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Product Adoption Methodology

Vs 1.3

For Physicians Adopting a Desktop Capability

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Tell me and I will forget, show me and I might remember,
involve me and I will understand and support.
- ***Old Native American Proverb***

Introduction

As few as 10 to 15 percent of product implementations have a smooth introduction that delivers anticipated benefits.[1] The remainder either experiences "teething" problems or a significant shortfall in delivered benefits – with a full 30 percent of enterprises receiving what he calls a "nasty surprise." The fascinating variable is what characterizes the lucky 10 to 15 percent. It's not luck; it's better communication, attention to individual groups and training. In addition, an appreciation and understanding of managing transition places organizations at the leading edge of successful implementations.

This isn't new. Everyone who has been a part of an implementation knows that these factors are important. Especially software vendors that earn handy revenues from design-once, recycle-many-times training courses – and leave it at that. We recognize that a successful adoption must include *managing transition, communication, attention to individual groups and training.* This paper discusses these objects and presents the concepts, strategy and methodologies for the successful adoption of a product into the enterprise from an end user (associate[2]) perspective. It is assumed in this paper that there is a familiarity by the reader with the product and its benefits.

Product adoption is different from most product adoptions. A desktop solution benefits the organization and the individual by providing applications to increase productivity, accuracy and improve processes and requires strong support from physicians and associates. An operating system or utility rollout improves standardization, technical integration and stability but has little physician or associate involvement. Most desktop software, as an intuitive product, requires little training or initial involvement (except the understanding and willingness to use the product) and has little user complexity. It, however, requires a strategy for enterprise-wide implementation, acceptance and use. Physician and associate utilization is key for IT to realize its ROI, impart efficiency to increasingly over-utilized services and provide easily accessible and useful desktop service functionality and knowledge management to physicians and associates.

With any product rollout, past implementations have concentrated on training (although the timing and depth have been suspect in less than successful implementations). The problem is the word: *training.* It conjures up images of data entry and field understanding. "Training is separated into two parts – education and training. Education is all the why, who and where issues, training is the how part of the equation. Of the two, education is the bigger piece of the puzzle. If physicians and associates don't go through this education, you won't have their support and you won't have their minds."[3] Associate support and their use of the product is key to the success of product adoption and utilization.

Education is not necessarily classroom instruction. It is a clear plan of physician or associate (specifically stakeholder and middle management) involvement with the product, clear communication of benefits, schedules and results, and attention to each group's needs and barriers. Education is necessary for successful acceptance. Too many organizations rely on email announcements, posters, flyers, stickers and a smooth installation – and that is about it. Also in too many organizations, the product is not accepted or utilized. "When speaking at user seminars, one of our favorite questions is to ask, "How many people would go about their plan for

[1] A. Godfrey, the Juran Institute
[2] Associate identifies those employees that are end users of a new product as differentiated from Agents. Agents are employees who administer and take action on associate requests within the IT organization.
[3] J. Conklin, CIO, World Kitchen

education, communication and transition differently in their next product adoption?" Seventy-five percent of the people put up their hands and say the next time they'd allow more time for planning, education, communication and physician or associate involvement, and they'd tailor it more around their organization's needs and concerns."[4]

Product Adoption revolves around ensuring user involvement, communication and satisfying individual and group concerns and needs prior to and during installation. Time, effort, commitment and leadership is required, as well as attention to communication, individual groups and training, by those enterprises implementing the product. This effort is recognized as not as large as a major implementation; however, attention to the people receiving the change is as relevant for acceptance.

We can implement the product adoption techniques for a successful implementation among the user community by several approaches. Depending on the approach acceptable to the enterprise, resource availability and knowledge of adoption methodologies and techniques, we can support and improve your adoption, help your adoption, teach you the methodologies and techniques or audit and measure the success along the implementation path.

It is essential that clients adopting a product-partner jointly prepare and implement product adoption along with technical implementation. As discussed earlier, experience has shown that successful implementations and transition include *education, communication, attention to individual groups and training.*

Top Ten Best Practices for Implementing Transition

What are the best ways to ensure that these building blocks are in place and that your transition initiative will be successful? Through many years of experience, we have identified a number of best practices that are consistently successful in reducing risk and driving change. The following list, arranged in descending order of priority, is by no means exclusive, nor is it intended to be a recipe. Rather, it provides a high-level overview of key requirements and suggestions for bringing about effective organizational and product transition.

- *Identify and agree on key change drivers.*
  Change should be driven by a key business concern that is significant, well understood, and articulated throughout the organization. If people perceive that you're making a change simply for change's sake, then you'll cause more problems than you will solve. If they perceive that there's a real problem or opportunity and understand the negative effects of not taking action, however, then associates will support your change initiative.

- *Create demand for change; don't mandate or force it.*
  If you want everyone in your organization to adopt a change, then you must create demand for it at every level. Make sure each person understands the change you are addressing and has a feeling of ownership for the solutions you're proposing. This "buy in" is required if you expect stakeholders and associates to drive change and withstand setbacks and hurdles. When managers give orders demanding change, they meet with resistance, halfhearted attempts to adopt the change, false starts, enormous amounts of wasted time and money, and sagging morale.

- *Exercise consistent leadership and communication practices.*

[4] D. Kline, VP Education, PeopleSoft

This applies to everyone from top managers to group leaders. Lack of leadership and vision will cause the change effort to stall and lose credibility. Changes to your plan are inevitable, and it is critical to keep the troops informed about when and why you make them. In environments with poor top-down communication, people consistently look for signals or signs that let them know how things are going. Often, they identify inconsistent signals or misinterpret actual ones. For example, if a project start is delayed, or if management is holding more "closed door" meetings than usual, then employees may incorrectly assume that things are not going well for the project.

