



Understanding
readiness for
change with
people-centric data



People are the true driving force behind change— both planned and unplanned. Change management efforts need to harness the data that people within an organization generate in order to effectively manage transitions from legacy systems, processes and practices to new ones or changes forced on organizations. This is data-driven change management, but more than that, it is people-centered data that lies at the core.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a trial by fire of sorts for federal agencies and the private sector. Many of them transitioned quickly from in-office work to work-from-home arrangements, as they scrambled to maintain their operations while protecting the health of their employees. In the process, many of them had to make unplanned technology updates and develop new processes for people working remotely.

More often, change managers have the luxury of time and planning; even that is no guarantee of success, however. Therefore, change managers need a strong strategy for measuring and assessing change readiness.

It is the employees who use the systems, who operate according to established processes, that modernization initiatives will affect first and most directly. It is the employees who determine whether an initiative succeeds or fails, based on their willingness and ability to accept it. And therefore, it is incumbent upon change managers to understand employee mindsets before, during and after the execution of the project.

Outside factors can influence employee sentiment. The public's growing demand for government services that are as easy to access as e-commerce or electronic banking has made many federal employees more welcoming of modernization and digital transformation initiatives that deliver on that demand. Change managers should seek to measure such factors along with other parameters that affect employee attitudes.

If the strategy is planned well and executed deftly, change managers will have the data they need to evaluate how employees are accepting and adopting changes, and identify points of resistance. If organizations fail to conduct and manage this critical work properly, they risk failed transformations and decreased employee satisfaction.



Using data to drive change

Change management is essentially a psychological exercise; new technologies change the processes employees use to accomplish their goals, and employees do not always welcome or adopt those changes. Employees' awareness of changing technology, relative willingness or resistance to adopting new systems and their understanding of the coming changes are all data points which organizations should consider.

To some, this may sound amorphous, subjective, even "touchy-feely." To an extent, it is—yet it is also important to understand. Employee sentiment, indexed alongside cost, budget and efficiency impacts, provide a road map for change managers to bring a workforce from resistance to acceptance to enthusiasm.

Though OCM teams drive change with creative materials and activities, their actions are best founded on actual data to maximize impact and efficiency. To collect the data needed to inform people-focused decisions, change managers need a foundation of best practices to inform the process. Here are best practices for collecting data and responding appropriately to employees experiencing a change journey:

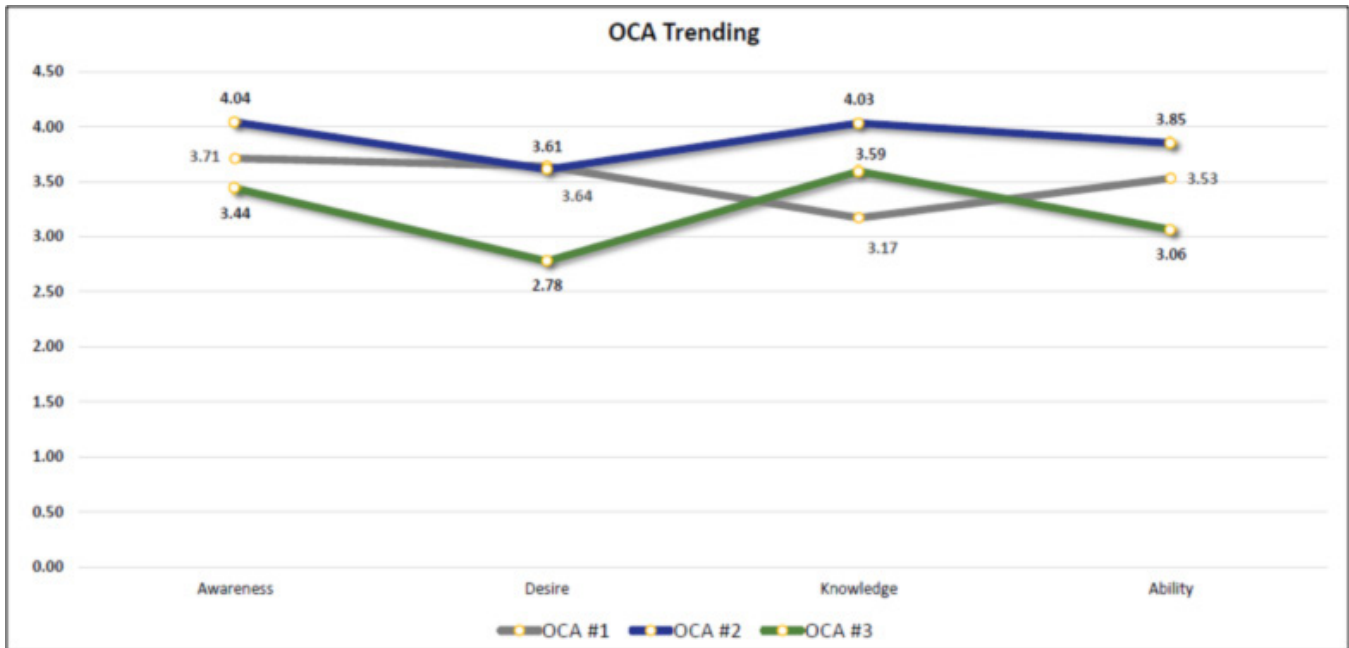
Measure: For a large federal transformation delivered over phases, a CGI OCM team collected data on how employees interacted with the change, how they absorbed new information and whether they sought related learning opportunities. The OCM team identified specific areas for actual employee interaction data and feedback. The data collected related to how employees were accessing information, when they began using the new financial/accounting system, and their perceptions of program components.

