

Breaking Through the New Tool Barrier:

3 Key Strategies for Reducing Resistance When Introducing Change

Change is a common theme in any business or organization. It is a fact of survival in the pursuit of continuing to stay ahead. The problem of change lies in acceptance; acceptance from the structure it is introduced to, as well as the people that it will affect. Optimizing efficiency and productivity can be as simple as implementing new tools. The problems arise when people aren't able or willing to explore these new options. Implementing a new or unfamiliar tool can be a frustrating experience. There is no guarantee that the implementation will be accepted, appreciated or even beneficial. Much of that depends on how the tool is introduced and especially how it is supported.

Several leading causes for an implementation to fail are not the faults of the product itself, but the use, or lack of use, by those designated to use them. There are several obstacles an implementation must overcome before a determination of the tool's effectiveness and fulfillment of purpose can be assessed. The first step towards a successful implementation must begin with creating an environment accepting of its introduction.

Many people see a newly added tool or application as a hassle. New implementations are interpreted as more work, more complications and one more thing to learn, tackle and integrate into an already complex work order. There are three key strategies for addressing this resistance.

The first strategy should be addressed by finding a complimenting tool to preexisting use and knowledge. In the same manner one can easily navigate any newspaper they pick up, so should be the tool. A user friendly interface that is easy to navigate and produces a sense of familiarity is crucial in the effort to reduce initial resistance. A tool designed intuitively to common user errors, habits and needs make transitioning a new tool into an everyday routine without feeling forced. Having structured content, resources and processes in a clear and coherent pattern is also important. The tool must also simplify user steps, leaving the complexities and unnecessary processes to the program itself.

The second factor lies on the part of those implementing the product. Adequate training and support is necessary for any newly introduced product. By ensuring proper understanding of how the tool is used and what it can accomplish, a solid foundation can be established for full utilization. Continuing the support is also vital. The mistake of providing training and support only once during a product's implementation not only stifles optimum use, but also morale and faith in the tool's purpose and importance. Maintaining support and training promotes sustained use and exploration of the product's abilities. It also adds confidence in the users by displaying organizational commitment through continued assistance and encouragement. Misuse, misunderstanding and abandonment can also be quickly addressed and corrected with these ongoing support channels thus reducing incidences of problems in the future. The extra time and effort spent providing these resources may add initial time and cost in implementing the new tool, but is significantly less costly than future abandonment or ineffective, partial use. By ensuring proper and complete use of the product, a foundation is established for effortless, long term success.

The third tactic is implementing a new tool that provides instant gratification. Benefits that are immediately noticeable improve acceptance and confidence in the tool's value. People are more willing to incorporate new tools into their routine and are less critical of the potential learning curve they might face if there is already some added reward in its implementation. Giving a quick result that is sustainable, while the other benefits may take time and effort to achieve, provides tangible markers that makes the future objectives and prospective gains more believable and in sight.

With every objective, a strategic approach is necessary to reach the desired end. This is especially vital when the goal is to introduce a change in work structure and procedure. Considering both, the individual and organizational, needs of a tool and then formulating a long term, tailored plan will not only make the acceptance of a tool more successful, but also its intended objective.

Alyssa Keziah
Social Anthropologist
Impact Technologies Group, Inc.