of Materials, Change Control, Document Management, etc.)
- ... of the **Effort** - Even when opportunity is more fully understood, the difficulty of implementing is over-simplified, leading to initial excitement followed by disillusion and even program abandonment
- ... of the **Cost** - The opportunity is understood with high ROI estimates, but the complexity, cost, time and efforts appears to be overwhelming, for large companies with big expansive agendas, it's possible that costs run into the 10s or 100s of millions (big PLM is catching up with big ERP in this respect)

Technology Issues:

- Historic lack of PLM technology maturity (breadth and/or depth of capabilities)
- Usability problems (for many reasons)
- Many of the platforms were initially architected decades ago
- Most of today's PLM platform vendors have acquired other PLM companies and the resulting solutions are either integrated from a marketing perspective only (they have the same platform name, but separate technology stacks), or must maintain backward compatibility
- Overly expensive upgrades
- Expense and upgradability issues if you extend or customize the solution
- Performance/scale problems
- Data migration challenges

Execution Challenges:

- Ineffective program leadership and governance
- Ineffective organizational change management
- Ineffective implementation methodology
- Changes in leadership over the lifespan of the program

While I have never seen any one company overcome all these issues on a sustained basis, I have seen each of these issues overcome individually. The first [successful pioneers](#) will overcome all or most of the challenges well enough to cross the chasm. The good news for everyone is that the technology is finally getting better, especially in areas like usability and industry focus. No doubt cloud will become increasingly relevant in PLM and help us overcome the traditional architectural problems we often see.

If the best solutions are in place, companies can achieve truly transformational PLM. A [visionary goal](#) might be to automate 70-80-100 processes, but even getting to 10-15 of the most critical pieces of the product lifecycle would be a tremendous advantage over the majority of

the industry.

In the remainder of this series will focus on what works well to overcome these challenges, and how to manage the program so it's self-funding.

More In This Series

The Missed Opportunity and How We Can Overcome It

- [PLM, the Great Missed Opportunity in Life Sciences](#)
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The Business Benefits

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The Basics of Technology and Strategy

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PLM Strategy

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Making it Real – People, Governance and Methodology

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