

MANAGING BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION: FIVE BEST PRACTICES

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So you have a mandate to improve operational effectiveness, streamline processes, upgrade methodologies, or make the necessary changes to transform the way your organization does business. No doubt, you have some great ideas, valid concerns, and have seen these kinds of things fail before. So what's your plan this time? We've drawn a number of lessons from scores of transformation efforts that you should consider in the planning phase. Here are five best practices you can put to use right away:

1. Learn from previous failures and successes

Many leaders don't look back and learn from previous failures within the organization before planning a transformation effort. Why? There's often the belief that the people doing it last time weren't the right ones. While this may be true, be careful with this assumption. Rest assured, there are operational, technical, political and cultural reasons that will come back again and will need to be addressed.

2. Assign a Transformation Program Office Leader

Staff an individual to head up your Transformation Program Office (TPO). A TPO coordinates program governance, aligns functional and technical resources, and translates objectives into plans, deliverables and results. The TPO provides project teams with tools, approaches and knowledge sharing mechanisms so they stay on course, make wise use of valuable resources, and integrate their efforts with leadership team priorities. There is simply no better way to manage multiple, concurrent transformation projects that require cross-functional collaboration.

3. Use a Lean Program Management approach

Use a lean program management approach to deliver results quickly, limit risk and build broad organizational support. This is accomplished by engineering a transformation roadmap that consists of a series of "plan-discover-design-implement" cycles focused on specific high-priority areas, each occurring within a fixed timeframe of a few weeks. This enables the team to engage specific stakeholder groups on high-priority problem areas first, develop solutions, and deliver meaningful results that can be applied to other areas as the program evolves. Lean program management has proven time and again to be an effective way to avoid the pitfalls associated with "all-at-once" transformation strategies that require months or years of change management effort and often fail to achieve their intended outcomes before the next planning cycle as a result.

4. Staff projects with your best and brightest collaborators

You know who these people are. They're the ones who people want running their projects because they know how to navigate the organization and get things done. They know that making progress means not only having vision, strength and tenacity, but also the ability to bring others along so you get contributions from the right people at the right time. Staffing a key project with sub-optimal talent is a sure-fire way to undermine the program's success.

5. Provide project managers and teams with expert coaching and support

While you selected team members because they have the functional, technical, or leadership skills required to influence change, they may not have done a transformation project like this before. Give them the knowledge, tools and experience they need by providing them with a transformation program advisor. You may have people skilled in this area internally that have the necessary time and experience. Or you may want to hire a seasoned firm with an established methodology to provide hands-on support, training, and problem-solving to manage the details so you can focus on the big picture.

Use these five best practices in the up-front planning stages of your business transformation initiative will dramatically improve your odds of success. Applying them right away can lead to exciting new growth opportunities for you and your team.