

CHANGE MANAGEMENT DURING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS: HOW
TO OVERCOME BARRIERS USING AN AGILE APPROACH AND MODERN CHANGE
MODELS

by

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Change Management During Digital Transformation Projects: How to Overcome Barriers Using an Agile Approach and Modern Change Models

While focusing on the constraints of existing change management models in an agile digital world, the topic of this paper explores the human barriers change management professionals encounter during digital transformation projects and how an organization's culture can be detrimental to successfully implementing the changes required. Further, it proposes moving away from change models designed for the waterfall project management methodology and instead adopting a change model that supports agile methods to best support digital transformation projects.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The world today operates in terms of digital. Customers can pay for purchases in-store using their smartphones. Businesses rely heavily on data collected through the internet to drive business decisions. Even politicians use social media as a supplement for on-the-trail campaigning. Things that once were in-person, physical transactions are now available within the digital space, often found at the end of our fingertips. This shift, coined the Fourth Industrial Revolution by Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum in 2011, “has digital technology transforming and fusing together the physical, biological, chemical and information worlds. It's a force for a massive new opportunity in every area valued by society – i.e., convenience (e.g. online shopping), improved health (e.g. biotech), security (e.g. digital homes), food security (e.g. agrotech) and so on” (Saldanha, 2019, p. 4).

The traditional ways of doing business have been disrupted by this digital revolution and, as a result, “radically new approaches that revolutionize the way in which individuals and institutions engage and collaborate” have been developed (Schwab, 2016, p.22). Digital

transformation projects meant to plan for and adapt to this digital revolution are important for any-sized organization across all industries. When invested in, they result in “a significant, impactful initiative that can positively support their customers and employees” (Laster, 2021). However, with these new approaches come challenges as companies and organizations must either adapt or risk collapsing. This is a challenge to most organizations as it is estimated roughly 70% of complex, large-scale transformation projects fail to reach their goals, with reasons for failure including lack of employee engagement, inadequate management support, and few leaders knowing how to achieve a major reset of mind-sets and behaviors (Bucy et al., 2016).

Saldanha (2019) argues the “surprising answer to why digital transformations fail is a lack of discipline in defining *and* executing the right steps for digital transformations to take off and stay ahead” (p. 5). The steps needed for digital transformation projects, however, lie within the change management models the organization chooses to employ. The existing change models (Lewin, Conner, Kotter, etc.) were created with a waterfall project management approach in mind, whereas most digital transformation projects take an agile approach (Gibbons, 2019).

It should be noted that while an agile approach takes an iterative approach to a project, the waterfall project management approach is linear and follows a set path, which does not adequately support digital projects. This can be seen in most software development projects where a project utilizing the waterfall approach will design and implement a solution, then conduct testing and quality checks. Any changes or fixes may require the project team to go back to the design phase and correct requirements after spending significant time (sometimes months) building what they have.

An agile approach, however, would approach the project by attacking specific pieces of the requirements and delivering within a shorter window of time known as a sprint. Testing and

quality checks still occur, but bugs and necessary changes are caught earlier in the project and addressed as they arise. Project roadblocks may also be identified and addressed earlier as well. This not only saves an organization time but money as well.

Outdated change management models are not the only issue driving project failures. As with any project, there is a human behavior aspect to consider. At a senior leadership level, executives may struggle to clearly understand digital projects since these projects cannot be seen or touched. This often leads to a disconnect between those approving the change project. The managers and employees are directly impacted by it and “for a large-scale project, the people delivering the final phase have no idea of the original purpose” (O’Riordan, 2021). Despite senior leadership’s efforts, organizationally, the culture may not support the quick turnaround Agile demands and, on an individual employee level, the human instinct to resist change must be considered and managed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research paper is to discuss how leaders can mitigate the human barriers that endanger the success of digital transformation projects using a transformational leadership approach, while also highlighting the importance of adopting newer, agile-friendly change models designed with today’s Fourth Industrial Revolution in mind. There are various reasons why older change tools may not be well-suited for today’s digital world. Millennial culture and the introduction of advanced technology are contributing factors, though possibly the most important to note is that “when these models were developed, waterfall project management was all we knew” (Gibbons, 2019, p. 107).

The models being referred to by Gibbons are three of the commonly used change models developed and adopted well before the Fourth Industrial Revolution was declared in 2011:

Lewin's three-stage model in 1947, Kotter's eight-step change model in 1995, and Prosci's ADKAR model in 2003. While Prosci's ADKAR model is more recent, it requires the five steps to be worked through in chronological order. This is problematic when an agile environment considers "responding to change over following a plan" (Scrum Alliance, n.d.) a core value. Gupta (2018), further proving utilizing an agile approach is key to successful digital transformation projects, writes past research found, "More than two-thirds of the respondents in the interview spoke about the existing organizational design in the companies and how the existing structures hinder their companies from becoming agile as well as adopt agile ways of working" (p. 47). Again, past models do not support agile methodologies, but new models have been established with digital in mind.

Significance and Implications of the Study

Since the Fourth Industrial Revolution was declared, newer models such as Esser's 5-phase model (2014), PricewaterhouseCooper's 6-phase model (2013), and Bouée and Schaible's 3-phase model (2015) have been introduced to cater to a digital world. Each of these models "serve as the basis for a Roadmap to the digitalization of a business model" (Schallmo & Williams, 2018, p. 35) and will help an organization to succeed in successfully implementing digital transformation projects that are essential to keeping organizations competitive in today's modern world.

Through reviewing existing literature and data, this research paper will explore the meaning and importance of digital transformation and the areas of resistance organizations may face. Further, the importance of adopting a transformational leadership model to support the unique challenges the Fourth Industrial Revolution introduced will be emphasized. Lastly, this

research paper will provide education on several newer agile change model frameworks leaders may choose to adopt to support their digital transformation projects.

There is no debate that digital transformation projects are here to stay as technology continues to advance. The findings of this paper provide recommendations to change leaders, as well as organizational leadership, on change models that are better suited for these projects. It also highlights the importance of embracing an agile organizational culture to lay the foundation for change and reduce employee resistance so that digital transformation projects may be successful.

Literature Review

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is, by definition, “the process of using digital technologies to create new – or modify existing – business processes, culture, and customer experiences to meet changing business and market requirements” (Salesforce, n.d.). The importance, however, focuses heavily on how organizations interact with their consumer base and on the customer journey itself. The “customer’s expectations, preferences, changing patterns in how and why they purchase need to be the core of any digital transformation effort” (Columbus, 2020).