It is important for the management team to communicate in all directions and to behave as a cohesive unit with a consistent message. If managers appear to be disconnected and out of synch, then team members will quickly become concerned. A consistent regime of talking openly, sharing information, and helping others understand the common vision will ensure cohesiveness across the organization. It is also critical to keep the message simple so that it can remain consistent over time and not promote confusion or misinterpretation.

- *Continually update and fine-tune the vision and project plan.*
  In the initial planning phase, creating the vision and project plan helps managers identify key issues and risks, establish good communication and strong relationships among stakeholders, and fix a starting point that everyone can agree on. It's important to remember, however, that these plans are not set in stone. The vision and project plan are living objects, not static documents (as they are frequently communicated). They provide a roadmap for change, but it will be necessary to correct the course and validate the direction throughout the implementation. As new physicians and associates come on board, it is important that they understand and adopt the vision and plan.

- *Achieve incremental, demonstrable success.*
  Nothing can stall an effort like starting with an overly ambitious plan that tries to address every issue or project at once. Instead, the best strategy is to strive for incremental, demonstrable success as you implement the plan in stages. This will help stabilize the environment and build the confidence, credibility, and experience needed at each phase to manage chaos and sustain performance.

- *Find champions for your solutions at all levels.*
  Early on, it helps to identify champions at all levels that support your solutions and can get the change process moving forward on the right track. These people can also provide valuable insights on the working environment and team morale. Remember that potential champions may take different forms and hold various titles, so be sure to do a little digging for the right people.

- *Acquire and develop new employee skill sets.*
  Change creates demand for modern techniques, skills, and mindsets. As a vision and plan is formulated, it's important to identify what new skills will be required to facilitate change and operate in the new environment.

- *Establish a collaborative environment.*
  At the outset of any change initiative, it is essential to establish a collaborative working environment among all stakeholders and partners. Successful product adoption requires risk sharing, a collective sense of ownership, and the ability to leverage the knowledge and skill sets of people across the organization. Technical change, for example, requires bilateral knowledge transfer in disciplines such as domain expertise and modern software development techniques.

- *Collect and use metrics to monitor progress.*

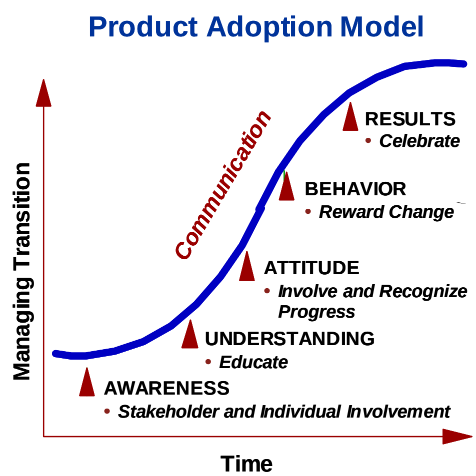
How do you monitor project status and know when things are going well or going wrong? Too often, organizations spend an enormous amount of time planning how they are going to implement products, but too little on understanding which metrics are critical to monitor a project's performance.

- *Overhaul incentives before you begin.*
  If you're asking associates to adopt a change that will require modifications in behavior, skill sets, and responsibilities, then you must also ask yourself, "What incentives do they have to make these adjustments and ensure the initiative's success?" Making changes to incentive programs before the change process begins will generate the energy and behaviors critical to success. This includes providing incentives for those who may lose something in the transition to keep their motivation and self-esteem intact. You can structure incentives around achieving milestones on or before schedule, a certain level of quality, or other specific goals, for example.

Product Adoption Model

It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's the place in between we fear. . . It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket's in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

- Marilyn Ferguson, American futurist



The extent to which organizations that adopt a product will vary greatly from those that will mandate usage to those that will allow each unit to choose their methodology for acceptance and use. Clearly, IT's objectives for the product might be more quickly realized from the first approach. However, both approaches require physician or associate acceptance and use. The variations in between adoptions are many and depend on the organization and the relationship between the clinical community and IT. To provide successful adoption of any product (especially one that has an impact on IT's success), there are several key concepts and principles that must be understood. These concepts are presented in the groupings of *Managing Transition, Communication, Individual Involvement and Training*. Key to transition is education manifested through communication and individual involvement. The figure to the right displays the cycle of Managing Transition. This paper does not specifically discuss the cycle but the actions needed to influence and complete the cycle.

Managing Transition

We think in generalities, but we live in detail.

- ***Alfred North Whitehead, American philosopher***

The devil is in the details.

- Common American proverb

"It isn't change that does you in, it's the transitions. Change is not the same as transition. *Change* is situational: the new organization, a new role, a new product. *Transition* is the process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal."[5] A service manager wanted a change and his staff was telling him it wasn't going to be as easy as he thought. The service manager thought the change made perfect sense, it was necessary for the firm's continued leadership and no one was going to lose a job or anything like that.

When the change occurred, there were problems – there are always problems with change. After a month, however, the new process wasn't working. The old way was still entrenched and issues were still being tossed back and forth. There was no systematic coordination. Associates maintained their old ties with people they were used to dealing with and tended to get things done with the help of their old procedures.

Basic Transition Interventions

There are several basic interventions that should have been used in the above scenario but weren't. Through best practices, there are many that have become trusted and used by innovative organizations and "Change Managers." Several very important actions should have been taken. The most important actions are:[6]

- *"Sell" the motive and individual benefit that is the reason for the change. -*
  Most managers and leaders put 10% of their energy into selling the motive and 90% in selling the solution. People aren't in the market for solutions to issues they don't see, acknowledge, and understand. Especially when they see no individual benefit.

- *Talk to individuals. Ask what kind of issues they have with the potential change. -*
  When an organization is having problems with change, managers usually say they know. Often they really don't. They imagine everyone sees thing as they do or make the assumptions about individuals and teams that are untrue. Ask the right questions. If one asks, "Why aren't you doing this?" a defensive and obstructive answer is the result. If, on the other hand, one asks, "What issues are you having with this?" the clear answer of why it isn't happening is received and can be resolved. Resolve issues through communication and individual attention.

