
Key Strategies to Successfully Implement Transformational Change

Tony Cooper is the Chairman of Legal Data Workspace and is an experienced Executive and former Deloitte Partner. Here, Tony shares the key lessons he has learnt throughout his career including key strategies to implement transformation change.



People can often be resistant to change, how do you bring people along on the journey? What do you do if people remain resistant to change?

Tony: Typically, you have 25% of people that are really receptive/excited about the change, 50% of people go along with the change and then 25% of people that are resistant to the change. In the past, I have been very clear about who that 25% are that are resistant to change and proactively had conversations with them. In the conversations, you need to try to understand their point of view, what is causing the resistance and see if you can unblock the issue.

If you can't convince them, then it is up to the individual to decide if they are going to join the journey, or not. At some point, as a leadership team, you will have to make a statement action that explains that if you are on the bus and don't like the direction, but you don't want to get off the bus then we will have to remove you. It's a tough decision to make but it is an important one as people that are not on board with the change will act like dragging anchors that harm the momentum of the program.

You are an expert on transformational change, what are your top tips for getting the c-suite onside?

Tony: During a transformation change, getting the c-suite on board is the number one thing that you have to get right. If you haven't got the c-suite alignment then you have got a problem before you have even begun. Historically, a lot of transformations have been driven by a pressing need, for example, to cut costs, and sometimes they don't really transform they just do the same with less. In my book, that is not a particularly inspiring transformation. Transformation should really involve doing things differently and better. So, you have to create an exciting vision and you need to involve the C-suite in that from the outset.

People don't always like change, even at the c-suite. So I think you've got to engage them in that journey to set the vision and line of communication. Outline why you are carrying out the transformation, what is the rationale, what are the benefits and how will people feel on the other side of the transformation.

How do you create a purpose for a team?

Tony: Purpose comes back to the breakdown of the overall vision of the organization, or the function. You need to establish a high-level vision so that you can clearly articulate it to the wider organization. You have to make the purpose personal and meaningful to the various teams. To help establish a clear purpose it can be really helpful to actively encourage collaboration by taking leaders from various different functions; it helps to break down silos. It allows individuals to see the consequences of their actions further downstream. However, you need to ensure that you regularly bring the multi-disciplinary teams together regularly to review and progress.

As a leader, how do you carve out the time for big-picture thinking?

Tony: I do two things. First, I add 'thinking time' to my diary even if it is 30 minutes. Second, I find that my brain doesn't switch off after work. I find that sometimes the best connections are made when I am walking or driving; I like to think of it as processing offline.

What would you say are the key leadership lessons that you have learned?

Tony: Mentoring, both up and down can be super powerful for leaders. One of the big jobs of the leader is to create the leaders of tomorrow. To achieve this you have to invest time in people. My second lesson learnt is that you need to recognize as a leader that you don't need to know all the answers. The leader needs to build a successful team to find the answers.