Indeed, digital transformation projects brought on by the Fourth Revolution are being driven by “a much more ubiquitous and mobile internet, by smaller and more powerful sensors that have become cheaper, and by artificial intelligence and machine learning” (Schwab, 2016, p.12). This is witnessed in day-to-day normalcies. The common smartphone allows individuals to carry a miniature computer in their pocket. Companies no longer rely on pen and paper surveys to gain valuable consumer insight. Instead, they rely on artificial intelligence and machine learning to “accommodate vast descriptive data from enormous sources; images and

videos and customer behaviour and response” (Kaur et al., 2020, p.1) and, after logging into social media on that smartphone, one often see advertisements that are tailored to their interests using the data previously collected.

Home Depot, for example, rolled out a plan to improve the eCommerce customer experience in 2017. After creating a large team of employees skilled in digital, IT, and customer experience, they began using data and predictive analysis of store inventory to save costs. The outcome was stock prices rising from \$135 to \$215 and revenue increasing by over \$17 billion (Hysolate, n.d.). On the other hand, Procter & Gamble (P&G) set out to become the “[m]ost digital company on the planet in 2012 but ran into growth challenges in a difficult economy” (Davenport & Westerman, 2018). Instead of finding success, the company found itself with a new CEO after the one overseeing the endeavor was ousted by the company’s board.

Using a different approach, CVS has long been the subject of internet jokes and memes for their extraordinarily long receipts. However, this strategy is driven by data collected each time a member of their rewards program makes a purchase. The data is then used to provide customized coupons or offers to consumers based on their past purchases. This strategy of using data-driven offers (and very long printed receipts) has not only given the company free marketing on social media but has also led to more frequent customer visits than the traditional methods of weekly circulars (Meyersohn, 2022).

As highlighted in these examples, digital transformation may be used to refer to companies leveraging enhanced technology to improve their business capabilities, operational efficiencies, and ultimately, their customers’ experiences. Maurin (2021) writes:

It doesn’t matter if your company competes head-to-head with the tech giants. When you deliver a digital experience – search, website, intranet, chatbot, anything – that experience

will be compared to the deeply relevant experiences people get every day from Google, Netflix, and so on. Today, we- the people consuming digital experiences – demand relevance in each interaction, and we reward the companies that provide it, with our time, our money, our productivity, and our loyalty. The companies without relevance? We walk away. (p. 16)

If companies approach digital transformation in a structured, timely way, they can gain benefits that could give them an improved competitive advantage” (Laster, 2021). If an organization lacks structure or speed (to market), the purpose of the transformation may fail.

Importance of digital strategy and vision. Leaders often have bold ideas for a new product or service and can clearly communicate this vision. To move these ideas forward, they may rely on the familiar planning and budgeting approaches that have led past projects to completion. However, communicating and planning for a digital transformation project requires a different approach. Instead of focusing on one area or business process, this type of transformation must include the entire organization, not just a specific department or system. While “the ability to digitally reimagine the business is determined in large part by a clear digital strategy supported by leaders who foster a culture able to change and invent the new” (Kane et al., 2015, p.3), the scope and objectives of the digital strategy is key.

The importance of a clear strategy is clear in the case of General Electric’s (GE) foray into the digital world. In 2013, the company launched a digital transformation endeavor to become one of the world’s top digital IT companies. To support this, GE Digital was established as a 1,500-employee strong division focused on developing a software platform that would give the company a competitive edge. After investing \$4 billion with little success, GE Digital was initially put up for sale in 2018 and GE found itself with a new CEO (the third in 15 months).

There are three key areas of failure that have been identified for GE Digital: strategic management (the company focused only on the IT solution), organizational management, and corporate culture development (the company embraced traditional approaches which failed to embrace Agile or Scrum methodologies) (Budagov & Sukhova, 2020). Finally, in 2021, CEO Larry Culp announced GE Digital would be combined into an energy and power business (Loten, 2021).

GE Digital's struggles and failures are not unique. Digital transformation projects often focus on technology, rather than strategy. Often, an organization will begin a digital transformation project with a pre-determined tool or system in mind as a deliverable. This is problematic because, without a solid strategy, the wrong technology may be invested. What may have worked for one organization may not work for a different organization as "the best combination of tools for a given organization will vary from one vision to another" (Tabrizi et al., 2019).

Unless a company is an early adopter of new technology, an investment in technology may not give an organization a competitive edge at all. Carr (2003) argues technology is only useful until it becomes easily accessible to everyone and cannot be relied on to differentiate a company apart from its competitors. However, that is not to say technology cannot be a driver or should not be included in the digital strategy. As Kraus et al. (2021) indicate, there are many advantages that organizations can gain by including technology as a driver in their overall strategy such as improving the ability to capitalize upon both internal and external knowledge, which, in turn, will assist the organization in becoming more competitive.

As of 2019, a Deloitte survey indicated "digital" was a top strategic priority for the years leading up to 2030 identified by 94% of CEOs (Gibbons, 2019, p. 46), however far too often,

“guiding teams either set no clear direction or embrace visions that are not sensible” (Cohen & Kotter, 2002, p. 61). Like any project, an organization going through a digital transformation will benefit from a clearly defined scope and objectives. Kane et al. (2015) write, “The ultimate power of a digital strategy lies in its scope and objectives” (p.6). However, scope and objectives are not the only things to consider when developing a digital strategy. It should also be recognized that the strategy “should fit the culture,” (Gibbons, 2019, p. 115) rather than the other way around. For a digital transformation project to be successful, a bold, comprehensive strategy that encompasses the organization’s culture is not only helpful but also a necessity.

Digital maturity

The importance of a solid digital strategy is also highlighted by Kane et al. (2015) in concisely writing, “Digital strategy drives digital maturity” (p.3). Further, digital maturity is defined as “an organization where digital has transformed processes, talent engagement and business models” (Kane et al., 2015, p. 3). It should be noted that “digital maturity” and “digital transformation maturity” are used interchangeably within the context of this paper. However, it is not as simple as classifying an organization as digitally immature or digitally mature. The spectrum of digital maturity is much more complex and can be broken down into six stages, as identified by Brian Solis.

Six stages of Digital Transformation maturity. The first stage of Digital Transformation maturity is “business as usual” in which the organization operates how it normally would with no changes or modifications. Digital is not a driving force of the organization’s transformation plan and no effort to modernize processes or plans has been initiated or made. The second stage, “test and learn,” occurs when someone realizes things could be done differently, either because the existing process is broken or because they’ve noticed

another organization differing in their approach. This usually leads to teams within the department beginning to experiment on their own in silos to try to drive change. In other words, the “test and learn” stage may also be considered the “trial and error” stage, as employees try to improve things on their own without formal organizational support or resources.

The third phase, “systemize and strategize,” occurs as “the organization is getting smarter, with its change agents seeing the bigger picture and starting to work formally towards it” (Solis, n.d., p. 11). It is often in this stage that a digital transformation business case is developed, and a project sponsor identified. Teams who endeavored on their own in stage two may now receive formal support and needed resources. Metrics also begin to evolve, and data becomes critical to making decisions.