- *Talk about transition and what it does to people. -*
  Give stakeholders and group leaders a seminar on how to manage people in transition. Everyone can benefit from understanding transition. A leader will deal with associates better if she or he understands what they are going through. If they understand what transition is like, they will be more confident that they are not taking a wrong turn. Associates can deal with change if they understand what is hard and what can be done about it.

- *Figure out who perceives they have something to lose and their resistance. -*
  Transition starts with an ending to the old ways. Individuals can't practice something new until the old is let go. It's the process of letting go that people resist, not the change itself. What must they stop doing and what are they going to have to start doing? Be specific. Until this is spelled out, understanding and letting go will not occur.

- *Communicate, communicate, communicate. -*
  Clearly establish a plan to communicate the motives (continual reinforcement), what, when and who of the planned change. Provide each individual with the understanding of when and what is replaced and the what, when and benefits of new capabilities and who is there to help and guide through the transition.

[5] W. Bridges, "Managing Transitions – Making the Most of Change"
[6] Ibid

Practical Application of Intervention Techniques

The above are macro factors to establish the smoothest transition possible for any product. However, to accomplish these factors and have been previously mentioned, there are two important considerations: communication and individual involvement. Application of techniques for product adoption and transition is detailed in the Product Adoption Strategy section below. The following are the highlighted techniques that are required for successful product adoption (based on transition principles shown below). Commitment is necessary to implement these techniques (in cooperation with and support of the clients) to ensure full benefits are realized from the implementation of a product. Specifics of communication, individual involvement and training are discussed in subsequent sections.

- *During Purchase Decision, Proposal Definition and Client Stakeholder Involvement*
  - Define product adoption, its techniques and the risks of ignoring product adoption
  - Select pilot organization based on predefined criteria
  - Create a features and benefits statement for initial organizational announcement
  - Identify incentives for product adoption for the organization as well as successful associates

- *During Startup*
  - Identify organizational and pilot stakeholders and champions
  - Identify pilot organization transition leaders and influencers
  - Provide stakeholders, champions, transition leaders and influencers with the tools and techniques of Managing Transition
  - Define pilot educational needs (What, Who, When, Where and Why)
  - Define pilot communication plan for education and feedback
  - Define pilot training needs
  - Perform the Five-Step Assessment of Individual Involvement for the pilot and prepare remedial activities if necessary
  - Define the training plan for pilot participants
  - Develop a schedule of events and responsibilities for the above

- *During the Pilot Preparation and Pilot Implementation*
  - Execute education via a practical communication plan
  - Involve stakeholders, champions and transition leaders in pilot technical preparation activities
  - Execute pilot training activities
  - Monitor individual involvement activities and prepare remedial activities if necessary
  - Define “lessons learned” from pilot production adoption activities
  - Define barriers and disruptions (if necessary) to the pilot participants and include in “lessons learned”
  - Define and schedule subsequent organizational entities for product adoption and implementation

- *Subsequent Entity Preparation*
  - Identify organizational stakeholders, champions, transition leaders and influencers
  - Provide stakeholders, champions, transition leaders and influencers with the tools and techniques of Managing Transition
  - Provide stakeholders, champions, transition leaders and influencers with the tools and techniques of Managing Transition
  - Define educational needs (What, Who, When, Where and Why) based on lessons learned
  - Define the communication plan for education and feedback based on lessons learned
  - Define training needs based on lessons learned

- Perform the Five-Step Assessment of Individual Involvement and prepare remedial activities if necessary based on lessons learned
- Define the training plan based on lessons learned
- Prepare activities to alleviate barriers and disruptions based on lessons learned
- Develop a schedule of events and responsibilities for the above

- *Subsequent Entity Implementation*
  - Execute education via a practical communication plan
  - Execute training activities
  - Monitor individual involvement activities and prepare remedial activities if necessary
  - Define "lessons learned" from production adoption activities
  - Define barriers and disruptions (if necessary) to the participants and include in "lessons learned"
  - Define and schedule subsequent organizational entities for product adoption and implementation

Principles of Managing Transition

All the above points and tactics help associates leave the current scheme and adopt the new capability. However, Managing Transition also requires reinforcement and several disciplines to be effective and convincing.

- *Be Consistent. -*
  The first reinforcement is consistency. Every policy, procedure and list of priorities sends a message. Great care must be taken to prevent conflicting messages.

- *Symbolize the New Capability. -*
  Never underestimate the power of branding. It reinforces the new capability symbolically while separating it from the old. Care must be taken, however, that the symbol be respected.

- *Celebrate the Success. -*
  Take time to celebrate and recognize the successful usage of the new capability. Clear marks of success should be established, and once reached, teams, contributors and associates acknowledged. This is especially important for groups that have not yet transitioned to the new product.

- *Ensure Quick Success.*
  These successes can come in small tasks such as providing immediate capability (such as password reset and server outages) if further capability is not quickly available.

- *Be honest, candid and less serious. -*
  This discipline is tied to consistency, honesty, candid lessons learned and actions to correct deficiencies provide confidence to those in transition. A less than serious approach to communication can also provide a more relaxing attitude.

Communication

A clear communication plan is necessary to facilitate acceptance and transition to a new product. There are many rationalizations in organizations for not communicating. Some common ones are:

- *Don't need to know yet. We'll tell them when the time comes. It'll just upset them now. -*

For every week of upset that you avoid by hiding the facts, you gain a month of bitterness and mistrust. Besides, the grapevine already has the news, so don't imagine that your information is a secret.

- *They already know. We announced it. -*
  You told them but it didn't sink in. Remember the adage - tell me and I will forget, show me and I might remember, involve me and I will understand and support. Say it again and find different ways to say it and different media (large meetings, one-on-one, memos, email, a story in the newsletter) in which to say it.

