

3 Keys to Managing Change

for a Successful RIM Program Implementation

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Whether implementing a new program, software application, or process, or simply modifying something that is already in place, it is the execution of the change management process that will determine whether users adopt the change and the initiative can succeed. But, it can be a daunting task to get all those who will be affected by the change to understand how it will benefit them – from the C-level all the way down to the entry level and including contractors and third-party service providers.

This article discusses the three change management elements necessary for the successful implementation of a records and information management (RIM) program:

1. Ensuring that the *power employees*, who are the owners, executives, and managers, understand and buy into the need for the program
2. Engaging and addressing the concerns of *knowledge workers*, who are those whose jobs primarily involve creating, distributing, or applying knowledge, according to the knowledge management expert Thomas H. Davenport
3. Respecting the inevitability of natural human behavior

Selling Change to Power Employees

RIM professionals understand that there is a real risk to *not* implementing a RIM program, as minimizing risk is at the core of what they do. Yet, power employees often fail to see the risk and, consequently, to recognize the value such a program



provides. Getting them to fully comprehend how a good RIM program mitigates risks, avoids costs, and provides other benefits to the organization is the first key element in ensuring user adoption of the program.

Conduct an Analysis

Helping power employees understand the real risks of not having a RIM program may be as simple as explaining that there are rules and regulations requiring the organization to properly manage its information. But it can go even further. A strategic analysis, for example, can expose the shortcomings in a current RIM program. Recommendations on how to correct those shortcomings can lead to a more optimal state.

ARMA International's Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® (Principles) provide a good place to start that analysis. The Principles are derived from RIM and information governance best practices and international standards. To evaluate a program against the Principles, use the ARMA-developed Next Level Information Governance Assessment tool, which provides a risk-level mapping for each Principle. The assessment can provide valuable insights as to what an organization is doing well and where it needs improvement, allowing users to address deficiencies and thereby minimize risk.

With numerical, color-coded ratings for the organization's maturity level for each Principle, it presents easily grasped, compelling results that help power employees see at a glance that there is a real risk in not having a proper program in place, as well as understand the benefits of having a proper program.

Take the Next Step

Surprisingly, many organizations stop at this crucial point and presume user adoption will be the easy outcome of having gotten the power employees to the table. But

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real adoption relies on getting the end user – the knowledge worker – to buy in. User adoption can best result when the power employees' actions show they are not only supporting the RIM program but that they also are allocating proper resources to it.

Selling Change to Knowledge Workers

Knowledge workers get their cues from the power employees, but if the knowledge workers do not completely buy into the change, the program will not work.

Discover Their Perspective

Understanding the knowledge workers' perspective about the change can enhance efforts to get their adoption. Investigate to learn how they feel about the new program, system, or process that touches their world. For example, if they believe the new program will require them to spend additional time on the change, giving them less time to fulfill what they believe are their more important responsibilities, they may be resistant to the change. Knowledge workers need to understand and believe that the program will make their work *less* cumbersome, not more.

Listen to Understand Their Concerns

Knowledge workers need to have a voice and believe it is truly being heard, appreciated, and considered. Seek to understand what the employees are actually saying – beyond their words – to get to the root of any resistance.

For example, knowledge workers that have years of experience may be protective of the information they have. Though they may not say this is the cause of their resistance, if they refuse to share or document the processes that are in their heads, it may be. Without resolving this issue, the success of the change itself will be in jeopardy and their knowledge may be lost.

Get Them Involved

It is vital to engage the knowledge workers early in the process because their involvement will give them a stake in the initiative's success and help turn them into advocates. More importantly, they may be able to improve and expedite the change initiative if they're invited to take part and have an investment in its success.

For example, a leading global investment firm had the following challenge. Because of localized processes and rogue software tools, data was floating around outside the system, in such places as Excel documents and on employee desktops. The risk was that over time this data could become inaccurate, outdated, and lost – potentially compromising client transactions and resulting in fines and suspended licenses due to regulatory non-compliance.

