Building Employee Trust in the Digital Transformation Process

stack overflow
FOR TEAMS

Introduction

In this ebook, we'll show you how to build employee trust in advance of your digital transformation so you can increase adoption and speed up implementation time, ensuring that your effort will be a success.

You'll see how Stack Overflow for Teams' interpersonal collaboration features and transparent knowledge sharing platform can support building trust through all the stages. It's an organic, easy, and transparent way to communicate with employees and for the whole company to work together towards your transformation.

Stack Overflow for Teams is an ideal solution to build employee trust in the digital transformation process.

It brings the best features of the well-known Stack Overflow developer & technologist platform with features tailored the enterprise

- Knowledge **captured** in bite-size elements as well as long form content
- Knowledge **shared and discovered** through simple and intuitive content organization structure, proactive alerts, and transparent information for all employees
- **Content health** is maintained by many instead of one and system is gamified to encourage enrichment
- **Effortless async collaboration** happens between peers and across teams
- **Distraction reducing** integrations with ChatOps, Jira, and GitHub integrations
- Inclusive platform where **everyone can contribute and benefit** from day 1
- Knowledge is reused — providing instant scale, value & ROI

Companies need this because **shared knowledge and context** is the only scalable way to improve technical skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication across entire teams and companies.

Only Stack Overflow for Teams is able to bring all these together in a single platform to support digital transformation within an organization.

Digital transformation initiatives on the rise

The average organization goes through five major business transformations in a three-year period—and requirements for adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of change for many businesses, speeding up initiatives by as much as three years.

Enterprises have led the way in digital transformation, and the results speak for themselves: Nike, for instance, has shifted its strategy to focus on selling through digital channels and gaining widespread usage for its fitness-focused mobile apps, and as a result, has seen digital sales grow by 82% in Q1 of 2020.

However, employees often struggle to adapt to the pace of change, and may resist digital transformation initiatives. Nearly one in every four employees distrust management, according to the 20202 Edelman Trust Barometer[1]. And while 79% of employees say that businesses have a duty to retrain employees affected by automation or innovation, only 30% trust that the business leaders will actually come through.

If employees are fearful of digital transformation initiatives, they're bound to fail. But by taking the right steps to build employee trust in advance, you can increase adoption and speed up implementation time, ensuring that your effort will be a success.

Follow these steps:

Build a strategy for managing change effectively

According to the CEB Change Readiness Survey[2], most organizations (73%) are planning more change initiatives than they've previously encountered. Of those, 62% say that their change management plans are largely guided by leadership from the top down, with little visibility into the digital transformation process until it's set in action.

That's not an ideal way to guide a digital transformation effort. Instead, it's important to solicit employee buy-in throughout the organization even as you work out the initial stages of your digital transformation effort, in what's known as an "open source" change management strategy.

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%, and can increase implementation time by as much as one-third.

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[1] https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-01/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_LIVE.pdf

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

In order to put an open-source change management plan into practice:

- Build a steering committee that includes employees from numerous departments
- Ask those employees to advocate for their own teams and to freely share information and feedback back and forth
- Use Stack Overflow for Teams as a central hub for information sharing. The Q&A forum can be used throughout the organization to share work-in-progress updates, and ask and answer questions about the digital transformation plan and its objectives for each department. Your employees will have the opportunity to offer diverse perspectives that can help to inform the plan as it moves forward, with the most relevant and insightful comments and suggestions getting voted up for greater visibility and stronger consideration in the collaboration process
- Once you're ready to implement your digital transformation plan, move in small phases, gradually implementing your changes throughout the organization and gathering feedback along the way to help you optimize your plan. Using the Stack Overflow for Teams platform will be useful in this process too, giving you a space to ask questions about how they're navigating the change and what improvements could be made as it's rolled out across the organization

By moving away from a siloed, top-down change management strategy to an open-source model, you'll be able to foster enthusiasm for your transformation from employees in every part of your organization.

Focus on educating and re-skilling your workforce

One of employees' major worries about digital transformation in the workplace is the threat of being made redundant because of automated technology. And that's a valid concern—but by putting in place a robust program for training employees on digital skills and leveling up their education at work, you'll be able to retrain employees for the jobs that you need to fill as their old roles change or become obsolete.