- *I told the supervisors. It's their job to tell the rank and file. -*
  The supervisors are likely to be in transition themselves, and they may not understand the information to convey it accurately although they are the most influential with the associate (aside from the informal leaders). Don't assume the information trickles down through the organization reliably or in a timely fashion.

- *We don't know the details ourselves, so there's no point in saying anything until everything has been decided. -*
  In the meantime, people can get more and more resentful and unsure. Much better to say what you do know, say that you don't know more, and tell what kind of schedule exists for additional information. If information isn't available later when it was promised, don't forget to say something to show that you haven't forgotten your promise.

Communicating Features, Benefits and Education Components (What and Why)

Creation of a features and benefits statement is recommend as an integral part of any effective education and communication program. This statement is often referred to as the "product vision." This marketing message should be compelling, persuasive, and easy to understand and communicate. A product vision session should be convened that includes representatives of various organizational constituencies, and a consensus vision statement be constructed that can then form the nucleus of the communication effort. Included is the timeline and constituency of the education and communication effort.

However, communication is key to the education of associates to the what, why and who of change and transition. A communication plan should contain the following main points. Involving corporate communications at this point is necessary as their expertise can be leveraged – their understanding of what works and what doesn't and their knowledge of the media available to the organization.

- *Define what is being moved out and what isn't. -*
  Think through each aspect of the product change and be specific about what goes and what stays. It takes time to define, but does not take the time to recover from the following:
  - Associates won't dare to stop anything. They will try to perform the old methods as well as the new. After a while they will burn out with overload.
  - Associates will make their own decisions about what to discard and what to keep and the result will be chaotic and the product will not be adopted.
  - Associates may react to toss out all customer service contact. It may provide desired results for IT, however, their technical and job productivity will suffer and cause frustration.

- *Mark and communicate the end of the previous capability.*

- *Clearly define the new capability in terms of timing and benefits for the individual. -*

Associates will want a new capability (especially if there is frustration with the old), however, they will also be ambivalent due to the natural emotions of change and transition.

- Explain the purpose behind the outcome sought by the new product. What was the motive or problem and on what evidence. What would have occurred had no action been taken and taken and what would have been the consequences? One of the clear obstacles to adoption is a perceived lack of purpose and benefits to the proposed changes.
- Paint a picture of how the outcome will look and work. Associates need to experience the product imaginatively before they can support it. There are several methods available to provide the picture of the product for stakeholders, leaders, informal leaders and associates. The benefits can be clearly shown.
- Lay out a step-by-step plan for phasing in the new capability. Associates need a clear scheme of how they can get to the new capability and the support available to get them there (and the support that may be required once the capability is implemented). This is not a plan on the large scale of product implementation, technical plans and group changeover – it is the steps and schedule by which associates will receive information, training and support they will need to make the transition.
- Provide for individual involvement (a part to play) in both the plan and the outcome. Associates need a tangible way to contribute and participate although it may be in a passive manner. This capability will be discussed further in the next section.

The Communication Plan (Who, What and When)

Construction of a formal communication plan is key to transition and product adoption. The following are guidelines used to construct a communication plan and suggests the following activities:

- Define constituencies
- Determine message content and media
- Plan and execute the communications strategy

- *Define Constituencies –*
  Different people within the organization have varying concerns and different needs for communication.

  - The executive level typically prefers brief, big picture updates on the status of the engagement and of open issues that must be addressed or arbitrated at their level. In addition, they must understand, as stakeholders in the new capability, their role in communication and reinforcing the adoption of the new capability.
  - Business unit managers and transition leaders must understand how new capabilities will affect their departments, its interaction with other functional units, and the outcome of the new capability. They want assurances that training and support issues are being planned and managed appropriately and that their ongoing operations will not be unduly disrupted by the implementation efforts.
  - Associates need to understand how to utilize the new capability to resolve technical issues. They want to be assured that their concerns and support needs will be addressed and that the new capability will be convenient to use and not threaten their job performance or security.
  - Information technology staff members are interested in their roles and responsibilities in the planning and implementation of the new technology. They want to understand the technical aspects of the new capability, and they want assurances that they will be prepared to be effective in supporting and maintaining that capability.

- *Determine Message Content and Media. -*

Create a communications project plan that will define the frequency, media, and content of the messages to be broadcast throughout the organization. Some of the communications suggested activities are described in the following:

- *Executive Briefings.* - Meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis between product adoption project managers and executives, in order to brief executives on project status, open issues, questions requiring arbitration, and other issues affecting schedule, budget, quality, and risk management. Expectations of support, individual plans and message communications to associates require reinforcement.

- *Associate Auditorium Presentations.* - Presentations by stakeholders and transition leaders to assembled teams of associates, explaining the new capability, plans and definition of the new capability in terms of timing and benefits for the individual. Question and answer sessions during these assemblies allow associates to express concerns and suggestions directly to stakeholders, transition leaders and project teams.

- *Newsletter.* - A periodic newsletter, intended as a general informational vehicle for the entire organization, should be distributed to all associates. The format should be entertaining and informative. It should be structured to generate excitement and anticipation about the benefits of the new capability. Special inserts, such as open letters from corporate management to the associates describing the objectives and benefits of the capability, should be incorporated into the newsletter. Associate feedback and suggestions should be also be included to promote interactivity.

- *Lunch and Learn.* - The “lunch and learn” format, in which a trade show environment is set up in the cafeteria or other associate gathering place and representatives of various project teams present information to their associates, provides a valuable opportunity to communicate a positive message to the community. Associates can interact directly with project teams and with their peers and learn the plans for implementing the new capability.

- *Posters and Brochures.* - Consistent, repetitive exposure to the product goals and benefits will help effectively overcome skepticism and build momentum for the capability. Posters in strategic areas throughout the existing sites, explaining the features and benefits of the new capability, will create an atmosphere of anticipation and mental preparedness for the change. Brochures that present more detail, including specific technology and capability, methods of registering concerns or resolving issues, should be prepared and distributed.

