

# Best Practices to Support Enterprise Staff when Introducing New Collaboration Technologies

August 2015

The following best practices for supporting staff across an enterprise—with respect to implementing new workplace technologies and systems of collaboration—are derived from interviews with large organizations that have successfully launched and sustained these types of programs. In doing so, they have engaged employees in every step of the process, gauging satisfaction, monitoring productivity, and actively seeking their feedback to improve operations and overall effectiveness.

#### Best Practice #1

Tune up measures of individual productivity and contribution to the enterprise before changing the technology and rules for collaboration.

IBM helped a major initiative focused on new collaboration technologies and flexible-work arrangements succeed by beginning the process with more substantial changes in performance and productivity measures.

“The office arrangements changed not because the technology meant we could collaborate better from the coffee shop – that was true enough, but not the point,” one IBM sales leader told ILO. “The office arrangements changed because we were moving away from rewarding people for how hard we could see them working to rewarding them for what they were really accomplishing. ...We put in a lot more measures of impact on the firm, on forwarding the strategic goals, and on measurable outcomes in accounts.”

#### Best Practice #2

Give influential staff extended temporary assignments where they can deeply experience the new technologies and collaboration arrangements – and then become advocates for change.

Hospital chain **ThedaCare** and consumer-goods giant **Procter & Gamble** have both invested heavily to give key staff weeks-long temporary assignments to get them comfortable with new technologies and new collaboration approaches, well ahead of formal change across the enterprise. These preview assignments create fans and advocates of new ways of working, and when companies select the right people as previewers – those with the strongest informal influence in the organization – naysayers tend to step back.

#### Best Practice #3

Emphasize person-to-person storytelling.

Australian telecom provider **Telstra** and global retailer **Walmart** both rely heavily on storytelling to help support technology-driven change. At Telstra, where Avanade has been helping to drive new workplace technologies across the enterprise, strategist Kyle Burkholder emphasizes the importance of “hero stories.”

“What we want to understand in advance, when we’re making plans for a new way of working with new tools across a large number of people, is where we think we can find the ‘hero moments.’ How are we going to advertise the stories of people who grasp what the new model of work is, and do visibly great things because of it, early on? That’s how to show people that there’s real personal value to signing on to the process.”

At Walmart, the company invests in Saturday morning meetings where senior management and representative staff from up and down the org chart celebrate their successes, reinforce company values, and make deals about merchandise, even though the company has arguably the best merchandise information system in the world. The storytelling and deal-making are vital, many Walmart veterans report, to making the data and technology feel personally important.

#### Best Practice #4

Train and support a dedicated group of change leaders from the rank-and-file.

**The University of Kansas Hospital** has had great success training and rewarding a team of nurses to be specialists in helping pilot new workplace programs and technologies. The key ingredients to their success include:

- Select 45 in-service nurses from the rank-and-file who keep their day jobs, but grow their expertise in communicating and supporting the value of change every time a new initiative roles out. They become specialists not in any one technology or work redesign, but in the process of helping change succeed – while also keeping their feet on the ground as in-service nurses.
- Provide social rewards and recognition for being part of the change team.
- Dedicate on-the-clock time to strategize as a team, share stories, and celebrate their successes.

## Best Practice #5

Treat staff as customers for data that new workplace technologies generate.

The CEO of a **major industrial manufacturer** says a big driver of his company's success in getting value from sensor-generated data in the workplace is by creating data-driven reports for the rank-and-file workers. The CEO tells ILO that when he and his staff talk with technicians in general about the sensors and other workplace-data strategies, there is little interest or engagement in response.

“But when we share the data with them – that is, show them how the tools [with sensors imbedded that track their use] tracked that great build in Norway compared to a tough session they had over in Arizona, then the data tells a story about how and why one went great and the other got off-track. Then the staff are all over that. They love it. And they see things we can't see in our offices.”

