Creating a Flexible Change Management Framework

Leadership expert Robin Sharma describes change as "hard at first, messy in the middle, and gorgeous at the end." And he's right—implementing a digital transformation, for example, is difficult but worth the effort when it's complete.

The problem is reaching that point. According to McKinsey & Company, up to 70 percent of digital transformations fail. All too often, that's because organizations get tangled up in the "messy" middle.

The good news? Thanks to change management, you have the power to dictate how big of a mess has to exist in the first place. When used alongside a digital transformation, this proactive approach makes implementing, maintaining, and helping people adapt to change a much cleaner process.

"Associations are spending a significant amount of money on management systems that trigger and drive transformation. The lack of attention, training, and resources for the change management aspects of a project—both during implementation as well as throughout the lifecycle—represent some of the major factors of a failed project."

Gretchen Steenstra
Director of Client Strategy
DelCor Technology Solutions

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5 Change Management Strategies

Organizations can nurture innovation by deploying a flexible change management framework inclusive of five change management strategies: Planning, transparency, honesty and realism, communication, and stakeholder participation.

01

Planning

The Planning stage helps lay the foundation for a successful change management framework.

Determine the scope of the project, ensure your plan aligns with the size of your organization, identify key stakeholders, and map out expected checkpoints. Then, create guidelines on how the team can support the change evaluation process.

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02

Transparency

Transparency is another crucial consideration in change management, creating trust between employees and their employers and fostering a healthier, more collaborative work environment. Be sure to communicate everything you've reviewed in the planning stage, and keep stakeholders updated along the way.

Transparency can also eliminate barriers to innovation. "Breaking away from knowledge-hoarding—which can be a serious issue, especially at organizations where longer-tenured employees harbor lots of institutional knowledge—helps employees collaborate and solve problems more effectively," said Rebecca Hawk, product manager for ASAE Business Services, Inc., in a recent blog post.

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03

Honesty

Honesty means telling the truth, no matter how uncomfortable the reality may be. Larger organizations in particular often find themselves skirting around harder, more controversial topics.

"You need to have honest, realistic discussions," Steenstra said. "Where within the organization will change create friction? Where do we lack skill sets? You need to have intentionality around change management before it's too late and things fall through the cracks."

04

Communication

Communication is the vehicle in which honesty and transparency reaches stakeholders.

To successfully guide employees through change, remember [Jeff Hiatt's ADKAR Model](#) for driving change in individuals. Through proper communication and training, stakeholders should be aware of the need for change, the desire to support change, knowledge of how to change, the ability to leverage necessary skills, and the reinforcement needed to maintain change.

"These different elements of communication need to be embedded all the way throughout the process and to all stakeholders," Steenstra said.
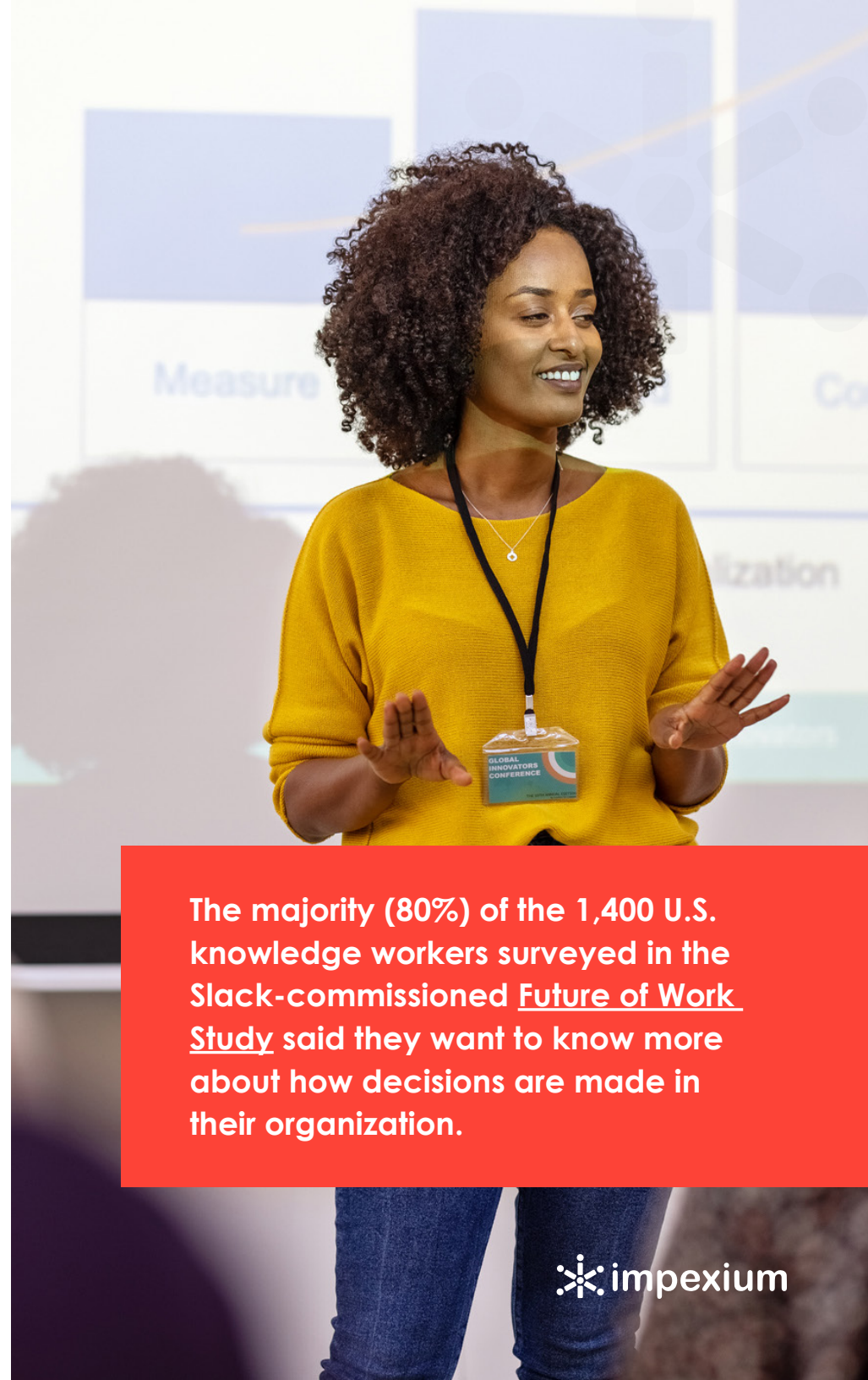
The majority (80%) of the 1,400 U.S. knowledge workers surveyed in the Slack-commissioned Future of Work Study said they want to know more about how decisions are made in their organization.

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05

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder participation is a must when executing change management. Aim to engage all types of stakeholders. It's great if your executive team is enthusiastic about change management, but without that excitement flowing throughout the company, the end user isn't likely to proceed as they should.

Consider forming a steering committee that includes everyone from executives to power users; it will serve as a glue of sorts between stakeholders.

Remember:
People are Key!

Flexible change management frameworks should always be centered on people and their relationship to the systems they are using. "Focus first on the goals of the organization and the people responsible for executing them, then align technology as an asset and partner, rather than buying good systems and making them fit," Steenstra said.

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