



Accelerate technology
transformation with an
open source change
management strategy

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Introduction

If there's one thing we know in business, it's that change is a constant.

The global pandemic has accelerated the pace of transformation for many companies, as they rush to prioritize their digital transformation strategies and improve remote work protocols and infrastructure. For instance, Synergy Research Group found that corporations spent a record \$29 billion on cloud infrastructure in the first quarter of 2020—a 37% increase over the same period in the previous year.¹

Whenever a significant change takes place within your organization, whether it's related to technology, culture, a leadership transition, or other factors, it's important to carefully plot the pace of the change and build in guidance as to how it will be adopted across the enterprise. Without widespread buy-in, any change can lead to confusion or disengagement among your team—so it's important to get the conversation going organization-wide to get employees excited about the process, even in the early stages of your initiative.

The CEB Change Readiness Survey found that most organizations (73%) are anticipating more change initiatives in the coming years than they've encountered in the past. And 62% of survey respondents say that their change management plans are largely guided by leadership from the top down.

While it might seem more efficient to let leadership take charge of your plan, managing your change strategies this way can be a disservice to your company, robbing you of the creativity and innovation that your employees could add to the mix. This ebook will showcase how and why to shift away from a top-down plan and shift to an open source change management strategy.

¹<https://www.srgresearch.com/articles/covid-19-fails-dent-aggressive-growth-cloud-spending-half-q1-market-belongs-amazon-microsoft>

²<https://www.cebglobal.com/content/dam/cebglobal/us/EN/best-practices-decision-support/human-resources/pdfs/making-change-management-work-whitepaper1.pdf>

What is change management?

First of all, what is change management and why is it necessary?

With any change, whether a major transformation or just a simple adjustment to an existing process, it's important to build a plan that helps educate employees on the reasons behind the change and trains them on how to adopt it into their daily routines. A change management strategy consists of the processes and frameworks for planning widespread enterprise adoption of new corporate initiatives. "Organizational change management ensures that the new processes resulting from a project are actually adopted by the people who are affected," says Sheila Cox of Performance Horizons.³

While your organization may have developed a comprehensive plan for your change initiative, the plan itself delivers no value to your company—the value is realized when the plan is adopted company-wide, at the individual level. But in order to get your employees to actually engage with and embrace the change, you need to align the initiative with a dedicated strategy to help your team understand the whys and hows behind it, incentivizing employees for embracing it and evangelizing it to their counterparts.

A good change management strategy will encompass identifying stakeholders to lead the initiative, recruiting key team members to train their fellow employees, and tracking metrics associated with usage and progress as the initiative is spread throughout the organization. As you communicate the change initiative to your team, it will be important to be specific about what will be different, what will remain the same, and what specific outcomes you'd like to see from the change initiative. Implement a detailed plan for scoping out the change initiative in phases, trialing it with a small group and optimizing your process before promoting widespread adoption.



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Sheila Cox
Performance Horizons

When is change management needed?

Change management comes into play during a wide range of transitional times within an organization. Some of the key times when it might make sense to implement a change management strategy include:



Culture change

As organizations grow larger, it becomes important to define your company culture, both for the sake of recruiting like-minded new hires and keeping your existing employees engaged. You can prioritize this by showcasing a set of core values, as Atlassian does (e.g., “be the change you seek,”), and then illustrating ways that employees can bring these values into practice by spotlighting examples. However, it will take buy-in at every level of the organization to incentivize getting employees to actually embrace and recognize the desired behaviors.



Transformation

When your company is undergoing a transformation, there may be a lot of shifting in roles, responsibilities, and overall business processes. In this case, it will be important to build a change management strategy to help employees understand what the transition process will be like and how their day-to-day roles and responsibilities will be different at the end of it.