A 2017 report from the European Commission found that 44% of Europeans between 16 and 74 lack basic digital skills, and that 90% of jobs in the future will require these digital skills[3]. For employees at your organization who may be impacted by the transformation, transitioning into more digital-focused roles will be crucial to their ongoing success. And employees are willing to put effort into future-proofing their careers: The average employee is willing to spend up to two days a month to update their digital skills.[4]

It's also beneficial for employers to focus on retraining employees, rather than replacing them. It's far more cost-effective to invest in a dedicated training program to help your current employees adapt to your new technology needs, rather than letting those employees go and recruiting for skilled employees in a competitive market. Amazon, for example, is currently investing $700 million in a workforce education program to retrain a third of its employees to take on more high-tech tasks.[5]

It's up to employers to invest in providing the right learning resources, however. Only half of employees say that they're satisfied with their employer's available resources for learning new technology.[6]

In order to re-skill your workforce as you complete your digital transformation initiatives:

- **Focus on microlearning**
  Use an LMS platform where you can continually track employee progress in watching videos, reading documents, and participating in quizzes to test knowledge retention. Set goals for a minimum amount of learning that should take place each month, and use a leaderboard to show which employees are the most engaged in the learning platform, offering incentives for those who show the most dedication.

- **Encourage your subject-matter experts to educate their peers**
  Much of your institutional knowledge exists only in the minds of your subject-matter experts—so it's important to find opportunities to circulate that knowledge throughout the organization. Encourage employees to ask questions about skills and technologies they're not familiar with in your knowledge-sharing platform, tagging relevant experts and teams for a response. Your experts will be able to share their knowledge broadly, in a searchable archive that's accessible to the entire organization.

Fostering an open, collaborative workplace environment that incentivizes knowledge-sharing will make it easy for employees to educate and train one another, and problem-solve together as they adapt to your digital transformation initiative.

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[3] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/content/nearly-half-europeans-dont-have-basic-digital-skills

[4] https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/images/PwC_CIS-Tech-at-Work.pdf

[5] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/11/technology/amazon-workers-retraining-automation.html

[6] https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/images/PwC_CIS-Tech-at-Work.pdf

Create a company culture that fosters trust

Building trust in a digital transformation initiative can't happen until you've built a foundational level of trust in your leadership and company culture. Author, researcher, and Claremont Graduate University professor Paul J. Zak lays out a series of key elements for building trust in his 2017 article for Harvard Business Review:

- **Recognize excellence**
  Provide opportunities for public, positive recognition, especially from peers. Stack Overflow for Teams' content voting system is a good example of this; contributors who offer high-value comments will gain votes and be recognized in the company's leaderboard system.

- **Induce "challenge stress"**
  Focus on providing your teams with clear goals that are difficult, but achievable. When team members are unified with a common objective, they'll focus on relationship-building in support of those goals.

- **Give discretion in how to perform work**
  Not all employees perform best under the same conditions, so it's important to provide leniency to enable them to work under the conditions that best suit them. For some, this may mean talking frequently in person or over videoconferencing; others may prefer to go over questions and respond to inquiries in an asynchronous collaboration tool like Stack Overflow for Teams. Make sure they have access to a range of collaboration options and are encouraged to find the rhythm that works best for them.

- **Let employees choose what projects to join**
  Some of the companies with the highest trust have an open approach to joining projects: They enable employees to self-organize into work groups based on the types of projects that most appeal to them. If you choose this model, new employees will be able to "preview" what it's like to work in a certain group by digging into the existing Q&As and articles about the group on Stack Overflow for Teams.

- **Be transparent in information sharing**
  Employees trust companies where information is shared openly, including transparent salaries, financial forecasts, and road maps for future plans. Hold regular "all-hands" meetings and use your knowledge sharing platform to disseminate information throughout the company and provide answers to questions employees might have.

- **Build social ties at work**
  This may be more difficult now with largely distributed teams than in the pre-pandemic days, but it's important to help your team members find common ground. Organizing ice-breaker activities and social hours will help your employees build strong relationships with each other and their managers.

