Conference Panel Recap: Beyond Product Development - Transforming Business Results with PLM

by Katherine Valentino, Vipin Goyal and Steve Riordan

Steve Riordan, partner with the retail practice at Kalypso, hosted a panel at the Product Innovation Apparel Conference entitled "Beyond Product Development: Transforming Business Results with PLM." The panel consisted of retail industry leaders with a range of functional perspectives and real-world experiences, including:

- Mike Flader, Director, Product Development Systems, IT at Carters OshKosh
- Charlie Holmes, VP, Product Development Analytics & Operations at Kohl's
- Nicole Jones, Director, Product Development Technologies at Lane Bryant
- Vipin Goyal, PLM Transformation leader for Retail, Footwear and Apparel at Kalypso

The panel discussed how transforming product development requires a balance of strategy, process, IT and change leadership. Panelists spoke about PLM as a vehicle to transform business results, discussed their personal experiences with PLM, and examined business drivers beyond PLM. Here are the questions panelists were asked, and a summary of their answers.

What role does PLM play in enabling key strategic initiatives and/or in transforming your end-to-end product development capabilities?

Inefficient development processes and duplicated efforts negatively impact a company's capacity to create products that help meet business goals. PLM has the potential to enable strategic initiatives that address these challenges. PLM transforms teams and workloads, freeing up time to create amazing products. It helps companies operate more efficiently and share information faster. It provides visibility into what a company is doing and enables the collaboration required to develop a better product.

For PLM to enable these key strategic initiatives, it must be used for the right reasons. Vipin Goyal of Kalypso explains, "The right reason in our mind is when PLM is tied very closely with business strategy." PLM must align with business goals. All panelists agreed that for PLM to play a significant role in enabling key strategic initiatives or transform end-to-end product development capabilities, a company needs to have defined goals for what they want to accomplish with the program.

Many PLM transformation program sponsors have a hard time justifying these substantial programs. What is your experience?

Justification for substantial programs depends on the culture of the company.

Nicole Jones of Lane Bryant pointed out that defining goals at the beginning is important. Implementing the solution must allow them to achieve their goals. To justify a substantial program like PLM, program sponsors must be able to point to a specific business goal and show how the PLM program helped achieve that goal.

Without defined goals, companies have a hard time tracking progress or even knowing what they want to track. It's important to consider quantifiable goals as well as soft wins, and present both as part of ongoing justification efforts. Vipin Goyal explained that the support for the business case comes from three aspects: financial drivers, operational drivers, and strategic drivers.

Contrast the ways PLM has exceeded vs. not met your expectations in meeting your transformation objectives

All panelists agreed that PLM met their expectations. The only cases that are unclear are when expectations change over the course of a PLM program. The goal at the beginning may not be the goal at the end, making it a challenge to determine if the program met expectations. Constant change is a reality for retailers, and when the goal changes mid-stream, PLM program leads must adapt to be sure the tool can satisfies the new goal.

Although Kohl's is still in the implementation process, Charlie Holmes believes PLM will exceed expectations. Goyal says the key is implementing the right software the right way. He says, "Pick the right software to meet most of your business requirements with a sharp eye

on the software's three-year roadmap to make sure it stays aligned with your plans. Then, implement it the right way with robust and scalable solution design."

As you consider the advancements in PLM-related technologies coming to market in the near future, such as true mobile applications, 3D digital design and development, intuitive user interfaces and navigation, movement to the cloud, etc., what are you most excited about applying to your company?

When thinking about the future and where PLM is going, many of the panelists were very excited about the increasing mobility of PLM and the idea that they can access and use it anywhere decisions are made.

3D will also change the way PLM works and what it can do, making this an important trend. 3D can create better synergy between design, tech design and the supply chain. Whatever the future holds, it's important for companies to understand what's possible and what's not. Goyal reminded the crowd that PLM is truly a journey; it's the lifecycle of a product, which evolves constantly with market trends and technological advancements – you can't really put boundaries on it.

What is your top piece of advice for companies thinking about using the transformative capabilities of PLM to drive a major program or initiative?

Nicole Jones: "Having the right people to support [PLM] is key. You need a champion as well as executive support to push and encourage your business."

Mike Flader: "Get the right people involved, so they can help guide you through the process of implementation… [PLM] is something that you have to maintain and go in with eyes wide open."

Charlie Holmes: "[PLM] affects the whole company. A lot of different groups and different people will be moving in the same direction, so you need open communication."

Vipin Goyal: "PLM is not a backend transaction system, it's about the people. Remember that PLM is not ERP."

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What's your view? Add your question or comment

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