Market expansion

When your company is expanding into a new market, by launching new product lines or segmenting a new type of customer or geographical region, your overall corporate strategy may change as well. You’ll want to build a change management plan that helps to outline how each department will be tasked with aiding the market expansion, and provides insight on what new hires will be required to aid the transformation.



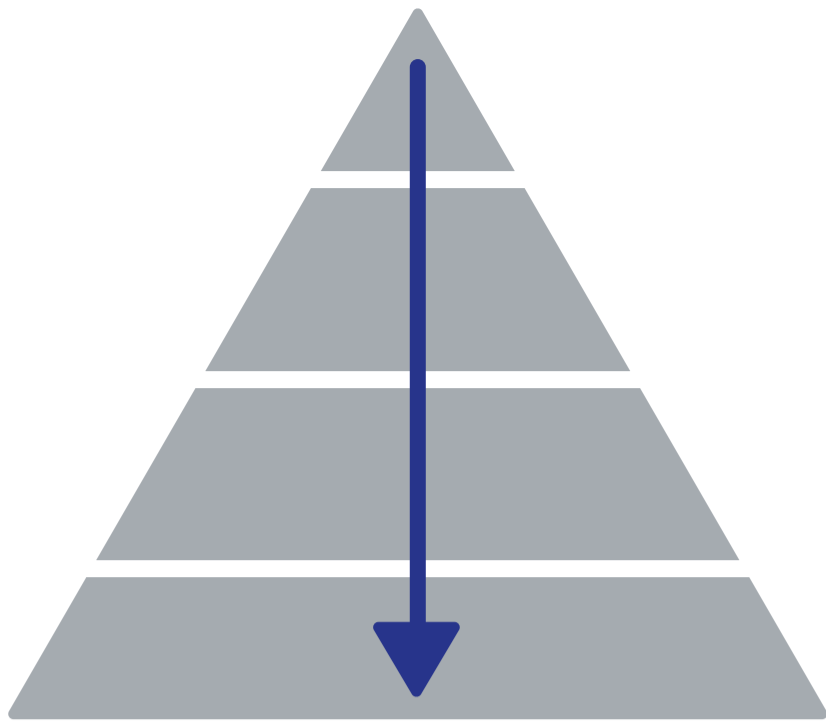
Leadership transition

New leadership can often mean new management styles and new senior hires—so it’s important to prep the entire organization for the transition and make sure that they’re ready to adopt the new leader’s goals and methodologies. A change management plan can help spell out the stages involved in making that transformation.



Merger or acquisition

In a merger or acquisition, your company may need to deal with the challenges of combining with an entirely separate brand, culture, and team. This process can involve a lot of hurdles, so it’s important to put steps in place in advance of the merger to help both teams understand how they’ll combine resources, change their processes and technologies, and build a unified front.



The Old Way: Traditional top-down change

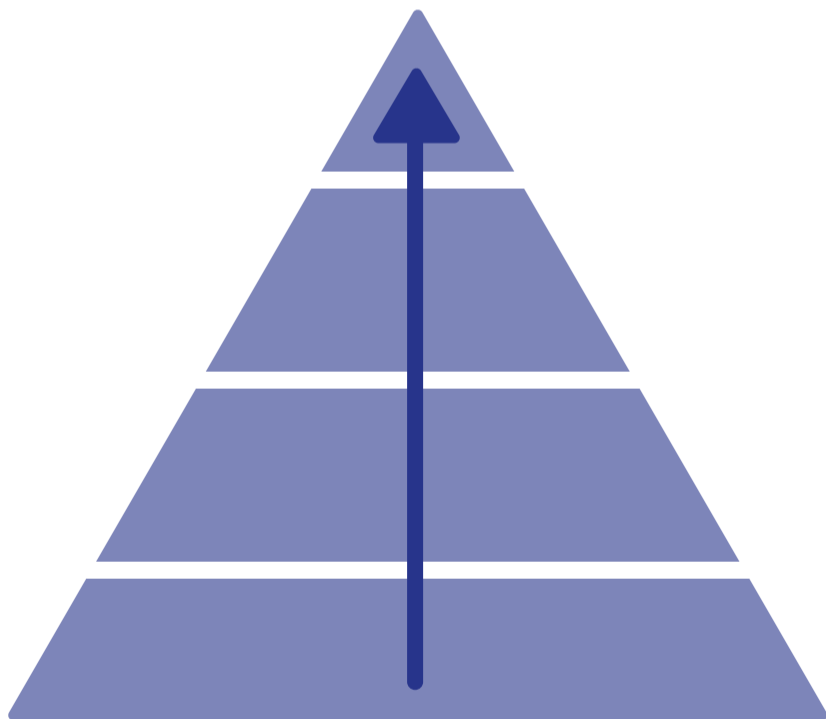
So how does change management take place? Traditionally, most companies have used a top-down approach, driven by corporate leadership.