After partnering with a design research firm, the organization deployed design research teams to their offices worldwide to evaluate back-office processes, understand variability across locations, and uncover hidden risks. Insights from this research led

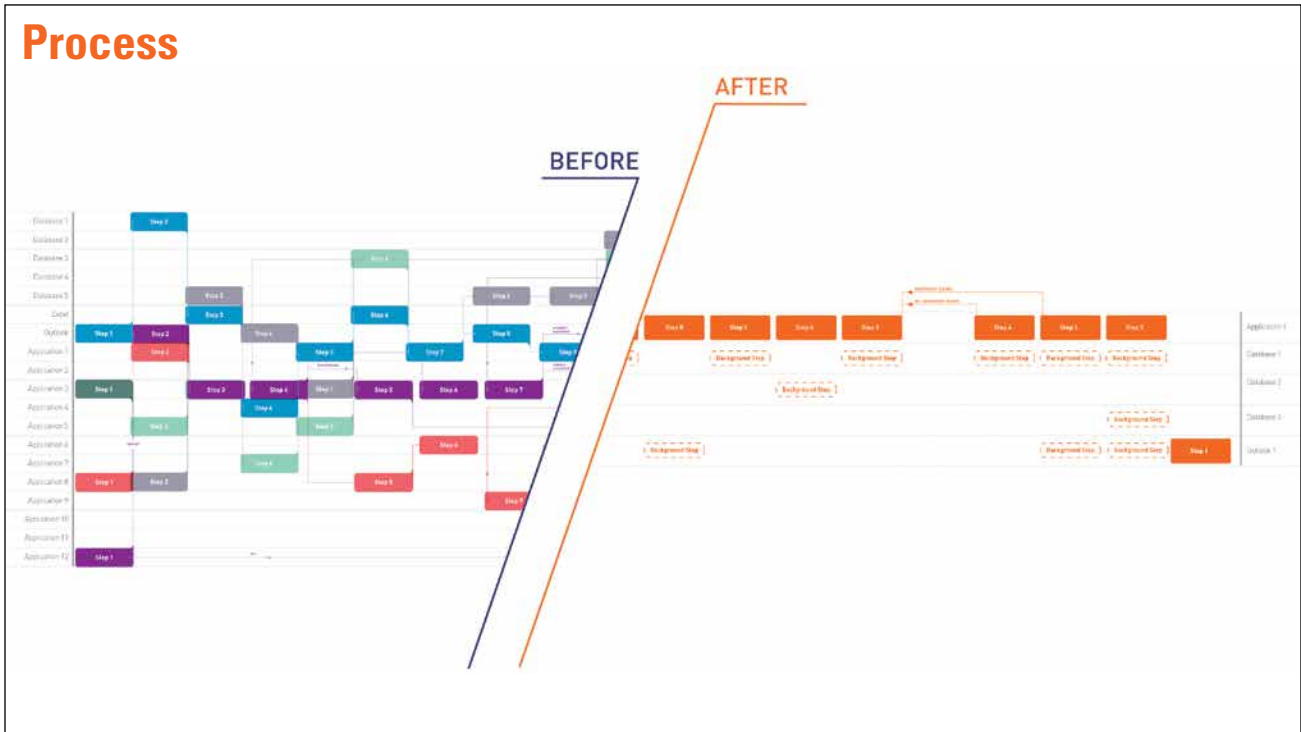


Figure 1 – Source: Electronic Ink; pictorial view of the “before” and “after” processes

the design team to create a secure, global application with a customizable user interface to accommodate the specific needs of each office. The new application provided greater consistency, accuracy, and information security across the enterprise.

The solution used a single, repeatable process that eliminated the need for 11 duplicative applications. It automatically and intelligently delivered necessary information in the right format, to the right person, at the right time. The system eliminated rogue application data, and it reduced maintenance and training, databases and server requirements, and workflow steps by 66% (See Figure 1).

All of these achievements were the result of a deep appreciation and respect for the knowledge workers, their individual roles, and their contribution towards a grander solution.

Taking into Account Human Behavior

The third element of a successful change initiative for the imple-

mentation of a RIM program is to understand human behavior. Do not design or invest in the process without understanding the culture and human behavior of those it will affect.

For example, knowledge workers may circumvent a process because it causes redundancies and bottlenecks that frustrate them. Even though their “workarounds” might waste time and resources, negatively affect customer service, and increase risk, they continue the workarounds because they naturally want to get their work done in the ways that suit them best. Without understanding this natural human instinct, an organization may continue to design unrealistic processes.

A clear, unbiased view of the people who will use a system or process is critical. Many companies now realize that this key skillset has been missing and are looking for ways to develop it or are getting it by partnering with groups that specialize in human behaviors and user experience. By leveraging this highly specialized

skill and integrating it with process improvements, organizations can realize tremendous results.

Concluding with a Successful Change

Although the word “change” has a negative connotation for many people, it is possible to implement change positively. It begins with ensuring that power employees realize the need for and benefits of the change. It progresses by including knowledge workers in discussions about the change, listening “between their words” to understand their perspective, and demonstrating that their concerns are heard and considered. And, it concludes successfully with a well-designed solution that addresses their concerns and takes into consideration the natural human behavior of those who will be affected by it.

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