The following examples show these best practices in action, both from an implementation perspective to a full-on operational perspective. Take note of the overarching employee engagement that comes into play in each example.

## Flexible Work Arrangements and Performance Measures: A Tale of Two Companies

Several years ago, at roughly the same time, professional services firm Ernst & Young and technology-services conglomerate IBM both shifted from traditional office arrangements to early 'hoteling' programs that cut the link between individual executives and permanent personal offices.

Under the new plan, every executive was assigned an office on a day-to-day basis, depending on where each preferred to work – in the office, out on a client site, at home, or in a 'third place.'

At IBM, the program was a surprising success. Even while the company's famous headquarters office buildings north of New York City began to feel emptier and a bit less vibrant, key executives were spending more time with customers, and job satisfaction rose.

At E&Y, the program failed to take – executives kept coming in every day, kept trying to keep the same offices day to day, and putting a lot of energy into seeking exemptions from the program.

### The “Unwritten Rules” Matter

Peter Temes, president of the ILO Institute, was an advisor to E&Y at the time. “The rules had changed,” he explains, “but the real understanding of the unwritten rules hadn't changed. You still wanted to be seen around the office, you still wanted to be in the key meetings with the chairman, you still wanted to hear the

talk in the hallways. Those things didn't change, so people didn't want to be in other places.”

In an opposite manner, at IBM, the shift in office arrangements was part of a broader change in how executives were evaluated and compensated.

“In the regional offices, in the client-focused functions, and in terms of the shift between products and services, a lot was changing,” one career IBM sales executive told ILO. “The office arrangements changed not because the technology meant we could collaborate better from the coffee shop – that was true enough, but not the point. *The office arrangements changed because we were moving away from rewarding people for how hard we could see them working to rewarding them for what they were really accomplishing.* We put in a lot more measures of impact on the firm, on forwarding the strategic goals, and on recording and reporting measurable outcomes in accounts.”

“The technology shifts were really important to make those measures work, but the office arrangements changed only after the real change in how we were working and could be working was assimilated into performance measures and job descriptions.”

## Short-Term Previews for New Ways of Working

### Six-Week Previews at ThedaCare

Many organizations roll out new workplace technologies and collaboration structures with a “big bang” approach, with very modest previewing and little or no experiences in advance for giving staff the feel for new workplace technology structures and collaboration structures.

The 7,000-employee hospital network at ThedaCare took a different approach.

Planning the rollout of new technology platforms and collaboration approaches for its workforce, Thedacare created a preview worksite, built as a model of the new workspace, and mandated key clusters of its staff to spend six weeks working there several months in advance of the full-on changes.

Karen Golden-Biddle, a professor at the Boston University School of Management, documented ThedaCare's program. She explains that “clinicians trained together in a mocked-up collaborative care unit that matched the newly designed ones, with private rooms for all patients; newly designed supply servers outside the patient room yet accessible to clinicians inside the room; and, in place of the nursing station, a central area visible from all rooms. Part of the training was designed to inculcate new practices like getting accustomed to what would be stored in the new private rooms, using the new drug dispenser and using revised electronic medical records to assure reconciliation of medication.”

Perhaps most importantly, nurses, doctors, and pharmacists test-drove new collaboration models in their six-week preview assignments:

“A central feature of the new model was the creation of a trio of physician, nurse, and pharmacist who would deliver care at the patient bedside. To be effective, the trio required its members to work as a clinical team, asking questions of each other in front of the patient and addressing patient questions as a team. So a second part of the training was designed to help clinicians see beyond their current expectations of how they should relate to one another and entertain possibilities for greater collaboration.”

#### *Building New Habits of Collaboration at Procter & Gamble*

Cincinnati-based consumer packaged goods giant Procter & Gamble (P&G) has taken a similar yet ongoing approach to supporting staff facing change in the workplace. At P&G's Clay Street Project, teams of staffers are pulled out of their usual jobs to work at the special Clay Street Project site in highly-focused, short-term, diverse teams. The highly-structured work process, driven by next-generation collaboration technologies, strong mentorship, and a distinctive approach to defining and addressing problems, runs typically for about six weeks, after which the participants go back to their core work assignments, and are encouraged to take newly learned habits with them.