Under this type of model, company leadership are the ones who determine what changes need to be made, communicate with the rest of the company about the changes, and create the implementation plans. In this model, the majority of employees have minimal input into the change or how it will be implemented. Leaders have exclusive access to information, which is then funnelled down through management to frontline employees.

This method made sense years ago, when the pace of change moved more slowly and organizations were less complex, with fewer locations and divisions. But in today's fast-paced environment, employees expect a flatter structure and want to have more access to information, so that they can provide input and be involved in shaping plans from the start.

There's clearly a disconnect between leadership and employees when it comes to change management plans: 74% say that they include employees in setting their strategy, but only 42% of employees say that they're included.

And too many changes without a strong change management strategy can take a heavy toll on the workforce: By the fifth change, there'll be a negative employee engagement impact of 18%.



The New Way: Open source change management

Innovation is central to any business growth plan—but in order to make sure ongoing changes don't have a detrimental impact on your employee's engagement and commitment levels, it's important to involve them in the process at every stage, from initial discussions through to implementation.

CEB's Workforce Change Survey found that an open source change management strategy can increase the odds of a successful change by as much as 24%. Employees who are invested in the process are far more motivated and committed: Employee engagement goes up by 38% and intent to stay increases by 46%. Involving employees in the process also speeds up implementation time by as much as one-third.

Building an open source change management strategy means talking about a plan with your employees, rather than simply explaining it to them. They should be able to openly provide feedback at early stages, and discuss positives and negatives around various scenarios openly to help shape the strategy. Rather than delivering pre-packaged messaging to your team, give

them an opportunity to participate in an honest dialogue. As you roll out the changes incrementally, build a feedback loop so that employees can share the impact on them and recommend opportunities for optimization.

Obviously, a business isn't a democracy, and no one expects it to be run as such. It would take far too long to make any decision if everyone had the opportunity to state their case. However, by striking the right balance, in which employees are presented with several potential options and have the chance to provide feedback, employees can feel like a valued part of the process. This will go a long way towards getting them to evangelize for the change, helping to promote it throughout the organization.



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How to build an effective open source change management strategy

In order to make sure your open source change management strategy is effective, it's important to set up the right processes for managing it at every stage, from initial conversations all the way through to implementation. Here are a few recommendations:



Build a cross-disciplinary committee

It may make sense to create a cross-disciplinary committee of employees who will be more deeply involved in the change management plan, who'll route feedback to and from their own divisions as they serve as spokespeople for their own teams. This will help to ensure that everyone has a voice in the process, while making it clear which team members are guiding the initiative. This can help expedite the pace of planning, while ensuring that all divisions' concerns are given a voice as your company builds the initiative.

Make sure that your committee plans an agenda for each meeting, so that every team has a sense of what input they should provide to help guide the discussion. This group can take detailed notes on the changes discussed at each meeting, and regroup with their own teams for follow-up conversations.



