



# The changing nature of work

## Workforce productivity



## The art of organisational transformation

Major change programs don't happen by wishful thinking – they require a unique plan suited to the nature of change, and a dedicated focus on people, collaboration and transparency to be effective.

There is no such thing as one-size-fits all when it comes to organisational transformation programs –and any organisation that tries to implement change without a unique, tailored strategy to suit the specifics of the situation could be at risk.

In fact, recent KPMG research shows that around 70 percent of transformation projects fail to deliver on the desired goals set at the start, explains Catia Davim, Partner, People & Change KPMG.

"That is a lot of money wasted," she says. "There is a direct correlation with badly managed change programs to this sort of outcome."

Davim says the key issue is not usually the idea being implemented, but that it is executed via a poorly defined strategy.

"You need to design a program of work that truly involves people along the journey. It is very rare that you have a change program that doesn't involve people. People will need to do things in a different way, or will need to use new tools or technology to realise those benefits," she says.

### Every transformation is unique

The change happening in organisations now is unprecedented, multifaceted and largely technology related. With competition rife and the fight for relevance very real, companies are being challenged to upturn their systems, processes, employee roles, costs, customer service, products and markets – among many other issues – in order to boost productivity, sustainability and relevance.

"Change is a process, and when you are designing a program of change, it's essential to look at the drivers of change. Do you need rapid change, is there a pressing need from the market? And how can you implement rapid change sustainably?" Davim says.

After the driver is understood, defining a strategy suited to the specific nature of the change required is essential.

"Something that is driven by a new regulation, versus something like fostering a culture of innovation in an organisation – require very different approaches. As each change is in a different context, it is key to look into the conditions of the problem, the dynamics of the organisation and then design a program of work that fits those principles or conditions," Davim says.

### People at the core

The people of an organisation are usually the most impacted by any change, so consideration of this must be factored into any strategy. Luella Forbes, Director, People & Change, KPMG, says that "organisations have to be really clear about where they want to go and why things need to be different"

"Then it is necessary to articulate it clearly, build consensus and to get engagement from the workforce to progress to that outcome," she says.

Close communication with every level of the business is vital, Forbes explains. The method of delivery must be tailored to each audience, with consideration of how different roles best receive information.

For example, desk workers are likely to respond well to information online, while non-desk staff may need regular meetings.

“In organisations such as retail or in police, you have to think about how to gather their opinions and build engagement,” she says.

### **Collaboration builds strength**

This leads to the power of collaboration in helping a change program to succeed. Davim adds that for major change, such as transforming culture – collaboration from top to bottom, or bottom to top, brings immense value to the potential for success.

“For example, if you are looking at transforming to a customer centric culture, you need to ask the question, ‘what does customer centricity mean to every part of the business?’” she says.

When undertaking a customer centricity transformation with a large organisation, Davim first conducted a workshop with the top 12 leaders to find out what the concept meant to them in reality.

“We then had sessions with the next 70 people, then 300, then 7500 on the front line, then 30,000 around the world. As you go along, the level of intelligence starts increasing. Then you start to develop mini projects to fix each part of the process.”

### **Transparency clearly needed**

Nothing will impact the success of a change program more than employee confusion, speculation and disgruntlement, which means every step must be as transparent as possible, Davim explains.

“There is an increased requirement for transparency. You need to be able to respond to the market quickly and do the process of change, but you must also join everything together and make sure you are giving your employees a view of the change,” she says.

This means as much information should be shared as possible, at well-planned and appropriate times.

“With ‘attention’ the currency of now, the opportunity to get into the consciousness of people is so small, that you definitely need to be very efficient in how you design communications,” Davim says.

Transparency matters even more when multiple changes are hitting the same people, Forbes adds.

“If you have five projects going on at once, you need to build a consolidated message that doesn’t confuse the audience and makes it clear what they are expected to do differently. This is one of the biggest challenges,” she says.

However, with a clearly planned program of change that takes into account the type and nature of the change, the impact on people, and the importance of collaboration and communication, there is no reason why transformation can’t lead to greater productivity and a thriving future.

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