At this point, “efforts in digital transformation become intention with short- and long-term goals/outcomes supported by investments in infrastructure” (Solis, n.d., p.12). This is the “adapt or die” phase and employees have begun to realize (and appreciate) that change is happening. The embracing of the change(s) leads to stage five; transformed and transforming. In the “transformed and transforming” phase, Solis (n.d.) writes:

Digital transformation is now in the company’s DNA, and it becomes constant. Along the way, these efforts have reshaped the enterprise, creating new models and operating standards affecting people, process, and technology by function and line of business at both the local and enterprise level. (p.14)

It is in this stage that the organization as a whole truly embraces digital and data-informed decision-making. This, in turn, sets up a culture that supports innovation.

The final stage is considered “innovate or die.” As Solis (n.d.) states, “A culture of innovation becomes prevalent” (p. 15) and this leads to the ability of an organization to utilize

lessons learned in real-time throughout the process to improve their positioning within the market. Operationally, this phase may see the organization recruiting new talent to support their endeavors, considering new technology pilots to further gain a competitive advantage, or even pursue start-up opportunities.

Figure 1

Solis' Six Stages of Digital Transformation Maturity



An organization's level of digital maturity is based on where they are on the digital maturity spectrum. However, while the figure above shows a linear approach, this six-stage framework is not necessarily linear.

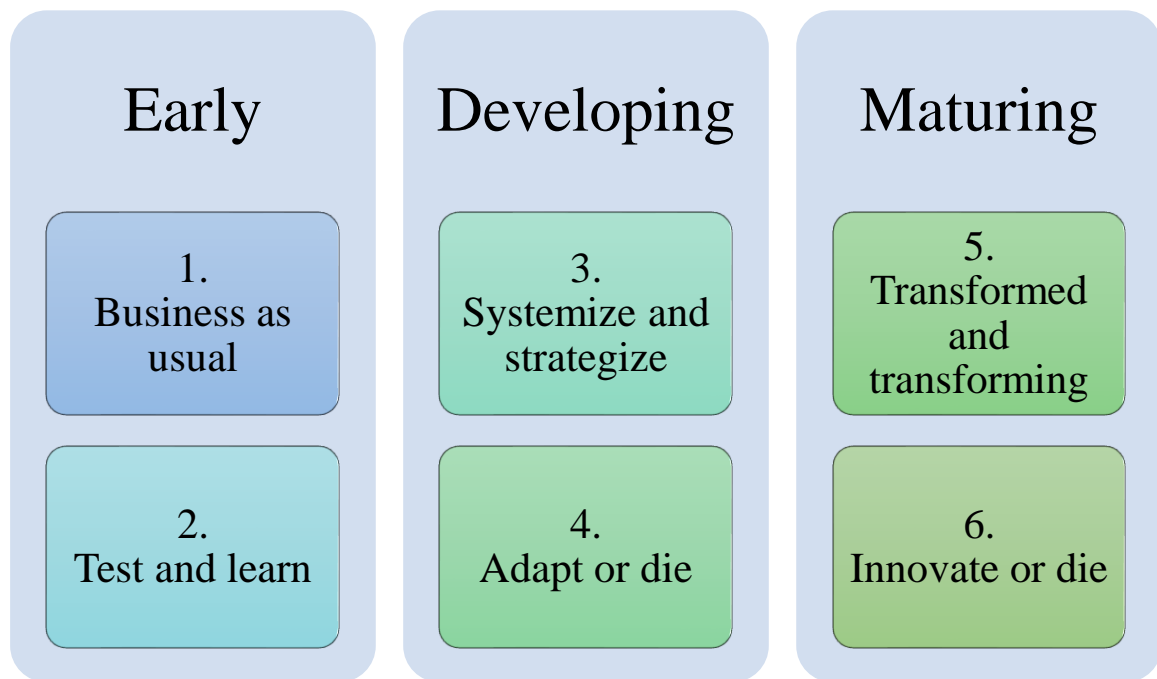
Solis (n.d.) writes “This framework provides a digital maturity chart. Its purpose is both prescriptive and aspirational. It helps companies take an objective look at their own current state progress before trying to move forward (or even recognizing the need to do so)” (p.2). An organization may be in any stage, or multiple stages, at any point in time. Some may take a ‘start

and stop' approach as they work through what their organization truly needs and determines how to best work through barriers they encounter.

Barriers to digital maturity. There are many barriers to digital maturity that an organization must contend with depending on where they are on the digital maturity scale. Kane et al., (2015) describe organizations as being in one of three phases: early, developing, or maturing. These phases overlap with Solis' six stages of digital transformation maturity as follows:

Figure 2

Kane et al.'s and Solis' Maturity Models



With this correlation in mind, barriers identified by Kane et al. that an organization may face can be explored.

For organizations in the early stage, a lack of strategy is the leading barrier, whereas, for organizations in the developing or maturing stage, too many priorities were identified as the leading barrier (Kane et al., 2015, p.5). Lack of management understanding, security concerns,

and insufficient tech skills are also barriers that organizations may encounter based on which phase they are currently in.

Table 1

Top 3 Barriers by Maturity Stage

	Early	Developing	Maturing
1.	Lack of strategy	Too many priorities	Too many priorities
2.	Too many priorities	Lack of strategy	Security concerns
3.	Lack of management understanding	Insufficient tech skills	Insufficient tech skills

Some of these barriers may be expected. For example, one might expect an organization in the early phase to struggle with strategy, but the natural evolution of maturity will see this dissipate as the organization refines the strategy over time. However, if the organization fails to define a strategy early, it will continue to struggle and efforts to move into the next phase will falter.

Irrespective of where the organization is on the maturity scale, it should be recognized that with any change initiative, a certain amount of resistance should be expected from those impacted as the project progresses.

Fear of automation replacing jobs and other resistance

Change, by definition, is “any alteration occurring in the work environment that affects the way in which employees will act” (Kuzhda, 2016, p. 50). As artificial intelligence and automation (both common in digital transformation projects) become more prevalent, employees may be more resistant to digital changes as they fear their role may change in such a way that they are no longer comfortable doing their job or that their role may be eliminated. It’s a valid fear, as the McKinsey Global Institute estimates one-third of all jobs will be automated by 2030, impacting 70 million people across the United States alone (Gibbons, 2019, p.55) and as of 2015, an estimated 45% of work activities could be automated (Chui et al., 2016).

However, “while automation will eliminate very few occupations entirely in the next decade, it will affect portions of almost all jobs to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the type of work they entail” (Chui et al., 2016). Once popular in the manufacturing industry, Chui et al. further write that automation is now expanding past manufacturing and “has the potential, at least with regard to its technical feasibility, to transform sectors such as healthcare and finance” (p 3). With transformation projects occurring across most industries, a large portion of job functions or roles is likely to be changed to support the organization’s digital strategy in the upcoming years.