- *Focus Groups.* - Allowing associates and managers to participate in the design of a product is an excellent way to build buy-in and assure that requirements are addressed. It is recommended that focus group sessions be conducted based on the pilot schedule and additional product rollout schedules, and then incorporating the comments and feedback into the adoption planning process. User “champions” will sometimes rise from these situations to become conduits of project information to their respective teams.

- *Associate Surveys.* - An ongoing series of associate surveys, gauging concerns and issues that are arising among the staff and that may not be visible at the planning team level, will create an atmosphere of participation and enthusiasm.

- *Electronic Suggestion Box.* - The creation of e-mail and voice-mail suggestion boxes that can be accessed by all associates to leave messages of concern, suggestions, and issues is a powerful communications tool. Issues raised can then be included in the newsletter, to demonstrate that the planning team is listening and incorporating physician/associate suggestions in the process. Feedback of actions (or why a suggestion is not incorporated) is necessary for reinforcement.

- *Intranet Web Page.* - A project-focused web page that broadcasts status information, schedules, and project benefits can be convenient and an entertaining method of communicating. Both associates and executives can access the data at their convenience and can immediately send feedback via e-mail links posted prominently on the page. Online documentation that describes the new capability will give associates a chance to educate themselves at their own speed.

- Other methods of communication, such as memorandums from executive management or departmental status briefings, should also be considered.

Communication Execution

Communication should be planned as a project, with specific goals, objectives, deliverables, roles and responsibilities, and schedules. It is recommended that a communications team, consisting of associates involved in the planning of product adoption as well as representatives of corporate training and communications departments, be created and tasked with the responsibility to design a plan that includes the elements outlined above. This plan should then be scheduled and budgeted as a discrete element of the overall adoption effort, and its activities should be integrated into the master product implementation project plan. We have significant experience in the design of IT project communication plans and should be pleased to participate in this effort.

Individual Involvement

Example is not the main thing in influencing others,
it's the only thing.

- Albert Schweitzer, French physician

Although involving the individual in product adoption has been articulated in several areas discussed in the Managing Transition and Communication sections above, there are additional considerations to the characteristics of successful product adoption. These are discussed in this section.

Key to individual involvement is the necessity of the involvement of stakeholders and transition leaders from the business community in which this product is implemented. They will, along with expert input our expertise, provide the key principles in Managing Transition and be a communications conduit.

Stakeholders, Champions and Transition Leaders

As discussed in previous information concerning a product, an important facet of product implementation is the pilot. Early on in the process to finalize the Statement of Work for the implementation, a pilot group should be carefully chosen and negotiated. The pilot group will influence and set an example (among gaining valuable lessons learned) for subsequent groups that will implement the product. Key to each business group and the adoption of change for the pilot as well as subsequent groups is the stakeholder and transition leader for the group. They should be chosen carefully. Several factors should be considered in selecting these individuals:

- *Respected and candid individuals within the group (not necessarily the executive or senior manager) who can communicate and lead transition.*

- *Responsive to Change. -*

Change response is the measure of an individual's past willingness and ability to learn from experiences and subsequently modify her or his behavior positively based on lessons learned. He or she is positive and willing to influence others with their responsiveness.[7]

- *Versatility. -*
  Versatility is future focused. It is a speculative measure of an individual's ability to play an expanded role as her or his group evolves into the change. As the word implies, versatility is being able to adapt and take on different roles as product adoption dictates.[8]

- *Communication Oriented. -*
  Not only will these individuals facilitate communication of the above purpose, picture and plan, they will adopt capabilities to identify, influence and prepare associates to participate in the product adoption. To reiterate, individual participation can be within focus groups, part of a lunch-and-learn capability and/or individual team meetings. This is dependent on the organization and group as to which methods are most effective. It will be incumbent on the stakeholders and transition leaders (along with the product adoption team) to determine the effectiveness of the transition methodologies.

Five-Step Assessment

Along with the product adoption team, the stakeholders, transition leaders and selected associates within each transition group should follow a five-step assessment and prepare actions based on assessment results. The five steps are:

- *Evaluating Key Factors for the Group. Once the stakeholder and change leader are assembled, they should choose selected associates to evaluate key factors of the group. The factors are:*

  - *Targeted Skills.* These are the observed skills of the individuals in the group to assimilate new products and technical capability. Normally individuals fall into three capabilities; little or no technical skills, average technical skills and advanced technical skills (those individuals who can use their desktop and applications extremely well and may be able to stand on their own). Those individuals with advanced skills can aid those with lesser or no technical skills to assimilate the product.
  - *Pivotal Positions.* Key informal leaders will be identified in this step. The informal leaders, who have a strong influence on the attitude of the group, are identified and selected for additional grooming and coaching to make a positive influence and aid in the transition of the remainder of the group.
  - *Towering Strengths*. Are there individuals that communicate extremely well, have advanced technical skills and are informal leaders that can be leveraged into informal trainers and helpers of the remainder of the group? In addition, they can informally lead focus groups and facilitate improvements or concerns of the product.
  - *Development Needs.* Are there individuals that require additional development and coaching (transition, technical, time)? Individuals are identified and coached.
  - *Challenges/Unanswered Questions.* Many managers and leaders downplay challenges and these questions hoping they resolve themselves on their own. Articulate the challenges and questions, then track and communicate the actions for resolution.

- *Spotlighting Key Measures in Individuals. -*

[7] C. Bishop, "Making Change Happen"
[8] Ibid

The two key measures, Responsiveness to Change and Versatility, were discussed as part of selecting stakeholders and transition leaders. The key measures will highlight the effort and depth of communication needed for the group. Associates may have had performance reviews and they have been observed in action. However, they may not have been evaluated in terms of a transition.