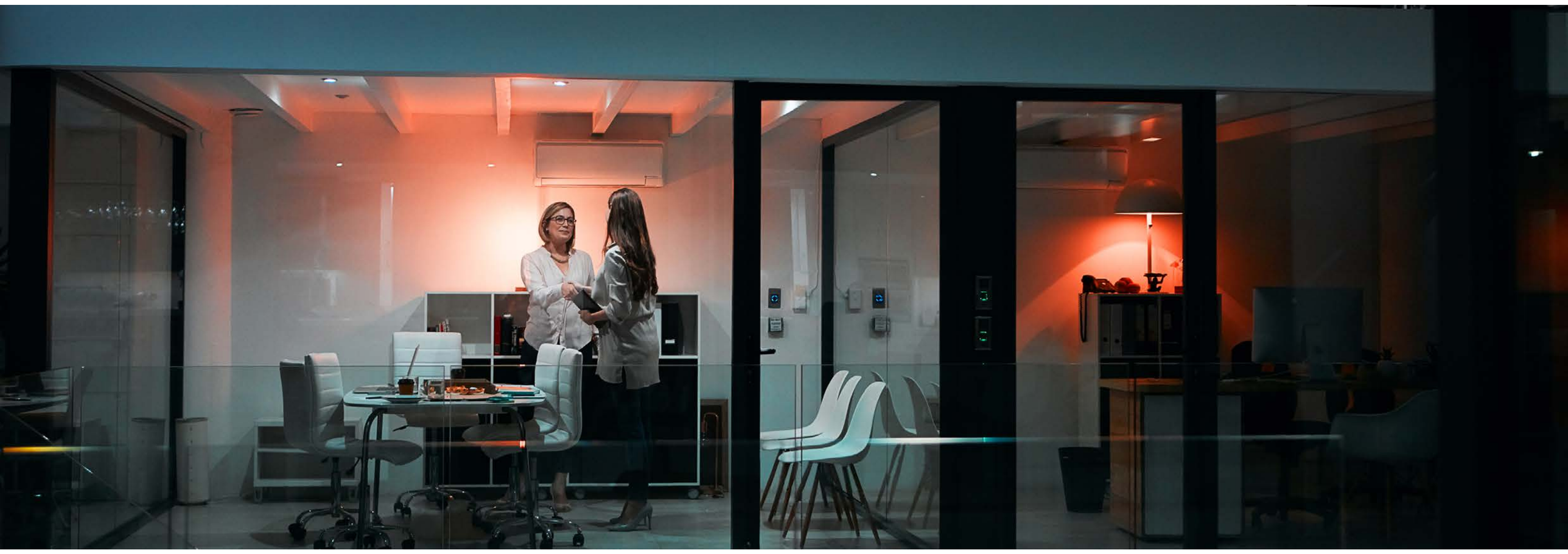
- **Facilitate personal growth as well as professional**
  Beyond focusing solely on project objectives, good managers will help their team members feel comfortable in an organization by focusing on personal goals as well. For instance, have conversations focused on whether they're achieving the level of career-family balance they hope to, or whether they're learning the skills that will help them transition to their dream role within the company.

- **Show vulnerability**
  Trusted organizations are ones in which leaders at all levels aren't afraid to be open and ask for help and guidance. Encourage senior leadership to use Stack Overflow for Teams to share their own questions to solicit feedback through the organization, and to respond openly and proactively to criticism.

By identifying which study participants' companies were "high trust" organizations, Zak found these measurable benefits in companies with high trust:

- 74% lower stress in employees
- 106% more energy
- 50% higher productivity
- 76% more engagement
- 29% more satisfaction with their lives
- 40% less burnout

Creating a high-trust environment will make it much easier to get employees on board for a digital transformation. Instead of resisting change, they'll be motivated to actively evangelize for it and help educate their peers. By fostering an open, transparent workplace where employees are invested in one another's success and share knowledge to help one another, you'll be able to pave a smooth path for your digital transformation plans.



Conclusion

Change can be hard for employees if it’s forced upon them without warning. But, by setting up the framework to build an open, engaged workplace where employees have a clear sense of the company’s future plans and how any digital transformation initiatives may impact them directly, you’ll be able to build a team that’s committed to the process and engaged with its outcome.

As you begin to plan your digital transformation, and all the way through to implementation, you can use Stack Overflow for Teams as a centralized communication hub where leadership can share plans and respond to questions, and team members from any department can share their insights or questions.

By encouraging all employees to participate by asking questions and sharing their feedback, you’ll be able to gain diverse perspectives on how to successfully implement your digital transformation initiative, ensuring a smooth rollout and high adoption rate.

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