As the organization moves to a digital strategy, the culture must shift as well. Bilefield (2016) also writes, “the hardest part of a successful digital transformation is the cultural piece.” This often requires organizations to “challenge the status quo, experiment, and get comfortable with failure” (Mayo, 2022). This is a major adjustment for most organizations and may also cause stress and uncertainty among employees and lead to resistance. In today’s digital world, how employees show resistance has changed and now has a further reach than they did in prior decades.

Employees and customers alike now turn to social media and the world wide web to voice their displeasure, allowing the information to travel further and faster through networking (Stauss & Seidel, 2019). In the age of instant information, what would once stay between friends and family now is shared globally. Online newsletter platform Substack, for example, faced significant backlash from its writers who felt a change in strategy to financially support controversial writers moved the company towards being in the media space rather than a technology platform and saw many writers publish statements indicating they would be exiting the platform as a result (Ha, 2021).

In another situation, employees from Glossier, a skincare and beauty products company, published an online letter calling out the need for accountability and change due to toxic work environments which included racist behavior and a failure to act by management in the retail stores (Hinchliffe, 2020). Additionally, the company's packaging received backlash on social media for being wasteful and was discontinued in February 2020 (Kilikita, 2022). The CEO promised change, but it came too late as the retail stores closed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, many organizations have faced backlash due to the actions of their employees or management team. While harmful to the organization's culture and morale, the impacts go much further. As negative information about a company spreads and backlash escalates, not only may the company's reputation or profits take a hit, but the efforts to drive internal change may be undermined as well.

How organizations change

There are two ways an organization can change. The first is through drastic action, where "change is discontinuous and often forced on the organization or mandated by top management in the wake of major technological innovations, by a scarcity or abundance of critical resources, or by sudden changes in the regulatory, legal, competitive, or political landscape" (Meyerson, 2001). This type of change is not ideal as the change is quick and often disorganized. The organization is likely to face strong resistance from employees during these changes.

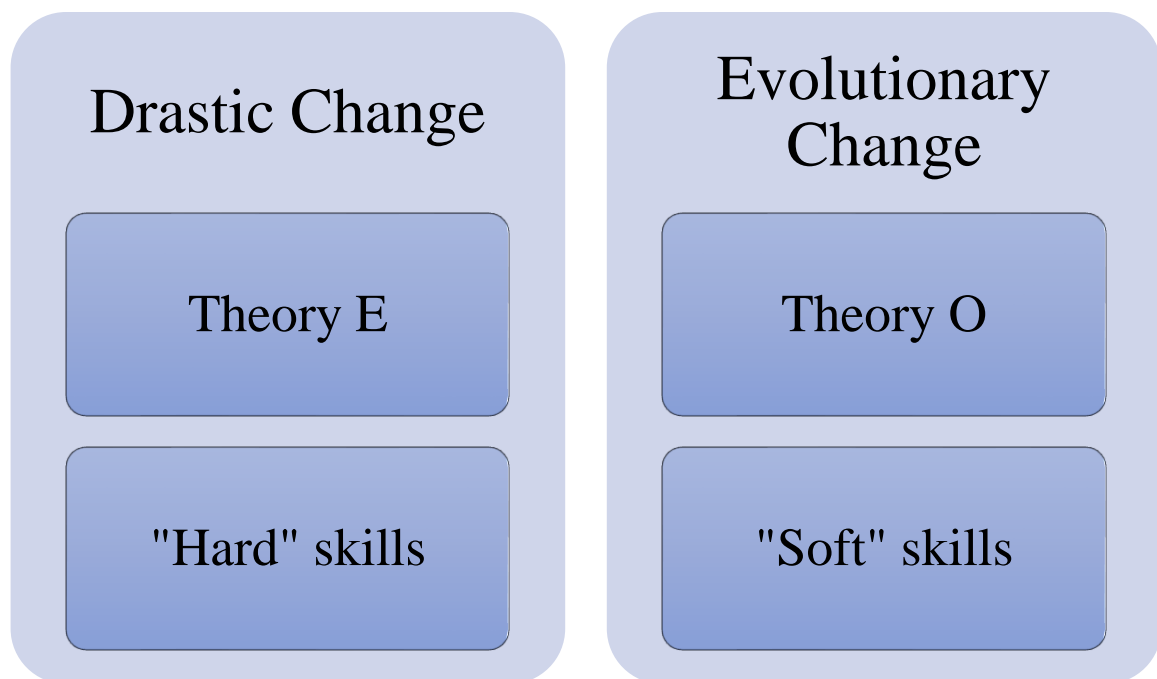
The second method is evolutionary. This approach is "gentle, incremental, decentralized, and over time produces a broad and lasting shift with less upheaval" (Meyerson, 2001). In some cases, if done correctly, these changes may be "so incremental that they barely merit notice—which is exactly why they work so well" (Meyerson, 2001). This approach is the preferred

method of change as small changes are barely met with harsh employee resistance and will be better tolerated.

These drastic and evolutionary methods align closely with the two theories of change introduced by Nohria and Beer (2000) as Theory E (the “hard” approach) and Theory O (the “soft” approach).

Figure 3

Methods of change and theories of change



Theory E is known as the headline-making change; it is “changed based on economic value.

Theory O is changed based on organizational capacity” (Nohria & Beer, 2000). They are used to classify corporate change initiatives and are defined by the measure of corporate success however, like all theories, each has pros and cons.

Theories of change. Theory E places heavy emphasis on stakeholder values, but this type of change strategy involves “heavy use of economic incentives, drastic layoffs, downsizing, and restructuring” (Nohria & Beer, 2000). The main component of Theory E is “the

implementation of leadership from top to bottom, which allows you to focus on elements that are able to focus on the rapid achievement of effect” (Bugubayeva et al., 2017, p.200). This approach may be utilized when there is a need for restructuring or other sweeping changes to the organization. However, with this approach, it should be recognized that if employees are in fear of losing their jobs, they are less likely to embrace change while they remain employed.

Theory O, however, takes a softer approach with a goal to “develop corporate culture and human capability through individual and organizational learning” (Nohria & Beer, 2000).

Bugubayeva et al. (2017) write, “From the point of view of theory, an organization is an evolving learning system. Changes are aimed at developing organizational competencies and abilities” (p. 200). Theory O does not set out with the goal of addressing any one problem.

Rather, it is viewed as “an investment in the development of human resources” (Bugubayeva et al., 2017, p. 200).

