What's in 'IT' for me?

People change in IT Transformation

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Introduction - what's in 'IT' for me?

At Coeus we understand that embedding any type of transformational IT change is not instantaneous, but takes time to evolve as a programme or project moves from initiation through to implementation and benefits realisation. Technological changes will always have an impact on people, not to mention the wider culture, governance models and more broadly, ways of working across the impacted organisation.

There are a number of common mistakes made during transformation programmes, which specifically contribute to low user adoption, delays to project and programme delivery and often poor return on investment. This paper explores these mistakes, how best to avoid them, and outlines our Coeus best practice people change methodology, developed through our experience supporting our clients through their successful transformation journeys.

Common 'people change' mistakes

Clarity and clear scope

- IT change isn't linked to business outcomes, therefore people don't understand how the change is going to contribute to business success.

- Change leadership is unclear, meaning decision making processes and interfaces into the business aren't defined.

- Scope is misdiagnosed - often IT programmes focus on the technology and tangible aspects of the programme. Understanding who will be impacted, how they will be affected and the potential varying levels of resistance to change is often neglected.

- Multiple business and IT change initiatives impacting the same area of the business are run as separate (or competing) initiatives instead of aligning as one unified effort with integrated plans and resources.

Methodology

- Most organisations have clear change management methodologies/processes within their IT organisation to manage system change, however many do not have a dedicated methodology and/or capability for the management and governance of people change impacts.

Capacity for change

- Transformation leaders often don't think about the additional capacity required to make change successful. They need experienced internal resources to support the change programmes, but these people are often also key to running business as usual - the two needs have to be balanced. Business pressures can drive leaders to want change implemented immediately, however it needs to be planned thoughtfully to determine realistic timeframes that can deliver sustainable benefits.

Existing culture

- Not adequately understanding the existing organisations' culture can lead to poor levels of adoption. This is further exacerbated in multi-national and global organisations where one approach may work in one part of the organisation but does not work in all areas. Emotional impact is also important - IT change programmes often neglect to build mitigation activities into their change plans which will support individuals (and entire organisations) in navigating the transition to new ways of working.

- External supplier relationships must be considered to understand any impact and adjust contracts accordingly.

Engagement management

- Many programmes overly rely on defining a stakeholder management plan which engages with senior executives too late and assumes they will communicate change plans within their part of the organisation.

Communication

- Communication is focused on a one-way "push" of information often too late in the development stage of the transformation programme. Effective communication needs two-way integrated strategies which allow for people to react to information (given at the earliest opportunity during the transformation life-cycle), discuss potential personal impacts, ask questions and get answers quickly.

- It is also important to consider how communication messages are received and interpreted within multilingual businesses.

Managing change effectively

Change is inevitable in life. Organisations must continually change and adapt to remain competitive and ultimately profitable. There are many change theories and methodologies that have been developed over the years, however at Coeus, we have developed ours through our own personal experiences with clients and with a very specific focus to support the adoption and success of IT programmes.

The Coeus people change management approach provides an 8 stage model to guide organisations through change, looking at alternatives and mitigation strategies to support the needs of an IT programme. Ultimately it ensures all those affected uncover and work through underlying causes of resistance over the course of the transformation effort.

The Coeus people change management approach

2 – Leadership & Governance

Ensure clear leadership to enable effective governance and direction throughout the programme. A respected leader is key, they will be accountable for making things happen and influence business agendas and stakeholders.

1 - Case for change

Build and maintain a compelling case for change, defining how the transformation will have a positive benefit for the organisation as a whole and for individuals. Ensure that people understand why they have to change and what is in it for them.

4 - Build Commitment

Form a stakeholder coalition to build a critical mass of support by engaging across the organisation with stakeholders at all levels. Develop the stakeholder coalition throughout the lifecycle of the programme to build and maintain commitment

3 - Establish a sense of urgency

To ensure the transformational change is a priority in business agendas

5 - Communicate

Effectively communicate the case for change as early as possible. Communications should be ongoing throughout the programme and be two-way, regular, audience targeted and timely.

7 – Phased Benefits

Plan phased benefits with short, medium and long term goals show ongoing business benefit. Ensure a robust benefits realisation plan exists with the appropriate number of resources to execute the plan.

6 – Change Agents

Empower change agents throughout the parts of the business affected by the change. Identify and onboard experienced people to be on the ground locally to support and manage the introduction of change.

8 – Embed, Consolidate and Measure

Embed and consolidate improvements into business as usual. Understand and measure the attitude to change. Where necessary change incentives and drivers can be introduced to enable successful integration.

Profile: Global Consumer Products

Coeus was asked to help transform the IT landscape, with the aim of achieving a saving of over 25% of IT run costs as well as improving service.

From an early stage in the engagement it was clear that people change would have to be at the heart of the programme. The programme had extremely challenging timescales, with the largest outsourcing contract due to expire in less than 12 months: fast and effective decision making was required.

In order to achieve this goal, a clear understanding of the stakeholder community was required, with communications being tailored to the stakeholders own journey in the process. To aid this, Coeus brought in its portfolio of change methodologies and tools, which were utilised to make sense of the complex environment.

By understanding each stakeholder and their concerns and support levels, a tailored approach to aligning everyone was achieved. A significant amount of time and effort was taken to understand individuals perception of change and concerns about possible changes to the landscape. These were then taken on-board to align key stakeholders before all decision points.

When it came to the transition, from the incumbent infrastructure provider to the new supplier, accurate and up-to-date information became even more important. To this end, Coeus utilised its programme office toolset to create a 'single version of the truth' which was used by all parties in the programme. This helped inspire confidence in senior management, who could see that the programme was being managed in an effective and controlled manor and were able to answer questions posed by senior managers, such as key risks and mitigation plans.

Summary

Change strategies have three main components; the outcome (what we are trying to achieve), the roadmap (how we are going to get there), and the people (addressing the required changes in behaviour).

None of this is rocket science, it is common sense, but for some reason organisations continue to gloss over the people side of IT change. Again and again, we see IT transformations fail, due to the lack of funding and resources to support with the adoption of new technologies and subsequently new ways of working.

Successful transformation programmes must answer the basic question which drives most behaviours in the workplace "what is in it for me?". It is necessary to articulate the change programme in such a way as to highlight how the transformation will benefit both the organisation as a whole and the individuals involved.

There is also a common misconception that people naturally fear change, however in reality the majority of people can embrace change (we all do it in our everyday lives) and it is the fear of the unknown that causes change resistance. Avoid the unknown by being clear and straightforward about what is going to happen to all those impacted by the changes, as soon as it is possible to do so.

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About Coeus

Coeus Consulting is an independent IT management consultancy, providing both advisory and consultancy services.

Coeus specialise in the areas of strategy, technology, sourcing, transformation and optimisation.

Supporting some of the largest corporates, financial institutions and most recognised brands in the world we pride ourselves in providing our clients with the very best advice possible.

Our consultants have the right blend of knowledge and experience to help our clients cut through complex technology issues.