- *Identifying Group Change Capacity. -*
  Evaluating the five factors and understanding the group's responsiveness to change and versatility can assemble a clear plan assembled to augment the ability to perform the product adoption through additional communication techniques if required.

- *Analyzing Weak Links and Risks. -*
  By determining sufficient depth of Targeted Skills, Pivotal Positions and Towering Strengths, transition leadership can determine whether additional outside help may be required to transition to the new product.

- *Drawing the Roadmap. -*
  Once the Group Change Capacity is determined and Weak Links and Risks are identified, the next step is to identify any additional help or innovative activities unique to the group that may be required. This step articulates specific actions (communication, coaching, training, motivation, outside help) that are required for the successful transition of the group.

Although the five-step approach may seem daunting, in reality it may be accomplished within a few days (or one to two weeks) depending on the size of the group. We have methodologies and tools to bring the focus and understanding of accomplishing the five-step analysis and roadmap to accomplishing the transition for each group. In addition, the product transition team has the expertise to continually coach stakeholders and transition leaders through the process of attaining individual involvement and motivation.

Training

Although product training is minimal for associates (intuitive, provides excellent pop-up tutorials and is self contained) there are several basics that must be covered. These basics include, but are not limited to, accessing the application, sign-on techniques, initial navigation and capability. This training may be provided with a simple brochure or a Web Page on the organization's Intranet. However, those associates with low technical acuity may need additional help to understand the basics of using a new product. The product will also aid their understanding of other desktop based applications and office tools. As a new product knowledge management capabilities are better understood and used by the novice associate, additional technical knowledge will be gained by individual initiative.

Product Adoption Strategy

It should be clear to a CIO and/or CTO that the same barriers to a complex implementation exist for the adoption of any product within the physician and associate community. Although a new product has none of the complexity or scale of the clinical results, adoption in the user community is critical to achieve ROI goals and efficiencies within the clinical processes.

All the concepts and key principles described above may not be necessary for every organization, there will be several key elements necessary for a specific organization to succeed in the product adoption process. These key elements are revealed during the initial phases of discovery for the Statement of Work. Although the concepts are discussed in this methodology, key elements and the approach to product adoption cannot be determined without some in depth evaluation of the needs and customs of a specific organization. Further analysis, planning and scheduling of the product adoption strategy detail is necessary as part of the Business, Process and Needs analysis.

The strategy presented here is the strategy for product adoption. The purpose of this strategy is to present the activities, methodologies and tools as a mechanism for discussion, study and information to determine the optimum plan for a specific organization to achieve adoption of the product and for IT to achieve its ROI and service desk goals and objectives.

One very important purpose of this strategy is the upfront discovery of the adoption needs and customs of each organization and the early selection of the pilot group with specific criteria presented to key client team members and stakeholders. In addition, a strategy for successive group rollout must be carefully determined to ensure quick success and a model for subsequent groups (based on success of past adoption and lessons learned).

Objectives

Our goal in providing the product adoption framework is to enhance customer current communications capability to better serve its key stakeholders and associates by keeping them informed about the adoption of a new product, how project implementation will affect them, and how to effectively utilize the product. In an effort to further this goal, we partner customers will pursue the following key objectives:

- Enhance and streamline the delivery of product and service capability to customer stakeholders and physician/associate staff.
- Strengthen communication with key stakeholders and physician/associate staff regarding the pivotal role in and knowledge of emerging capabilities to improve customer service and knowledge management.
- Enhance, educate and deliver key characteristics, managing transition, communication, attention to individual groups and training that move the adoption to the upper 10 percent to 15 percent of successful implementations.
- Provide successful plans, methodologies and tools to solidify associate use and acceptance of the product to achieve ROI and efficiencies within the clinical setting while providing new physician/associate capability and knowledge.
- Provide the adoption mechanisms to supply the following to stakeholders, change leadership and associates:
  - A day-to-day plan to provide focus to tasks and deliverables,
  - A vision to aid in the setting of priorities,
  - A measured sense of order, control and measurement of product adoption,
  - Successful staff communication, input and support,
  - Protection against reactive demands and counterproductive activities, and
  - A clear communication of intent, progress, lessons learned and expectation management.

Critical Success Factors

As stated in the Introduction, more than half projects failed to be completed or did not achieve bottom-line business results, and for this reason product adoption "success factors" have become an important area of study. The success factors below are derived from benchmarking studies with more than 150 companies over a 24-month period.

Success factors are a collection of lessons learned from product adoption projects. Product team members that have struggled to make their projects successful often say,

"If I had it to do over again, I would. . . "

and from these lessons common themes have emerged. In this section we examine these themes or success factors that lead to successful outcomes for projects. These Critical Success Factors (CFSs) include:

- *Top Management Sponsorship (strong and consistent involvement) -*
  Major product adoption typically affects processes, technology, job roles and customs in the workplace. A significant change to even one of these areas requires resources, money, and leadership. Changing them simultaneously is a task that requires focus and commitment. If top management does not provide strong and consistent support, most likely one of these three elements (money, resources, or leadership) will not be present over the life of the project, severely crippling chances for success.

- *Strategic Alignment – "Sell" the motive and individual benefit -*
  You should be able to tie your project goals back to key business objectives, the overall product direction for the organization and individual benefits. This linkage should show the thread from the top down, so each person can easily connect the overall business direction with your adoption effort. You should be able to demonstrate this alignment from the perspective of financial performance, customer service, associate (employee) value, and the vision for the organization.

- *Compelling Business Case for Change (with measurable objectives) -*
  In one page or less you must be able to communicate the business case for product adoption. Less is preferred. Why is this important? First, your project is not the center of the universe. People have other important things to do, too. Second, you must make this case over and over again throughout the project and during implementation - the simpler and shorter it is, the more understandable and compelling your case will be.

