

Expert opinion

Digital Transformation: the individual at the heart of change management

By Philippe Le Gloahec, Consultant Manager, Hardis Group

The digital transformation goes hand in hand with profound changes to companies' organization, culture or even business models. It cannot happen without well-prepared change management, to anticipate obstacles and accompany the changes and revolutions which employees face, collectively and individually.

Digital transformation: an organizational and cultural shake-up

A transformation involves passing from state A to state B, regardless of the nature and depth of the transformation. In the case of the digital transformation, this is accompanied in 80% of cases with a transformation affecting organization, culture and business models: moving from a product sales model to one of service sales; from a BtoB to a BtoC model or a BtoBtoC model; from a single or dual-channel model to an omnichannel model, etc. It induces major changes in ways of working: means and tools for communicating and working together, more horizontal and less compartmentalized organizations, corporate culture changes, redefining the concepts of time and distance, etc.

But appropriation of new means of working is far from intuitive. From a purely technological standpoint, all employees (not to speak of generations) are not equal in terms of digital usage; while from an organizational standpoint, the acceleration of life cycles induced by digital technology, the deregulation of functions and redistribution of power are often causes for concern or mistrust on the part of some employees.

The HR director: the key to successful transformation

In fact, digitization induces the same types of behavior with regard to change as any other change: 10% of pioneers, 20% of employees with their foot on the brake and 70% who are willing to follow if they understand the meaning of the change for their organization and for themselves individually. Without going into the tactics of managing change, this means that these 70% need to be brought along to embrace new uses, new ways of working, new behaviors and postures, etc.

But in most companies, digital transformation projects are run by the operational departments and the IS department. The HR director is rarely involved early enough, whereas he is the only one, together with senior management, who has a cross-sector view of the company, its strategy and its culture. The HR director is also best placed to have a 360° view of HR issues related to the digital transformation, to assess employees' appetite for change and to set up measures to assist them in their development.

A necessary individual approach to change

Although it is transversal, a digital transformation cannot be conducted solely from a collective standpoint. It must also include the individual angle. The challenge for HR directors lies in their ability to analyze and anticipate changes for employees: the work itself, working

conditions, changes in management and / or colleagues, payment means, etc. This individual approach less expensive and time consuming than it sounds, and plays a fundamental role in the adoption of change by employees. These then feel that they better considered individually, as part of an approach that is nevertheless global.

To achieve this, it is essential to involve employees, from thinking to training and coaching in their new "digital daily life". To this end, it is imperative to mobilize middle and local management - which is itself often "tormented" by change - in order to get employees to adopt a positive mindset and facilitate the stage of appropriating change.

In summary, a digital transformation plan is a transformation plan, full stop. It should be an opportunity for a company to reinvent itself, to create new synergies and to transform risks into opportunities. And only cross-sector change management, taking into account individual challenges, will maximize its chances of success. For in the collective intelligence surrounding digital transformation, it is above all a question of trust and inter-relational communication.

About Hardis Group

Hardis Group, a digital services company and software publisher, assists its customers in their move to digital and omni-channel. The company helps them transform their information systems, their supply chain and their customer relationships to create value and increase operational performance. With its dual historical positioning, Hardis Group has developed business expertise in the areas of banking, insurance and e-health, distribution (CPG and luxury goods), industry and energy, logistics and transport services. This expertise now allows it to provide its clients with global responses to their needs, in an agile approach characterized by co-construction, innovation and continuous improvement.

Since its creation in 1984, the company has built its growth on a pragmatic approach and values of efficiency and firm commitment both to its 2,500 clients and its 700 employees (25% of whom are also shareholders). Hardis Group posted turnover figures of €62.1 million in 2014. The Group, whose headquarters are in Grenoble, has four other agencies in Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

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