Viewpoints on Innovation

To Succeed in a Digital World, Transform Traditional Organizational Change Management

by Pamela Soin and Chelsea Barnes

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Welcome to 2020 – and the race to a digital future!

Just a few years ago, innovations were created by reacting and responding. We attempted to address the right customer needs with limited, out-of-date data. We innovated for customers rather than with them. Entire quality and service teams were implemented to react and respond to customer problems.

In today's new reality, digital transformation is accelerating in support of remote working and building a more resilient future.

And looking forward, digital transformation is no longer optional.

To win today and in the future, companies must:

- Build stronger capabilities to discover, create, make and sell higher-value products faster
- Apply predictive analytics to proactively meet customer wants and needs
- Collaborate and co-create with customers, enabling them to shape products in real-time

This requires a comprehensive approach that leverages digital technology, overhauls processes and facilitates creating new business models with customers. Yikes.

Your biggest challenge today? Managing through all this rapid change.

The OCM Flip: From Hinderance to Catalyst

Even if you proactively incorporate an organizational change management (OCM) team into your initiative, success is not guaranteed. Traditional methodologies are short-sighted and cookie cutter.

Most companies view OCM as a checklist of activities:

- "Did we train?" "Check!"
- "Did we have a mass email from a top executive?" "Check!"

These deliverable types ignore what is needed to sustain new ways of working. And with extremely high stakes, you do not have time for your digital transformation to fail.

It's time to flip traditional OCM to lead your digital charge, not hinder it.

So, what's the game plan?

Stop Treating OCM as a Stand-Alone Function (and Team)

Your OCM team should shape and drive digital transformation, bring people along for the change journey, and set the organization up for measurable success. Implementing digital capabilities requires a tremendous amount of disruptive change that spans organizational structures, roles and responsibilities, processes, technologies, and data. Flipping OCM to drive this change requires a similar reimagination of your current OCM team's engagement, deliverables, skillsets and positioning within the organization.

Let's say your company wants to build a predictive analytics capability. This transformational effort will impact many functions. New hardware components and software platforms are required to gather information and detect patterns. New data science teams must be in place to interpret patterns into insights with tangible actions. New operating processes must be implemented to sustain the new way of working.

Assuming you are like other companies, these work streams are managed under a large-scale transformative program coordinated by your Program Management Office (PMO). You need to avoid making one very common mistake - adding OCM as an independent, lightly resourced workstream within the program.

In the traditional model, OCM workstreams are often an afterthought – added as a small, lightly resourced team within the broader program. Their purview is limited to learning development and communications planning for select portions of the program. They are not involved at the core of defining, designing, or rolling out the entire solution. Used inconsistently, their contributions are purely transactional, checklist based, and low impact.

For example, your OCM team might request messaging bullet points from the program's workstreams and then put those exact messages into a pretty template to drive awareness across the company.

Similarly, training content is limited to the most basic concepts since your OCM team operates with minimal understanding of the solution and little interaction with solution design teams or subject matter experts.

In these transactional examples, deliverables are created but not connected to the heart of the solution or the business case driving the program. And to your end user, everything seems disjointed.

Your digital transformation programs are massive monetary investments, and by their very definition will dramatically change people, processes, tools and information. Leverage your OCM team in a proportionately dramatic way.

Let the OCM Team Lead the Transformation While the PMO Delivers

Your OCM team should be intertwined in all aspects of delivery, and this should start with defining the transformation plan up front. Involve the OCM team in executive alignment, awareness and business case definition sessions. This makes the reasons and rewards for change crystal clear and readily available in the OCM team's toolbox.

These valuable messages can then open every town hall, design session, and training event; they can help in stakeholder alignment discussions; and they can serve as the baseline for tracking a defined business value case. This gives the appearance (and rightfully so) of a tightly knit, rewarding and straightforward initiative.

Next, the OCM team should be deeply engaged in design sessions and testing/confirmation events. By attending every critical milestone and collecting feedback, the OCM team can:

- Guide leadership to anticipate both moments of delight and pockets of resistance
- Transform those insights into communication campaigns and key concept training
- Help program leadership manage scope creep, risks, and other project roadblocks in a way that connects with users instead of just dismissing their concerns

By participating in design sessions, OCM practitioners can also offer insights into the design of the solution. Understanding human behavior is the foundation of what they do. They may find opportunities to enhance the solution in ways that engage the user, simplify their lives, and make them actually want to adopt the solution.

Take the example of an industrial manufacturing company that wants their operations team to use connected tablets to identify potential issues and address them in the field. Knowing that adoption will be a challenge, the OCM team taps into user needs and recommends a dashboard to gamify the software application and track the team's metrics, motivating them to beat their personal best. The management team gets more efficient operations, and the operations team gets an engaging way to take ownership of their performance.

Let OCM Teams Drive to Measurable Success

Even with these changes in place and a successful initiative conclusion, it's premature to declare success. Your new capability still has a wet foundation, and it's easy for things to collapse. Sustained success requires thinking through transition planning, metrics, and business prep.

Transition planning should start at the onset of a program when the OCM team works with executive stakeholders and program leadership to define success metrics, establish a current-state baseline, and define the plan for tracking and communicating results once the solution is live. With everything defined up front, OCM teams can communicate improvements as they happen. Proving and communicating value keeps optimism high and paves the way for future investments.

Likewise, actively tracking metrics can alert the OCM team when targets might not be met. Quick root cause investigation and corrective action get things back on track. And that visibility demonstrates transparency and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Sustainable change also requires that your business is adequately prepared. Your OCM team must proactively

work to prepare a group of change agents within your business – equipping them with the budgeting, planning and execution tools needed to carry the initiative forward.

For example, a global consumer products company plans to implement a product analytics capability to decrease product quality and safety incidents. However, the foundational product data is inconsistently managed and data quality varies widely. To help multiple regions plan for roll out and data conversion, the OCM team can create a suite of tools for regional leads to leverage.

This might include:

- Impact assessment templates for each business unit or region
- A standardized model to calculate the time, resources, and budget necessary for each regional implementation
- Communication packages to spread awareness across the region
- Facilitation guides to gain alignment from key stakeholders

This type of effort incites a grass roots feel that generates the kind of engagement and investment that will sustain the change.

The Bottom Line

Proper change management is perhaps the most important – yet overlooked – aspect of any digital transformation initiative. Empower OCM teams to shape and drive digital transformation, bring people into the change, and set the organization up for measurable success. Ensure a win by deploying OCM teams with the same focus and dedication you put behind the technology implementation itself.

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About the Authors

[Pamela Soin](#)

Pamela is Global Director, Consulting at Kalypso. She is a deliberate, scrappy, formidable and caring leader with 15 years of consulting experience.
[More Viewpoints by Pamela Soin](#)

[Chelsea Barnes](#)

Chelsea is a manager at Kalypso, leading the firm's OCM practice. She focuses on the people side of technology to help clients across industries drive large-scale digital transformation.
[More Viewpoints by Chelsea Barnes](#)

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