

6 Tips to Drive User Adoption of an Enterprise Software

Implementing new enterprise software (and ensuring appropriate user adoption, in order to realize the value) is more about people factors and effective change communication than about technology. In fact, difficulties with technology represent just 10% of the enterprise user adoption challenge.

Here are some tips for effective employee communication to increase user adoption of new enterprise software:

Tip 1: Understand your audience

Organizational culture is a big factor for user adoption - This is particularly the case for enterprise collaboration software. If employees don't feel like they can communicate openly or have adopted a silo mentality, they are less likely to use enterprise collaboration tools. It may be important to address the 'perceived risk' or focus on culture change as a part of a user adoption communication program.

Segment your audience - Identify WIIFM ("What's in it for me?") for each target employee group. Then adapt internal communications based on the needs of each target group. Customize and target messages separately, so employees are not flooded with irrelevant information.

Understand and address structural or process barriers - Many employees are judged by the results they deliver. If the new enterprise software slows down internal processes or creates barriers to their work, they will resent it. Understand exactly how the new software will impact specific groups of employees and plan strategies accordingly.

Speak their language - IT people do not tend to think like most employees. Avoid complex language or concepts that might intimidate end users. Keep messages simple and relevant to specific needs (regardless of the complexity of the solution).

Identify key influencers - Understand the thought leaders within the enterprise, both official and unofficial. Target specific communications to those with the greatest influence in order to get them on board early.

Tip 2: Identify your communications channels

Consider all channels - not just the obvious ones like the Intranet and mass email. For example:

- **Executive sponsors** - be sure to align leaders around a shared vision for the new enterprise software
- **Immediate supervisors** - have line managers explain to their teams how the new systems will benefit them and what processes will be affected
- **IT teams** – key members of the project team will need to become communication experts and evangelize on behalf of the new software / systems
- **Visual communication** - use visual communication tools such as info graphics and interactive screensaver messages to capture employee attention, spark their interest, and convey key concepts
- **Low-tech communications channels** - brown bag meetings and white board sessions are effective ways to reinforce high-tech communication channels
- **Desktop messaging** - for timely reminders of key deadlines. Recurrence options, based on individual readership can ensure for high message cut-through
- **Internal newsletters** – profile the deployment status and highlight good news stories. This works particularly well for pilots and staggered rollouts where stories can generate excitement and interest in the new enterprise software



Internal Newsletter



User adoption communication tools – Interactive Screensaver Messaging, Desktop Alerts and Tickers, Internal Newsletter

Tip 3: Plan and schedule communications to coincide with key stages of an enterprise software rollout

Plan your communication and start early in the project. Be sure to include messages that cover:

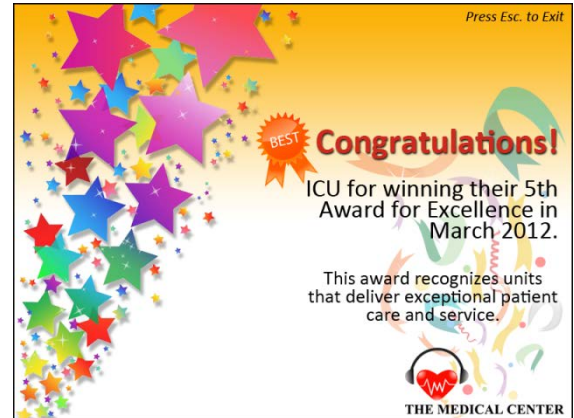
- The goals and value of the enterprise software
- The functionality to be provided by the new software
- The relationship to existing business processes and systems
- Time frames for deployment
- Available support channels
- Governance (if appropriate)

Help employees overcome any perceived risk of new systems.

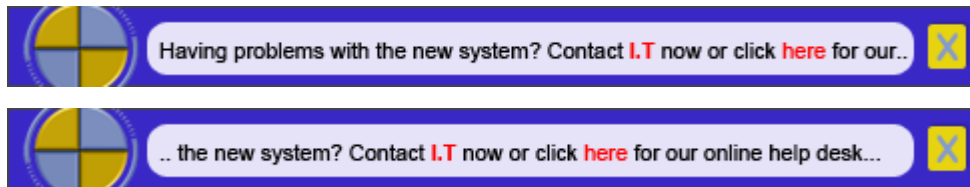
For example, explain that staff will NOT break things with experimentation. Acknowledge that mistakes are expected and are all part of the learning process.

Follow-through is important - Continue to communicate beyond the initial rollout of the new enterprise software. Ongoing communication helps to reinforce new behaviors and identify and overcome user adoption issues.

Corporate Screensaver



Desktop Scrolling Newsfeeds



Tip 4: Build the case for the new enterprise software

Start with basic concepts - Challenge the status quo, and highlight any disadvantages. Showcase how the new system could be applied by each target group. Help staff visualize the software working for them. Ask scenario questions. For example, "The new XYZ technology will help me do A, B, C, or D or all of the above?" Offer prizes to encourage staff to take part. Include humorous or trick questions and answers that make the staff quiz fun.

Communicate benefits - Make sure benefits are clear and cannot be argued, and frame them in the terms of the user. For example, "You can work from home more easily."

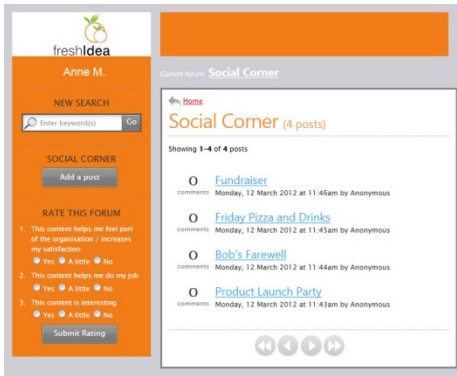
Set realistic expectations - Manage user expectations, and be open about the fact enterprise software cannot solve all problems. Users will not be disappointed if they understand the actual functionality provided by the software. Communicate appropriate disadvantages too. This helps make messages credible.

Inject fun and involve staff - Ask employees to name new systems and processes or suggest improvements. Offer prizes for the best ideas, and recognize those ideas using screensaver messages and articles in the internal newsletter

Screensaver Messaging



Online Helpdesk - Internal Social Media



Tip 5: Communicate widely regarding the support channels available

Communicate widely about available support channels - Support channels might include: online helpdesks, onsite assistance, and quick-reference cards, help desks, e-learning, intranet resources etc.

Be sure to communicate widely about the support channels available to employees and how they can be used.

Maximize attendance at training sessions - Use an RSVP invite tool that offers multiple options for available times and venues. A desktop alert RSVP will ensure that employees register for training and multiple options will help them fit training sessions around other commitments.

Reinforce training – Use desktop quizzes, e-learning and visual communications such as infographics and screensaver messages.

Tip 6: Commit to ongoing two-way communications

Identify and remove impediments to user adoption - Use two-way communications to identify potential barriers and resistance.

Understand and track perceptions of the new solution - Monitor discussion in online forums and the questions asked through online helpdesks, which may indicate issues that need to be resolved. A desktop survey tool with built in recurrence for unanswered surveys can be an effective way to assess what's working, measure attitudes, identify gaps in functionality or knowledge and to help you get to the bottom of specific issues.

Beware the grapevine – A grapevine tends to spring up when there is no effective ongoing communication and can stall user adoption of enterprise software. All employees should have access to accurate and timely information. Address complaints as soon as they are made, understand the root cause and address it (if it's plain and simple whining – challenge it).

Show how employee feedback is being used. For example, include a section in the internal newsletter or on the intranet called "Great feedback we're working with".

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