Since its launch, the P&G Clay Street Project has been entirely devoted to internal projects and internal teams. The core of the Clay Street Project is assembling teams from across functions, across different business units, and across geographies.

“We were very focused on selecting people – making sure the people who participated represented the right range of market-exposure, process-exposure, and decision-making rights to maximize the spread of these ideas once folks returned to their usual roles,” a senior leader of the Clay Street Project tells ILO.

Being chosen to participate in a Clay Street Project was and is a mark of honor at P&G, and gave P&G staff from across the company deep exposure to highly-structured team-building, problem-framing, and problem-solving processes.

“Our methods spread after a team might be resident at the center for a week or a month. They'd take back what they learned with them, and that was very much the idea.”

#### **Technology and Storytelling: Walmart and Telstra**

Global discount retailer Walmart has invested in more technology to support its frontline staffers than most of its competitors for decades, building a point-of-sale database that became a lever for getting better deals from its suppliers and

a powerful tool for store managers and cashiers, with more – and more useful – data at their fingertips than any of their competitors could muster.

Yet even in this data-rich environment, Walmart's leadership emphasize the importance of the retailer's Saturday morning meetings. Held weekly from the chain's earliest days, founder Sam Walton declared that he and his executives could hardly take the day off while store workers around the country were at their jobs, so the Saturday morning meetings were established. The Saturday meetings are now a monthly affair, with hundreds of seniors managers attending every event, and staffers at all levels are flown into Bentonville, Arkansas to participate as special attendees.

The meetings are dramatic, filled with celebration and fun. “Welcome to Walmart's Saturday morning meeting,” writes a columnist for The Economist, “part evangelical revival, part Oscars, part Broadway show.” They're also filled with actual deal making. Store managers, buyers, and program-managers take time to hold up fast-moving products, make informal deals for access to products, and bargain for extra support for special initiatives in their stores.”

“While they've certainly got systems that in theory are more efficient for these deals,” Karen Morris, an independent innovation consultant tells ILO, “you have to have the stories. The human voice, the personal testimony that this is great, that this works for me and my team, and that you should do it too. There's just no substitute for that.”

#### *What are the Hero Moments?*

Kyle Burkholder, a leader of Avanade's Digital Workplace initiative, spends a good deal of his time helping Australian telecom provider Telstra roll out new technologies across their 30,000-person workforce.

While Burkholder can talk extensively about pure technology strategy and app deployment, he emphasizes storytelling as well. “What we want to understand in advance, when we're making plans for a new way of working with new tools across a large number of people, is where we think we can find the ‘hero moments.’ How are we going to advertise early on the stories of people who grasp what the new model of work is, and do visibly great things because of it? That's how to show people that there's real personal value to signing on to the process.”

“That also drives that great user experience—capturing those hero moments—because the heroes also show us that they're using the tools we've given them a little differently than we expected. So we look for those good surprises, and wire them back into the system, to improve the norm.”

### QSIs at University of Kansas Hospital: Building the Community of Pilot “Pilots”

The University of Kansas Hospital began a program five years ago that has proven to be a big success in speeding up the testing and scaling of new patient health and quality-of-care programs. The program demonstrates the power that comes from establishing a cohort of healthcare professionals key to the patient-care function – in this case, nurses – who are:

- trained in the process of running pilots,
- with professional and social incentives and support for making those pilots work, and
- who stay in the role of “pilots” for pilot programs over an extended period of time, applying their growing knowledge and skill in making pilots work over months and years.

The Kansas initiative is driven by QSIs – “quality and safety investigators.” These are 45 nurses specially trained in how to design and run pilots. They meet and work together as a team every week for a minimum of two hours to share notes and coordinate support for new tests and initiatives.

