



ADOPTION ISN'T A METRIC: THE HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION

A perspective from Clark-Latham Consulting

Thought leadership on the human side of transformation.

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01

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND CHANGE

One of the things I've learned throughout my career leading transformation is that launching something new and getting people to embrace it are two very different things.

Organizations are remarkably good at measuring implementation.

Was the technology deployed? How many employees logged in? How many completed training? What's the utilization rate? How quickly did we reach 50% adoption?

Those numbers matter. But they don't necessarily tell us whether the transformation is actually working.

Because adoption isn't a number. Adoption is a behavior.

And behavior is human.

Whenever we introduce a new technology, process or initiative, we're asking people to change something. Sometimes it's a small change. Sometimes we're asking them to fundamentally rethink how they work.

And people don't respond to that change in the same way.

Some employees are immediately curious. Others are interested but cautious. And some resist—not necessarily because they're difficult or unwilling to change, but because resistance can be a rational response to uncertainty.

Will this make my job harder? Will I still be valuable? Is this technology actually going to help me? What happens if I get it wrong?

Those are human questions. And no amount of training completion will answer them.

02

EARLY ADOPTERS ARE MORE THAN USERS

I've always found early adopters fascinating. They're often the people who help an organization see what's possible before everyone else does.

But I don't think their value is simply that they adopt technology first. Their real value is that they can become translators.

They can take something new and make it relatable to their peers. Instead of saying, "Here's a new AI platform," they can say, "Here's how I used it to save two hours on something I do every week."

That's a very different conversation. It moves technology from an enterprise initiative to a human experience.

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BUT DON'T BUILD THE TRANSFORMATION ONLY AROUND THE EARLY ADOPTERS

We find the people who are excited about the new technology and assume everyone else will eventually follow. They may not.

The person who isn't adopting isn't necessarily the person we need to convince. They may be the person we need to understand.

Maybe the technology doesn't solve a problem they actually have. Maybe they don't trust it. Maybe their workflow wasn't considered in the design. Maybe they are worried about losing expertise they've spent years developing. Maybe they simply need more time.

And sometimes, they may be seeing a problem that the early adopters aren't seeing.

Resistance can contain information.

04

STOP MEASURING ACTIVITY. START MEASURING BEHAVIOR.

Instead of asking, "How many people completed training?" ask, "What are people doing differently?"

Instead of, "How many people have access?" ask, "Where is the technology actually improving someone's work?"

Instead of, "What's our adoption percentage?" ask, "Are people using this because they're required to—or because they've discovered value in it?"

That's a very different measurement philosophy. And ultimately, it's much closer to transformation.

05

THE HABIT PROBLEM

New technology has to compete with old habits.

People have established ways of working, established tools, relationships, shortcuts and muscle memory. If we want people to adopt something new, we have to make the new behavior easier, more relevant and more rewarding than the old one.

That's behavioral change. And behavioral change takes more than a launch email and a training session. It requires reinforcement, coaching, peer examples, leadership modeling, feedback, psychological safety and time.

06

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE HAS TO BE PART OF THE BUSINESS CASE

When we build a business case for new technology, we typically talk about efficiency, cost savings, revenue, productivity and risk reduction. Those are important.

But what about confidence? Trust? Employee engagement? Customer experience? Collaboration? A sense of ownership? The feeling that technology is helping rather than replacing?

Those things can be harder to quantify. They are not less important. In fact, they may determine whether the measurable business benefits ever materialize.

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07

PERHAPS ADOPTION ISN'T THE GOAL

Maybe adoption isn't actually the goal.

The goal is better outcomes: better customer experiences, better employee experiences, better decisions, better collaboration, better use of people's time and better business results.

Technology is simply one of the tools that can help us get there.

So instead of asking, "How do we get people to adopt this?" maybe the better question is:

"How do we create an experience where people understand why this matters, feel safe trying it, discover its value and ultimately choose to make it part of how they work?"

That's a very different transformation strategy.

And perhaps that's the fine line between implementing technology and changing the way an organization works.

Because technology can be deployed.

But transformation has to be experienced.

Food for thought from Clark-Latham Consulting.

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