- *Proven Methodology (that includes a clear adoption pilot) -*
  The succeeding strategy detail presents several production adoption methodologies and it is important to note that your methodology does matter. Seat-of-the-pants product adoption is just too risky given the need for ROI, leveraging customer service and impact these projects have on processes and people. Not only should physician/associate stakeholders, change leaders and informal leaders understand product adoption, they should know how to go about it. In short, an approach is needed that will meet the needs of production adoption and one that the team understands and supports.

- *Effective Change Management (address customs and needs) -*
  One of the most overlooked obstacles to successful project implementation is resistance from those whom implementers believe will benefit the most. Most projects underestimate the cultural impact of major product adoption, and as a result do not achieve the full potential of business requirements. Change is not an event, despite our many attempts to call folks together and have a meeting to make change happen. Change management is the discipline of managing change as a process, with due consideration to *Managing Transition, Communication, Individual Involvement and Training*.

- *Line Ownership (pair ownership with accountability) -*
  Many product adoption teams are the SWAT type – senior management responding to crisis with external consultants or their own staff. Unfortunately the ability of external consultants to

implement significant change in an organization is small. The chances are only slightly better for staff groups. Ultimately the solution and results come back to those accountable for day-to-day execution. Terms of engagement and accountability must be clear. The ownership must ultimately rest with the line operation and physicians/associates.

Often those closest to the problem can't see it. They lack objectivity, external focus, technical re-design knowledge, and money. On the other hand, they know their organization. They know the gaps and issues, they have front-line, in-your-face experience. They are real. The associates work with them, not your consultants and staff personnel.

Both are needed. The line organization is needed to have the awareness that they need help, to contribute their knowledge, and to own the solution and implementation. At the same time the expertise and objectivity from outside their organizations is needed.

Building this partnership is the responsibility of the line organization, stakeholders, associates, IT and product and product adoption specialists. No group is off the hook.

- *Product Adoption Team Composition (in both breadth and knowledge) -*
  The product adoption team (based on whether a pilot or subsequent rollout) should be composed of the following key team members:

  - Members that know product adoption processes and methodologies inside out. Preferably from an outside organization that is objective, knows the product and knows product adoption methodologies. Too often product suppliers abscond with this membership and rely only on technical training.
  - *Key Stakeholders* – Must be committed, knowledgeable of their organizations and can make executive decisions for the organization.
  - *Transition Leaders* – Must be committed, responsive to change, versatile, knowledgeable of their organizations and individual needs and can influence and lead product adoption.
  - *Key Informal Leaders* – Must be committed, responsive to change, versatile, knowledgeable of their organizations and individual needs and can influence and lead product adoption.
  - *Physicians and Associates* – Key physicians and associates from each transition group who are committed, responsive to change, versatile, knowledgeable of their individual needs and can influence product adoption. In addition, they are valuable in the business, process and needs analysis for their group – they aid in brining back positive understanding and support to their group.
  - *Key IT Product Technologists* – Key members of the IT team responsible for the installation, key systems and integration of technical and application knowledge within the product.

- *Pilot Group Selection –*
  Key to the success of the product adoption is a Pilot Group selected as part of the Statement of Work construction process. Obviously, this occurs with key client team members and stakeholders at the time of SOW discussion. The Pilot Group is chosen with specific criteria[#] developed from product adoption experience and best practices.

[#] Often a Pilot Group is chosen as perceived as having the most immediate need for the product (such as a Sales Organization or an organization that performs their duties remotely). A Pilot Group must be neither the best or worst target for transition, but one who can participate in definition, scheduling, managing transition, communication, Individual involvement and training, and the help articulate lessons learned to facilitate subsequent group adoption.

Activities in the Strategy

Two hundred and forty-eight companies have shared the most important activities to be completed for product adoption. The table below summarizes these activities by phase and included methodologies and tools for each activity.

Phase	Activity	Methodology / Tool
Planning and Startup	Identified key business drivers for product adoption and assessed the consequences of not changing	Product Adoption Assessment and Business Case Development
	Identified Pilot Group	Pilot Group Criteria
	Identified senior management sponsors and created a steering committee of key stakeholders	
	Gained senior management support for the project	
	Prepared a project plan: defined the scope, established measurable objectives, selected a methodology, and established a high-level schedule	Statement of Work Methodology
	Obtained agreement with senior managers on objectives and scope for the project	Statement of Work Approval
	Selected the Pilot Group and Adoption Team	Pilot Group Selection Criteria, Team Member Assessment
	Held a project kick-off meeting with the Pilot Group	Product Benefits, Pilot Criteria, Product Adoption Techniques
	Briefed pilot functional managers about the goals of the project; began communications to the organization	Product Benefits, Pilot Criteria, Product Adoption Techniques, Executive Communication
	Educated the Pilot Adoption Team	Product Benefits, Managing Transition, Communication and Individual Involvement Briefings
	Began change management activities and prepared a communication plan	Managing Transition, Communication, Individual Involvement and Training Methodologies
Phase	**Activity**	**Methodology / Tool**
Planning and Startup (Continued)	Designed and constructed the product adoption web page as a communication and product demonstration medium	Product Benefits, Demonstration and Communication Methodology

Product Adoption

Research and Discovery (Pilot)	Conducted associate interviews and focus groups to identify current and future needs for product usage Interviewed associates and managers to understand gaps, issues and to brainstorm ideas for change Conducted the “Five Step” Evaluation for Readiness of Change and Adoption Reviewed technology changes and options Interviewed stakeholders, key senior managers and associates Constructed and reviewed communication plan	Product Adoption Usage Assessment Product Adoption Change Assessment “Five Step” Evaluation and Findings Business, process and needs analysis and product knowledge Communication planning and execution
Design (Pilot)	Completed detailed design of product adoption, organizational models; defined roll out Developed supporting technology Created vision of ideal product adoption Separated short- and long-term improvements	Transition, Individual Involvement and Training Planning Installed product and integration Transition, Individual Involvement and Training Planning Business, Process and Needs Analysis with the Product Adoption Team
Implementation (Pilot)	Completed detailed design of product adoption, organizational models; defined roll out Developed supporting technology Communicated new solution to employees; implemented change management plan	Transition and Individual Involvement Implementation Training Implementation Transition and Individual Involvement Implementation
Phase	**Activity**	**Methodology / Tool**
Implementation (Pilot) (Continued)	Developed a training plan and trained employees on new processes and systems	Training Implementation