Officially, the QSIs aren’t innovation advocates. Instead they are focused on improving quality of care and safety throughout the patient experience. Yet their model focuses on the regular trial of new initiatives, with a sharply managed process of teaching nurses how to make new experiments that can benefit patient work.

“Becoming a QSI is an extra responsibility,” program head Liz Carlton says, “but it’s a mark of distinction, and it’s a very supportive community.”

That idea of the supportive community is vital to helping pilots gain traction. At University of Kansas Hospital, these 45 nurses, meeting regularly, trained from the same playbook, wearing special QSI pins, talk through the status of the projects they support and make the successful execution of the pilot programs a point of collective pride. Plus, they take lessons learned from one pilot into the next, they become experts in by-the-bedside pilots, and they deploy that expertise in all of the new pilots that come through the program.

“The community, training, mutual support, and knowledge that we gather over time – these all help make this an effective program,” Carlton adds.

### Sharing More Data with Staff: A Major Manufacturer and Internal Open Innovation

The CEO of a major industrial manufacturer shared with ILO a key part of the company’s data analytics strategy, which turns out to point to a powerful strategy for supporting workers facing new technologies in the workplace.

The manufacturer often builds very large engines – too large to assemble before shipping, so they’re fabricated in pieces, and then the pieces converge at the customer site, and a team of engineers and technicians runs a ‘build’ to put the pieces together.

“When we build a commercial engine,” the CEO tells ILO, “every tool has a sensor on it. The higher-order value comes when you start looking at the assemblies that were just perfect and those that were less than perfect, and you look for the differences. You wind up with insights like, the very best build doesn’t use this particular tool at all – it expands the range of use of another tool instead. The very best build actually has the tools being totally still for a certain predictable period of time every couple of hours, when the build leaders are taking a little time to think and visually inspect.”

“Things like that give you the best-practices insights, often surprises, that you can use to step-up the continual improvement process, based not only on the ideas and observations of the people on the ground, but on the stories that the tools are telling you through the tracking data.”

The CEO tells ILO that when he and his staff talk with technicians in general about the sensors and other workplace-data strategies, they get little interest and engagement.

“But when we share the data with them – show them the dance of the tools at that great build in Norway compared to that tough session they had over in Arizona, then the data tells a story about how and why one went great and the other got off-track. They’re all over that. They love it. And they see things we can’t see in our offices, and that is how the machine is making it work.”

This manufacturer invests in reporting its sensor-based data not only to its leadership, its business planners, and its suppliers, but to its rank-and-file workers as well.

“They need to know, and we have to take the time to plan the reports that will have the most meaning to the people doing the work. That leads them to see the value, and take the value from the process.”

## Conclusion

Change is never easy in large organizations, but it is more and more essential in the fast-moving global business environment of the 21st century. These best practices can make change in the structure of the workplace far easier to navigate up and down the org chart:

- Previewing changes in hands-on fashion for workplace influencers builds in support from the people who often matter most.
- Treating staff as customers for newly collected workforce data allays fears of a big-brother culture.
- Emphasizing continuity in teams of on-the-ground change leaders allows company leaders to build support for ongoing, positive change.
- Making sure that changes in the physical organization of work sync with the real measures and reward of success is essential.
- And sharing success stories of heroes gives a human face to important new policies that might otherwise feel cold.

Change still won't be easy – but deploying these types of best practices will make change more likely to last.



### About Avanade

Avanade helps clients realize results in a digital world through business technology solutions, cloud and managed services that combine insight, innovation and expertise focused on Microsoft technologies. Our people have helped organizations in all industries improve business agility, employee productivity and customer loyalty. Avanade combines business, technical and industry expertise with the rigor of an industrialized delivery model to provide and deploy high quality solutions—on premises, cloud-based or outsourced. Avanade, which is majority owned by Accenture, was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 25,000 professionals in more than 22 countries. Additional information can be found at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com).

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