

## Top Three Ways to Take the Sting Out of Digital Change Management

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When it comes to digitalization in construction, we often hear of it being divided into two perspectives: those who are proactive in their transition to tech-based tools and practices, and those who outright fear or are resistant to change of any kind, regardless of the benefits. But it's not quite so black and white. There's a gray area along this digital change management continuum where you'll find two other scenarios.

In one, you'll find contractors who have a more emotional connection to their legacy siloed solutions – effective at what they were initially designed to do but are unable to integrate with other solutions and/or don't have the advanced capabilities they now need to optimize their efficiency and be competitive. They don't want to let go of what is comfortable and familiar.

And in another are contractors who are all-in on adopting the software necessary to support their portfolio of capital projects but were burned by vendors with lax support and guidance during implementation. Having essentially been set up to fail, they're a bit skittish about the tech adoption experience, perhaps blaming the technology rather than the vendor and/or their change management process.

For contractors in this lost middle ground who don't want to remain stuck there, the question becomes, "How do we move on from this point unscathed?" There are several ways to approach it that can alleviate much of the pain of managing this kind of change. It's a more holistic view that goes beyond the software itself.



### TAKE CHARGE OF THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS EARLY

Take ownership of the change management process and maintain it even when you begin talking with tech providers. You'll have a better idea of what best fits your team's needs and goals – so you can prioritize functions and features that are most valuable to your business. And you can more easily communicate expectations with vendors as you begin the process of vetting the software that meets those needs through research and demos.

How do you best achieve this? Start by securing buy-in from the front line to the executive suite by asking the right questions. What problems do you need to solve that technology can help solve? What capabilities does your company need? Within those capabilities, what further functionalities do the primary users need to be most effective in their respective

roles? Is the technology scalable as your project portfolio or business grows? This is about getting everyone invested in the effort and building consensus. The more informed and involved everyone is about a new initiative, the smoother its implementation can be.

## **ADOPT A MORE OBJECTIVE APPROACH TO DIGITALIZATION**

From a digital change management perspective, there are a couple of approaches to this. One is to focus on tech capabilities to help overcome the subjective attachment to your familiar existing software. Maintaining the status quo by clinging to older tech isn't going to enhance efficiencies or create enviable competitiveness.

It may help to begin with the questions we posed above. But then take it a step further by putting the attention on your current technology for comparison.

- » How does your current software compete apples to apples with the proposed software? And in what ways does it not? Can it integrate with today's other solutions without creating incompatibility bottlenecks?
- » Is it able to produce and process project data at the level of detail and precision necessary?
- » Can it help you achieve the project outcomes expected by the project owner?
- » Does it have the capabilities that project owners are starting to require?

Another approach is to think of it this way: There was a time when you had to transition to your current technology and your company may have had to endure this same process of overcoming hesitancy to let go. Digital change management is about your people, not the software itself; emphasizing this can help to quash bad feelings associated with past tech adoption experiences.


That resistance could've stemmed from unexpected glitches your team doesn't want to get stung by again. Or the process may have surfaced some challenges they'd rather avoid. Recognize that these are legitimate concerns and that either scenario can serve as a learning experience to improve future digitalization processes.

But also acknowledge that your technology has served you well, but now it's time to move on to something even better. So, emphasize what they already know. Many of your project team members have been using technology for years and are familiar with many of its benefits. It may help to recall the seismic improvements made possible by the evolution of phone and mobile device technology or the transition from CAD to BIM. These made their lives easier in different ways. Focus on the outcome more than the process; after all, business growth doesn't happen without venturing outside your comfort zone and overcoming steep learning curves.

## **CHOOSE A TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER WHO WILL BE YOUR PARTNER, NOT MERELY A POINT-OF-SALE VENDOR**

Some rather unpleasant digitalization experiences are the result of interactions with the vendor – or lack thereof. Having a reliable, responsive, collaborative partner in your digitalization journey is a must-have, especially at the capital project-level scale at which you'll be implementing your chosen solutions or platform. How can you keep from being ghosted or misguided? Vet them as you'd vet the actual technology. From a partnering standpoint as opposed to a contractual one, consider these:

- » Determine what their plans are for product enhancements, how often they happen and what that entails for you.
- » Request names of current clients. Ask those clients about the provider's product integrity and reliability, customer service, tech support, and availability when you're likely to need them most. Does the technology do what the provider said it would? Are those clients happy with the technology and their relationship with the provider? How well and often do they communicate with them? Are there any areas they felt the provider fell short? If a problem occurred, how did they respond and make it right?
- » What are the provider's plans for its own business growth?

Digital change management isn't merely a tech adoption strategy; it's changing your business culture and practices, too. Such a multifaceted process doesn't come without its challenges along the way but taking the above approaches can help streamline and take the sting out of it. 



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