Table 2

Theories of Change

Theory	Measure of Corporate Success	Strategy
Theory E	Shareholder value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic incentives - Layoffs - Downsizing - Restructuring
Theory O	Ability to learn from the organization’s experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making changes - Obtaining feedback - Reflecting - Making additional changes

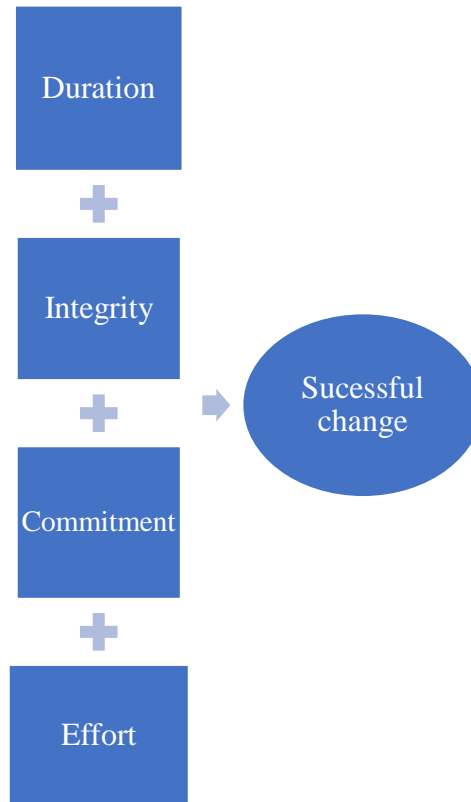
Some organizations combine the two theories, though care must be taken to mitigate the conflicts between them. It has been noted that when using the theories “companies are more likely to

achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. They also reduce the anxiety that grips whole societies in the face of corporate restructuring” (Nohria & Beer, 2000).

There is no right or wrong theory for an organization to subscribe to and some may subscribe to parts of both. Although, while “soft” factors such as leadership and motivation are important, they are not enough to implement transformation projects successfully. Leadership must be willing to make decisions using Theory E’s “hard” approach when necessary throughout the change.

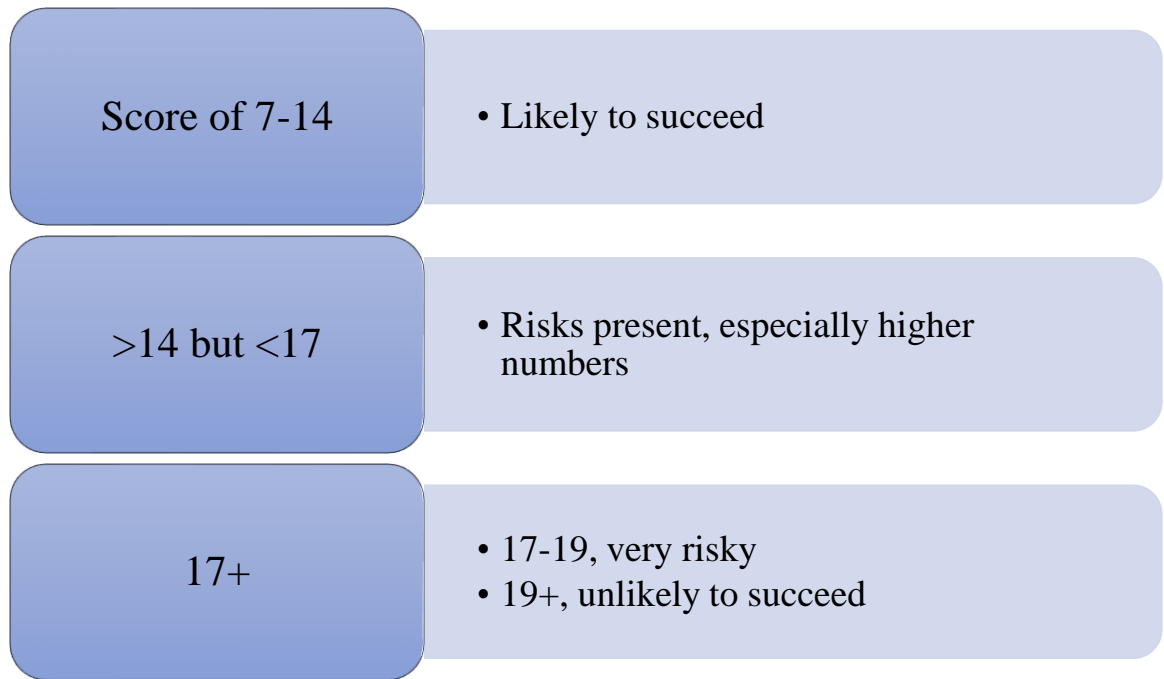
Managing change

Sirkin et al. write “Managing change *is* tough, but part of the problem is that there is little agreement on what factors most influence transformation initiatives” (2005). Further, they argue change projects fail when an organization ignores the hard factors which are characterized by three features: companies can measure them, their importance can easily be communicated amongst internal and external stakeholders, and organizations can quickly influence the elements (Sirkin et al., 2005). After surveying 225-companies, their research of change program outcomes resulted in identifying four hard factors known as DICE: project *d*uration, performance *i*ntegrity, *c*ommitment, and *e*ffort.

Figure 4*DICE- the four determining factors*

The project duration factor is, for short change programs, simply the calculation of time from start to finish. For longer programs, it is the calculation between milestones. Integrity represents the team’s ability to complete the program on time using their existing skills, while commitment to change includes a commitment by both senior management or leadership *and* those impacted by the change(s). Finally, effort is the “extra” work employees will be required to do because of the change initiative.

Using DICE, the team created a formula to forecast the outcome of any change, where C_1 is senior management or leadership commitment and C_2 is impacted staff commitment. Using the DICE formula of $(D + (2 \times C_1) + C_2 + E)$, one can calculate the DICE score and gauge the level of risk and outcome using the score.

Figure 5*DICE Scores*

Using this framework, Sirkin et al. (2005) “created a framework that would help executives evaluate their transformation initiatives and shine a spotlight on interventions that would improve their chances of success.” It should be noted that two of the factors revolve around employees’ commitment to change, further underscoring the importance of employee involvement.