	Monitor pilot group usage Develop and apply lessons learned Selected subsequent transition groups	Reporting and Measurement Product Adoption Selection Criteria
Research and Discovery	Conducted associate interviews and focus groups to identify current and future needs for product usage Interviewed associates and managers to understand gaps, issues and to brainstorm ideas for change Conducted the "Five Step" Evaluation for Readiness of Change and Adoption Reviewed technology changes and options Interviewed stakeholders, key senior managers and associates Execute revised communication plan	Product Adoption Usage Assessment and Lessons Learned Product Adoption Change Assessment and Lessons Learned "Five Step" Evaluation and Findings and Lessons Learned Business, process and needs analysis and product knowledge Communication execution and Lessons Learned
Design	Brainstormed new and innovative ideas; used creative thinking exercises to think "outside of the box" Conducted what-if scenarios and applied "success templates" to communication, individual involvement and training Separated short- and long-term improvements	Facilitated transition planning and communication techniques and Lessons Learned Facilitated communication, individual involvement and training techniques Business, Process and Needs Analysis with the Product Adoption Teams and Lessons Learned
Implementation	Completed detailed design of product adoption, organizational models; defined roll out	Transition, Individual Involvement and Training Planning and Lessons Learned
Phase	**Activity**	**Methodology / Tool**
Implementation (Continued)	Communicated new solution to employees; implemented change management plan	Transition and Individual Involvement Implementation and Lessons Learned

	Developed a training plan and trained employees on new processes and systems Monitor product usage	Training Implementation and Lessons Learned Reporting and Measurement
Next Steps	Defined key measures to evaluate periodically; measured the success of the new product; implemented a continuous-improvement program for the new product Issued final report to steering committee and senior managers	Reporting and Measurement

Sample Incentive Programs

As stated in the Top Ten Best Practices for Implementing Transition section, *Create demand for change; don't mandate or force it and Overhaul incentives before you begin*, are two best practices that incentive programs can help facilitate. This section does not attempt to list all incentive programs, however, it does list examples by which an organization can build or be innovative. Obviously incentives will be totally organizational dependent based on custom and previous practices. However, incentives are important to reward transition and success. The incentives can be as little as recognition of the best performers in a transition team and a symbol of success. It may be a T-shirt with "I Survived Product Adoption" across the front or a certificate of thanks for their participation. Serious or a joke, it acknowledges and ends a difficult time of transition.

- *Provide no choice but to use the new product –*
  Not a positive incentive, however, there is a strong motivation to use the product when there is no alternative. As with any learning experience, you can expect to encounter setbacks and hurdles. However, view these as opportunities to gain knowledge that the organization can build on, and don't allow your teams to get discouraged and lose focus. Make an effort to create an environment that advocates and rewards some level of risk taking. Without this, people will not be bold enough to propose new ideas and push for innovation. When change ceases, so does improvement and growth.

- *Build product acceptance into Performance Evaluations –*
  Although this incentive may not be available in all organizations, it is a clear message that innovation, change and a new product is clearly a part of individual performance and expectations.

- *Establish a clear group reward for a successful transition –*
  If the product is important enough to the organization and provides a clear financial benefit, sharing some of that benefit with associates (articulated prior to the transition effort) send a clear message of its importance.

- *Hold managers accountable with a friendly competition –*
  Once the product is installed for a group and transition activities have been completed, measure the usage within teams within the group. Report on a weekly basis the percent

utilization by each team to all team managers. When a team achieves 100% utilization (or less if the business case allows), reward, recognize and publicize their accomplishment. Recognize and publicize each team's achievement on reaching the utilization target.

Conclusion

Without understanding the whys of product adoption, decisions that would make sense in a pre-product adoption environment can quickly change in attitude – particularly when those decisions are made by middle managers whose day-to-day tasks revolve not around the computer screen but the directing of people who use the computer. "It is called it the black hole of middle management."[9] It is defined as "cultural inertia." "Companies have confused culture with wallet cards,"[10] referring to the printed crib sheets on which businesses set out their value statements and mission statements in a handy-but-forgettable format. The result? Managers who talk the talk but walk whatever way they may choose.

Training in how to operate the system will not, however, help the middle manager see down the road far enough to decide to forgo the short-term benefit of bypassing the come what may. Only a broader-based, holistic education in an organization's product adoption will do that.

But if associate and middle management education, communication and transition is so important, why isn't it given more priority? One answer, fortunately, is that it is being given more priority – now. "Companies have begun to wake up to the fact that education is a key requirement."[11] Education, communication and transition as a proportion of overall budgeted project costs was typically around 5 percent as recently as two years ago per analysts' published estimates. Now the figure has more than doubled, to around 11 percent of project budget.

While that is reassuring news, providing education, communication and transition must be enhanced for implementation success. "Very wide ranges make industry averages of no value," observes Benchmarking Partners, whose own study found that even though education, communication and associate involvement and transition averaged 8 percent of total project cost, the actual costs ranged anywhere from 1 percent to 30 percent. CIOs who aim for the average figure (and nearly every CIO in our experience could instantly cite what percentage of their organization's implementation costs were dedicated to education, communication and transition) may therefore be running the risk of undershooting the target requirement for a successful transition.

However, with examples of product adoption success that focus on education, communication and associate involvement and transition, companies may be expected to give some hard thought to acquiring and implementing an approach with product adoption.

[9] Implementation Management Associates
[10] Ibid
[11] P. Newton, CEO, The DA Group