The OCM team compiled the information to provide the executive steering committee an analysis of how the program affected the organization over time, which information sources employees used the most and how employees responded to the changes. This data and analysis allowed the program to better focus on what matters to employees.

Change managers conducted this recurring analysis across phases, allowing for continual improvement. Based on the analysis, and with executive support, the OCM team adjusted the timing of program milestones, improved methods for two-way communications and tailored the learning program to suit individual learning styles. Through this, the team found that combining data from employee interactions and employee feedback can help redirect program resources and timing. What employees say in surveys is not always what they do in practice, and blending the data from both led to more effective adjustments. The OCM analysis in each phase reduced the impact of the program on employees and improved employee engagement with the program and preparations for change.

Change managers first prepare and conduct surveys to measure employee readiness for the changes to come. Industry best practices suggest using a trusted change management methodology such as Prosci's ADKAR™ Methodology, which uses awareness, desire,





knowledge, ability and reinforcement of the change as a barometer. An organization can also use data to define its current state. Developing a baseline of performance shortfalls, employee capabilities, and other metrics help guide the transformation effort and enable measurement of progress toward the intended goal(s) of the transformation.

Assess: Using the feedback collected through surveys conducted at certain intervals in the change effort equips change managers to develop assessments to shape next steps and recommendations for reaching optimal employee adoption of the change. Assessing the data can also identify pain points employees may be experiencing that could result in employee resistance. Leaders can then use this information to address as necessary and mitigate risks. Change managers should take the pulse of the workforce (e.g. employee feedback surveys tailored with questions specific to the transformation) often throughout the course of a transformation to determine if change efforts were indeed successful.

For a large cabinet agency, we measured change adoption at three key milestone dates, all prior to the rollout of the new technology. Measurements showed how successful planned change management activities were at increasing employee adoption (See figure 1, below). These metrics provided government leadership comfort that employees were aware, willing and ready to take on the new technology. After go-live, this conclusion proved accurate, and the customer described the project as “one of the best and smoothest IT implementations” they had ever experienced.

Respond and Support: Once change managers develop strategies using the collected data, they can then execute strategic recommendations (such as enhanced communications from leadership, additional training needs, increased engagement in advance of system deployment) to increase employee adoption and overall satisfaction. These may include targeting communications to inform, educate or motivate employees, training to build the required skillsets, and developing reward and support systems to help ensure employees sustain performance levels in the new environment.

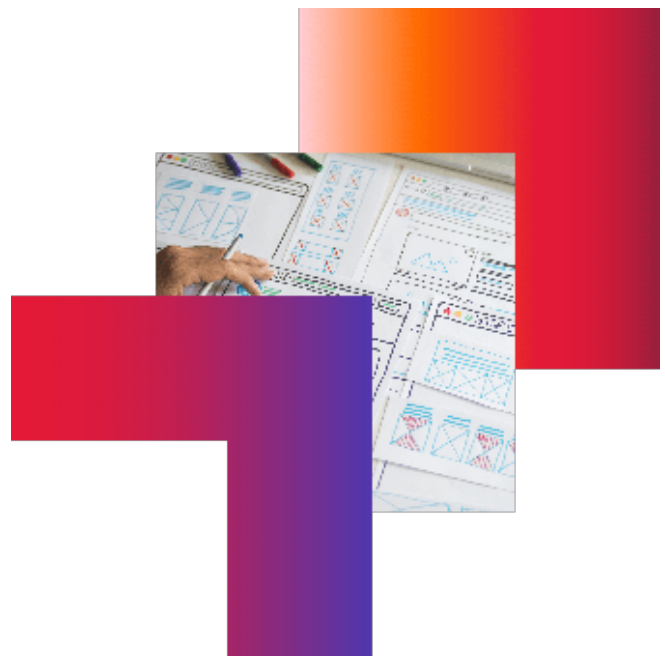
A data driven future

Organizations are quickly realizing the importance and power of people-centered data. In listening to employees and striving to enhance the overall experience, driving successful change is attainable. As new technologies will continue to roll out, change will continue.

Federal agencies should develop a culture of change. Organizations and leadership that can adapt and respond to people-centric data will realize the impact of transformation at a pace that will move them forward and deliver on their mission more effectively. Those that don't will continue to struggle to modernize and meet citizen expectations that are always changing.

CGI understands this emerging trend and our change management practice can help. Agency executives want to address employee needs through change management, especially when recommendations are data-driven and traceable. Data provides validation for OCM related decision-making. Moreover, employees respond positively to change efforts which inform and prepare them for success in a transformation, especially when we listen to them through their data.

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Nearly 7,000 of our experts help the U.S. federal government achieve comprehensive, scalable and sustainable IT and business goals. We enable our clients to execute digital transformation, build the federal workforce of the future, achieve operational excellence, enhance citizen engagement and protect America's assets. As the federal government faces unprecedented challenges, we remain committed to enabling its success, using our deep understanding of clients' goals and mission-essential needs to provide consultative insights and develop solutions for maximum results.

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