Use digital collaboration

In addition to live meetings, digital interpersonal collaboration tools (both synchronous and asynchronous) can provide an opportunity for all employees to be involved in the feedback process, regardless of their schedules or seniority levels. Consider using an async interpersonal collaboration platform, like Stack Overflow for Teams, in which your committee can circulate questions and ideas, and solicit feedback from employees throughout the company. Relevant subject-matter experts and teams can be tagged for requests on follow-up responses or actions. Feedback requests can help assess how well particular initiatives are being adopted or received throughout the organization, with the ability to qualitatively evaluate differences based on department or job role. All of this feedback can be curated by committee members to bring to follow-up planning meetings.



Test your main talking points at each stage

As you embark on your change management initiative, make sure that your talking points (e.g., your messaging) is resonating with relevant teams. Be sure to ask for feedback repeatedly on what makes sense and what still needs further clarification.



Build an incremental change plan

Rolling out a major change company-wide can be a dangerous proposition. Instead, look for opportunities to test out your change in smaller stages, by starting out with a pilot team, collecting feedback and optimizing for success, and then rolling out to additional teams or the entire department before promoting the initiative to the entire company.



Use a project management system to map out each stage of the plan in detail

Designate a project manager and come up with a detailed plan for determining what happens at each stage in the process, and who's responsible for each action item. Build in dependencies so that each team knows what they're responsible for and how high a priority it is.



Capture and share the institutional memories that you build

Make sure that all project-related resources, including discovery findings, technical documents, notes, announcements, and key threads from chat, are available for all employees in a centralized knowledge sharing platform that can be tagged and searched easily. All documents should include detailed versioning as relevant. That will help ensure that all employees have the relevant context to help them understand the change initiative at its current point in time, and how it's evolved from earlier versions.



Set benchmarks for expected outcomes, and track against those

As you begin to implement your change, create a scorecard to measure how well the adoption is going. For instance, if you're introducing a new interpersonal collaboration tool, consider questions such as: what percentage of employees are using the tool, how frequently are they using it, and how long did it take them to start using it?

These metrics may look different across different departments or teams, so make sure that you take a good look at teams that are beating expectations to establish best practices based on their stories, and consider how you can optimize the process for teams that are seeing lower metrics. As with everything else, communication is key: Make sure each team has the opportunity to share feedback on the positives and negatives at every stage of the process.

Conclusion

By making the move from a leadership-driven to an open source change management strategy, you'll be able to build a more engaged and committed workforce. Making the effort to embrace a diversity of voices and experiences when plotting an initiative shows that you genuinely care about your workforce, and builds trust in your ability to effectively prioritize based on your employees' key concerns.

Taking an open, collaborative approach towards managing change can translate into faster implementation times, higher engagement, and lower turnover. Often, employees look at major changes within an organization as things to dread—but as the pace of digital transformation increases, it's important to change that outlook and ensure that they'll willingly embrace the changes. By ensuring that all change initiatives are planned and discussed openly and intentionally, with opportunities for all perspectives to be heard, you'll be able to turn change from something to be feared into something to embrace.

Stack Overflow for Teams' interpersonal collaboration features and transparent knowledge sharing platform can support your open source change management program at all stages, from initial rollout through ongoing management. It's an organic, easy, and transparent way for employees to collectively participate in change management and for the whole company to collaborate and share knowledge as the company is transforming.

Stack Overflow for Teams:

- Facilitates asynchronous, interpersonal collaboration to minimize distractions while fostering engagement and inclusion
- Proactively disseminates targeted, relevant knowledge to promote and collect feedback on the change management program
- Provides built-in content health and value indicators to ensure freshness and quality of change management
- Includes gamification aspects to encourage continuous enrichment of knowledge and deeper participation with the change management program
- Fosters transparent knowledge sharing to improve technical skills, problem-solving, and adoption of change across the organization

Only Stack Overflow for Teams is able to bring all these together in a single web-based platform to support change management within an organization.



To learn more visit
stackoverflow.com/teams