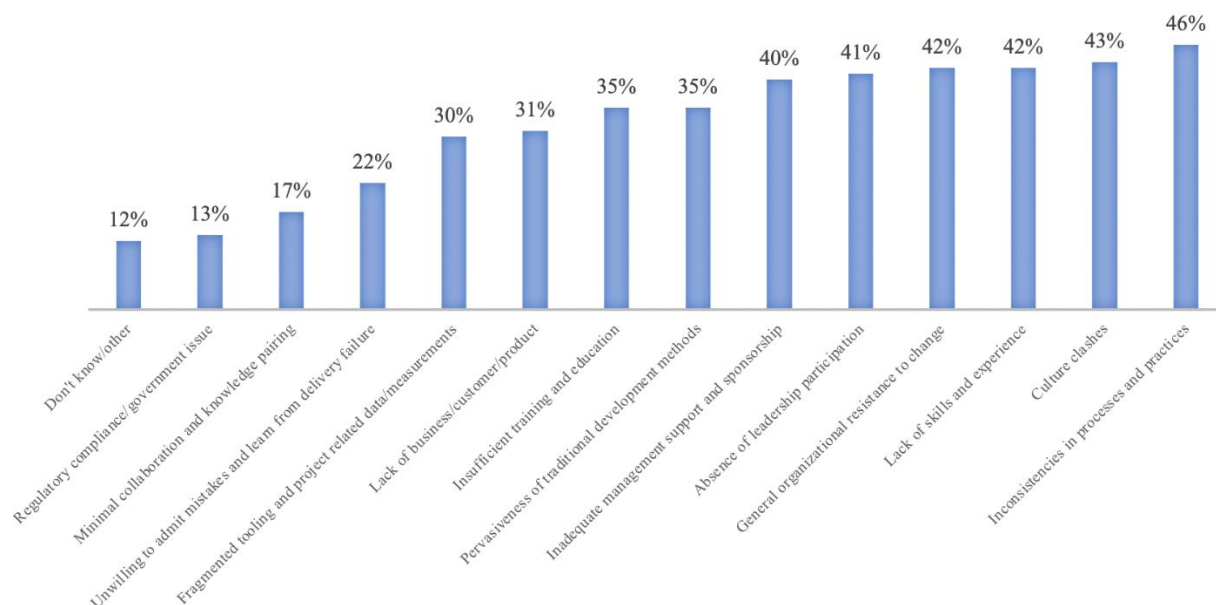
Reducing resistance to change

With any change, resistance is expected and is considered a natural reaction as people process it (Gupta, 2018, p.23). These reactions, however, cannot be simply ignored or wished away. When faced with the unknown, the initial human reaction is often to resist. Mayo (2022) explains, “Perpetrating a false sense of normalcy makes it difficult to establish trust, stifles innovation, and ultimately leads to failed transformation.”

As resistance builds up and trust in leadership wanes, it can be detrimental to digital transformation projects. This is especially true if an agile project management strategy, which encourages adaptability, is utilized. In the 15th State of Agile Report issued by digital.ai (2021), the following were identified as the most significant barriers to Agile adoption:

Figure 6

15th State of Agile Report Agile Challenges



Note: Adapted from *15th State of Agile Report* by Digital.ai, 2021

Many of these barriers are explicitly linked together. For example, an organization that is unfamiliar with agile methods may find its culture clashing with the values of agile, while an organization that has inconsistent processes and procedures may find its training plans insufficient or lacking. While these deficiencies present challenges to implementing changes, there are ways to reduce or mitigate the impact of change resistance.

Organization culture. The culture of an organization plays a key part in how change is received by employees. An organization's culture "comprises an interlocking set of goals, roles, processes, values, communications practices, attitudes and assumptions" (Denning, 2011).

According to Watkins (2013), an organization's culture functions as its "immune system," and "the problem, of course, is that organizational immune systems also can attack agents of needed change, and this has important implications for on-boarding and integrating people into organizations."

An *agile* culture is defined as "an environment that is underpinned by core values, behaviors and practices, enabling all levels of an organization to better adapt to cultural, strategic, and other changes" (Agile Business Consortium, n.d.). Further, it "puts people at the center, which engages and empowers everyone in the organization. They can then create value quickly, collaboratively, and effectively" (Aghina et al., 2018). For an organization whose culture cannot recognize and support agents of change, any change initiative, including digital transformation projects, is likely to fail.

As a baseline, an organizational culture that is supportive of change will always evolve faster and, if an organization does not have an agile culture already, it must foster one early in the digital transformation (Saldanha, 2019). However, if an organization's existing culture does not support Agile, it is not as simple as issuing a company-wide policy declaring the organization is now Agile. Walker and Soule (2017) explain:

Culture change can't be achieved through top-down mandate. It lives in the collective hearts and habits of people and their shared perception of 'how things are done around here.'

Someone with authority can demand compliance, but they can't dictate optimism, trust, conviction, or creativity.

Directives and declarations from management simply are not enough to change an organization's culture to embrace agile ways. Jurisic et al. (2020) explain "Organizations can do agile by changing their structure, processes, and technology. But they cannot be agile without changing

the way people work and interact daily.” Much like any change, for employees to embrace an organizational culture change, *leaders* are required to play a large role. Leaders must ensure their employees are aligned with the change(s) and motivated to support them for change initiatives to be successful (Sanchez, 2018).

Organization leadership. A successful business transformation relies on transforming individuals including senior leaders and influencers (Schwartz, 2018). An organization’s leadership, and its ability to inspire and motivate followers to accept and support the change, is key to alleviating these concerns and implementing a successful digital transformation. Jurisic et al. (2020) write:

Organizations are built and led by their leaders: the way they think, make decisions and show up shapes every part of the organization. This dynamic is amplified in agile organizations, which have an unusually high degree of openness and transparency.

Indeed, “there is growing evidence that ‘what leaders do’ can have a powerful effect on follower behavior and the success of change initiatives” (Hayes, 2018, p.164). However, what remains debatable is what good leadership during change looks like.

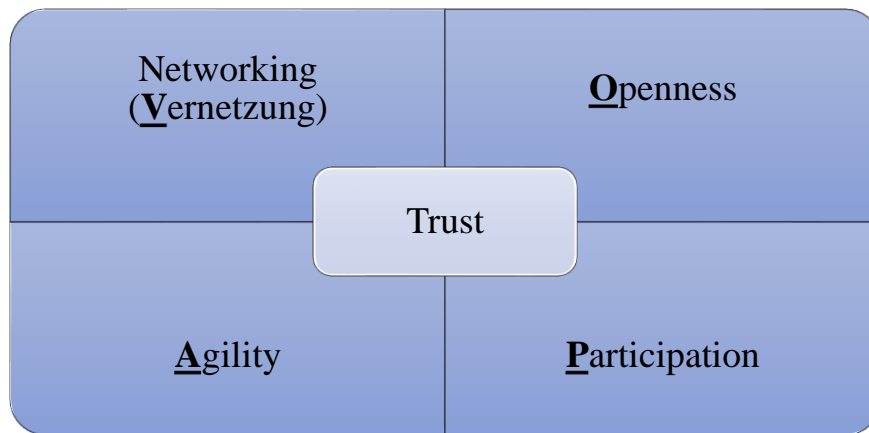
Often, organizational leadership finds it easier to highlight the benefits to the organization while finding it more challenging to communicate the benefits to the individuals impacted, despite the fact those impacted needing to know how the upcoming changes will impact them personally (Hayes, 2018, p. 173). Sanchez (2018) writes, “if you want to lead a successful transformation, communicating empathetically is critical.” Ignoring those that are impacted is problematic because without getting employees’ buy-in, the organization’s leadership is doing nothing to address the resistance that naturally exists, nor does it show empathy. Instead,

leadership should seek to understand what their employee's views of the changes are and should develop a plan that can help to mitigate that resistance (Yancy & Stanley, 2021).

