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Struggles with adoption of change

Are you introducing business changes, new technology, or working methods that impact your people? Do you need help getting teams and people to adopt the change fully? Adoption issues are common. Here is the lowdown.

Change Challenger #3

What's happening?

Pockets of change adoption form when an organisation's change initiative is only partially embraced. Some people fully adopt the changes while others lag or resist altogether, creating a fragmented landscape where the new processes, technologies, or ways of working are inconsistently implemented.

This disparity in adoption can stem from a whole host of sources, including differing personal attitudes to the change, functional silos, divergent levels of change readiness, change saturation, and more.

What does it look like

Let's explore
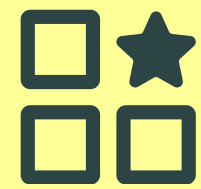
Functional differences

Different functions, regions, or teams implement the changes at different speeds or not at all, leading to inconsistent practices across the organisation – potentially creating an even worse situation than before the change started.

Change fatigue

Teams that struggle to adopt new changes may become disengaged, feeling overwhelmed or left behind. This lethargy can be hard to combat, but it's important to address it.

Isolated successes

Early adopters experience success but struggle to translate their achievements across the organisation due to a lack of support or resources. Seeing pockets of success can be a double-edged sword: it could motivate people to push through the change because they can see the potential of greener grass, or conversely, it could demotivate those who are behind by reinforcing a belief that they're too far behind to catch up.

Cultural divisions

Teams or individuals who do not adopt the changes can create division in the organisation, potentially leading to competing cultures.

How do pockets of adoption affect change

When pockets of adoption occur, the change initiative is at risk of stalling, with the organisation failing to realise the full benefits of the proposed transformation:

1 **Fragmented efficiency**

Inconsistent adoption leads to workflow disparities, decreasing overall efficiency as teams struggle to collaborate effectively.
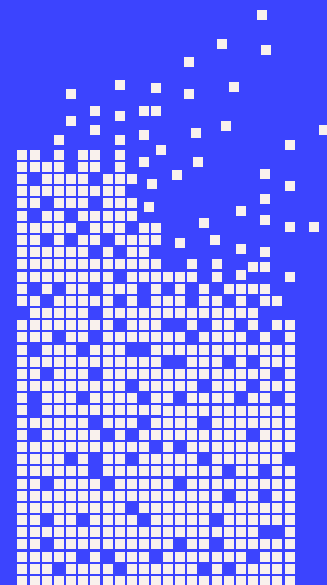
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2 **Siloed success**

The value generated by early adopters remains isolated, preventing the broader organisation from reaping similar benefits.

3 **Erosion of trust**

TRUST

Employees outside the pockets where adoption is high may perceive the changes as irrelevant or untenable for their situation, eroding trust in the direction of the change (remember the importance of a strong vision for the change?).

4 **Disengagement**

Teams resisting the changes can feel excluded or anxious, which can lead to a self-reinforcing lack of adoption.

NOTE

Pockets of adoption can sometimes result from overlooked contextual issues, like differing customer bases, team dynamics, or regional regulations.

Understanding these unique factors allows leaders and managers to tailor support and resources, bridging the adoption gap.

What can you do?

Tips to foster alignment

Cross-pollinate ideas and ways of working

Encourage successful teams to share their adoption strategies with others.

This can be done informally (like cross-team sharing sessions) or more formally (through mentorship).

Tailor support and training

Provide resources that address the specific concerns and challenges of teams struggling to adopt the changes.

Celebrate incremental wins

Recognise and reward progress made by people embracing the changes, showcasing their successes as achievable examples.

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Leadership sponsorship

Ensure senior leaders actively support and promote the adoption process, modelling change and addressing concerns head-on.

Time to meet Howard

Hi Howard

Howard **couldn't understand** how things were so different. He'd **recently joined** the Regional Category Development team **as a transfer from another region** in the business.

There had been an **ongoing transformation** programme in the company that **fundamentally shifted** how they **engaged** with their **customer base**. Admittedly, he knew his previous region was at the vanguard of these changes. But, he was **under the impression** that the **changes were "live"** in the new region despite this. However, when he arrived, what he discovered was **quite different**. There was a lack of data availability (and even if they did have the data, it wasn't clear that people would know what to do with it), and the **ways of working** with the customer were **deteriorating**. He couldn't understand **why this region** was so markedly different from where he'd come from. This **isolated approach to adoption** was leading to a **diminished market position**.

But they had all the **potential to recover**—they had great brands and great people, and he sensed a commitment to do better beneath the challenges.

What happened with Howard?

Howard experienced the sharp end of what happens when a change only has pockets of adoption. But, the good news is that he had experienced what things could be like.

⚠ Howards approach was critical.

He wasn't going to win any friends by being too forceful, and he genuinely had sympathy for his colleagues; he could see the struggle. So, he spent some time enquiring about why they were struggling with the changes. It turns out that the region is massively more complex than the previous region he worked in. There are way more markets, different regulatory requirements, different levels of capability, and a different resourcing model. These were challenges, but it didn't mean there couldn't be any improvement.

Howard started to slowly unpick these challenges – sharing lessons learned, coaching and improving, and challenging where more systemic change was needed.

By addressing the barriers to broader adoption and recognising the importance of tailored strategies, Howard was able to help the organisation bridge the gaps and ensure that the value and benefits of the change was shared consistently across the business.

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Change is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be disruptive.

We work with established blue chips, SMEs, ambitious scale-ups, and inspiring charities around the globe to help them find a better way to change.

Need help figuring out where to start?

Or do you already have a clear vision and need a reliable partner to help you get there?

Get in touch. We'd love to speak to with you.

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