Another area in which organizations tend to fall short is that, once the change is initiated, senior leadership moves on to other things and leaves behind an impression of a lack of support (Hayes, 2018, p. 173). It is critical that leaders not only remain involved in driving the changes but that they encourage their followers to be supportive as well. For leadership, "managing the culture so that it produces the results you are looking for has become an essential part of leadership and a core management competency" (Connors & Smith, 2012, p. 7). To account for this, a transformational leadership style can be helpful.

Transformational leadership "makes the followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, respect for the leader, and they are motivated to do more than what is actually expected" (Rahman, 2015, p.3305). By gaining followers' trust and loyalty, leadership can not only mitigate resistance to the change but may uncover unexpected agents of change that will generate support among the lower levels of the organizational structure. In some cases, they may discover emerging leaders who may not be in a management role. These individuals should not be overlooked; building a culture within the organization should involve every leader (Connors & Smith, 2012, p. 17), even those that are not in management roles.

Additionally, a more modern leadership model known as VOPA+ was developed in 2014 by Dr. Willms Buhse to support digitalization as well. As shown in Figure 2 below, the VOPA+ model centers around trust, but focuses on networking ("Vernetzung" in German), openness, participation, and agility (Heß, 2019).

Figure 7*VOPA+ model for digital leadership*

Foerester-Metz et al., (2018) explain that within the VOPA+ model, the four focuses are designed to develop and maintain trust, with Openness reducing uncertainty, Participation allowing individuals to actively take part in and feel a sense of ownership of the changes, and Networking allowing engagement with individuals across the entire organization. The fourth focus, Agility, allows faster responses to an ever-changing digital world and is critical to digital transformation projects.

Though Agile is also known as a project management methodology, “sound change management principles are sown throughout: Reflection, communication, engagement, learning, stakeholders, and motivation are all part of the agile canon” (Gibbons, 2019, p. 124). These principles are also key for a leader to engage followers and drive organizational change. Cohen and Kotter (2002) also warn that “focusing exclusively on building a ‘rational’ business case, getting top management approval, and racing ahead while mostly ignoring all the feelings that are blocking change” simply does not work (p. 36).

Organizational management. The “Father of Modern Management,” Peter Drucker, defined management as a “multipurpose organ that manages business and manages managers and

manages workers and work” (Choudhary, 2018). Using these definitions, management’s role in organizational change seems clear: manage people and work and make the change happen.

Realistically, the situation is much more complex.

It should also be noted that there are various types of management styles, some of which include micro-managing or telling employees how to do the tasks assigned to them. Success transformation projects have a foundation built upon empowering and coaching employees which includes “trusting others to get things done” (Jurisic et al., 2020). Wolpers (2020) argues “Agile turns into micromanagement as a result of the middle management’s resistance to change. Despite better knowledge, changing an organization into a learning one that embraces experimentation and failure is not in everybody’s best interest.”

Kotter (1995) explains “Management’s mandate is to minimize risk and to keep the current system operating. Change, by definition, requires creating a new system, which in turn always demands leadership.” However, not all managers are leaders, not all leaders are managers, and management and leadership are two very different things. While leadership relies on an individual’s strengths and abilities, management tends to rely on power. Or, as Nayar (2013) writes, “Influence and inspiration separate leaders from managers, not power and control.”

During change initiatives, managers “have the job of monitoring tasks so that complex tasks run smoothly” (Zafar & Naveed, 2014, p. 239). However, with many change projects, Kotter (1995) explains, “executives become paralyzed by the downside possibilities...A paralyzed senior management often comes from having too many managers and not enough leaders.” When discussing management and managers, it is important to separate the role of a *change manager* in transformation projects from other managers.

The difference between managers and *change* managers is exactly what the title implies. While managers manage people and work, change managers are tasked with the responsibility of planning and managing change initiatives. Change managers will:

Play a key role in ensuring projects (change initiatives) meet objectives on time and budget by increasing employee adoption and usage. This person will focus on the people side of change, including changes to business processes, systems and technology, job roles, and organization structures. (Prosci, n.d.)

The role this position holds in a change initiative is vastly different from that of other managers. Change managers, like project managers, may have no direct authority and must rely on their soft skills to gain the trust and support of those around them. It is these individuals that play a crucial role in humanizing the changes impacting the organizations.

Humanizing change. As evidenced by the Great Resignation of 2021, what has been acceptable for past generations in the workforce is no longer acceptable by today's generational standards. While the healthcare and hospitality industries are well known for high rates of pandemic turnover, the technology industry also suffered a high rate of employee departure. During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations were forced into a rapid digital shift, and individuals working in the technology industry shouldered much of that work (Andreatta, 2021). As a result, employees within the technology industry left in high numbers, likely due to burnout.

Rapid, reactive changes are often poorly implemented and changes that are poorly implemented can have devastating impacts on an organization, especially when employees may not be willing to tolerate as much stress and uncertainty as they once did. An organization may face high turnover, decreased morale, teams breaking off into silos, or change fatigue (Beech,

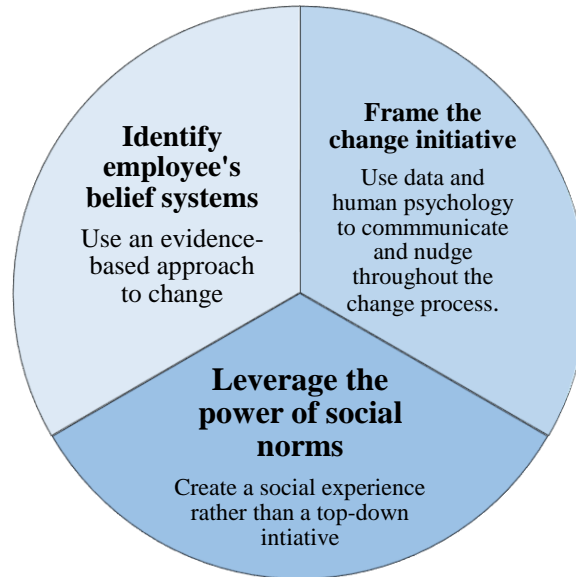
2019). Most notably, change fatigue is “a general sense of apathy or passive resignation towards organizational changes. Resistance to change is often a symptom” (Marcou, 2020). This can occur when employees feel the organization is taking on too much change, too quickly, or when numerous changes are happening in a very short amount of time (or all at once).

It is thought that employees’ ability to handle change is half of what it was pre-pandemic (Baker, 2020) and, as a result, may be less willing to tolerate the fatigue brought on by change. While most organizations approach change with a “strategy first, people second: specify the technical change, then get people on board” (Gibbons, 2019, p.103) approach, this may not be sufficient in a post-pandemic world. For most organizations, strategy and execution are more important than employees’ thoughts or feelings (Schwartz, 2018), however, the concept of humanizing change does the opposite and puts people first.

Monahan et al. (2016) created a model to assist organizations in humanizing change that focuses on making a change more human than simply a management-orchestrated undertaking.

Figure 8

Monahan et al. 2016 Humanizing Organizational Change



It is important to note that “psychology (and the other human sciences) are very young and very imprecise – some of what passed as orthodoxy a generation ago has been debunked by recent research (for example, the Kübler-Ross grief model, Maslow’s hierarchy, learning styles, and behaviorist theories of punishment and reward)” (Gibbons, 2019, p. 106). That is not to say these theories are not important, do not hold value, or are entirely incorrect. Rather, it shows that as human nature evolves, so must tools and models used to support them. This equally applies to change management and project management models; when most were developed, Waterfall project management was the norm and Agile was not yet on the radar.

Agile change management

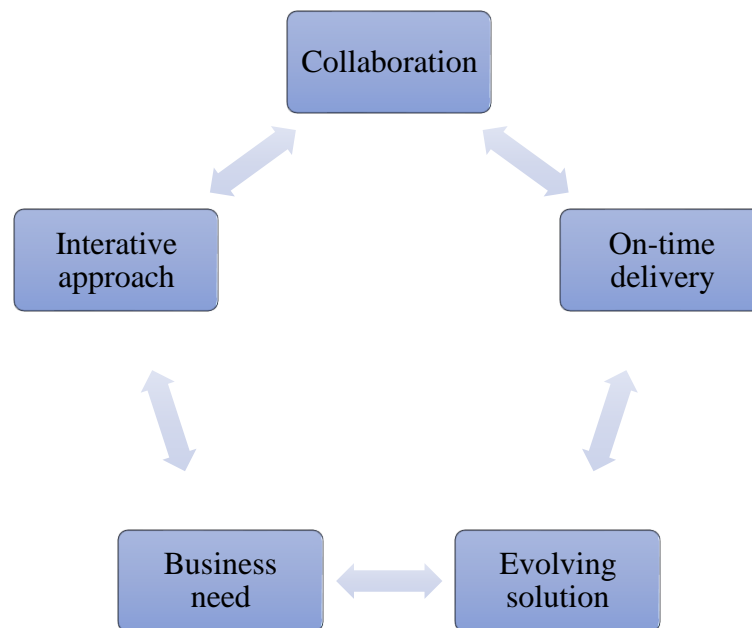
Traditional change management moves slowly and is very process-heavy to support older project management methods such as Waterfall. An Agile project management approach is more flexible and nimbler and the impacted organization’s change management approach must also

adapt to support it as needed. Franklin (2018) writes “the frequency of change generated by Agile approaches means that the traditional change management activities have to speed up.”

Franklin (2021) tells of five basic concepts of Agile change management which create new behaviors by combining existing Agile principles with psychological tools. Those concepts are collaboration, on-time delivery, evolving solution, business need, and iterative approach. These five concepts work in tandem and must be present for a change to be successful.

Figure 9

Five concepts of agile change management



There are many benefits of Agile change management outside of supporting digital strategies. An Agile approach is “designed to realize benefits from change as early as possible, by ensuring that the changes are prioritized according to their business value” (Franklin, 2021, p.1). Additionally, “each iteration delivers new ways of working, and by experiencing the associated benefits, those impacted feel motivated for more change” (Franklin, 2021, p. 22). When employees are motivated for change, not only do they embrace it, but resistance is minimal.

Integrating change management and Agile. Project teams and change teams should always be intertwined but for projects using Agile, this approach is critical. Agile teams:

Have well defined ways of working, including planning and work allocation. Without the right integration into this process, the change team can fall out of sync with the delivery team, diminishing their ability to understand change impacts and provide stakeholders with the right information at the right time. (Deloitte, 2015, p. 6)

There are many benefits of integrating change management with the Agile approach. Agile change management provides organizations with the ability to react to issues quickly and encourages teams to take the lead in supporting change.

Balje et al., (2015) tell of how a healthcare organization embarked on a project to develop an Intelligent Monitoring System to aid in patient monitoring and care with the threat of employee shortage looming. An Agile project management methodology was used and was applied to the Change Management project component as well. While this was the first time many of the team members had been exposed to Agile, the impact was noticeable. Among the observations noticed was that staff were actively engaged, that “the ability to steer the project created a sense of ownership,” and “all in all there was a sense of creating value by building expertise jointly” (Balje et al., 2015, p.13).

Due to its iterative nature and impact on the organization’s culture, change management is even more important in Agile projects than those which utilize other methods, especially if the project is the organization’s first venture into the world of Agile (Campbell, 2021). However, it is simply not enough to have a change management strategy in place for a digital transformation project. Failing to include a change management strategy that compliments an *agile* approach may result in project failure.

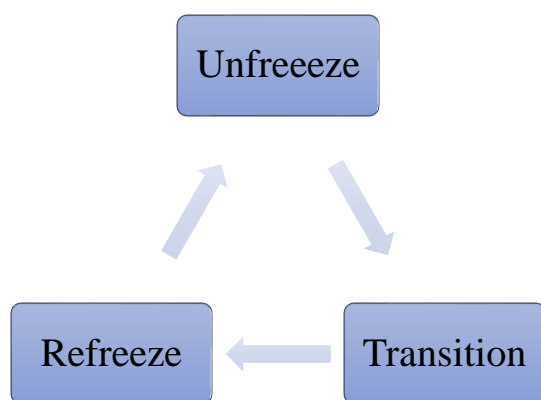
Framework

The three existing frameworks (Lewin, Kotter, and Prosci-ADKAR) explored in this paper have proven to be successful in many change management endeavors over decades of practice. However, they can be viewed as dated and each has flaws in today's modern digital world. From Lewin's three-step model to Prosci's original ADKAR model, critical aspects that would adequately support a digital transformation project are missing.

Lewin's 3-step change model. Developed in 1947 by Kurt Lewin, this simplistic three-stage model takes what has since been coined the “unfreeze-transition-refreeze” approach. The “unfreeze” phase allows the organization to identify and support the changes while removing resistance, while the “transition” phase allows it to pivot from the existing state to a new state and implement the new changes. Finally, the “refreeze” phase allows the organization to sustain the changes that were implemented during the “transition” phase. This loop allows for the organization to stay “ready” for change.

Figure 10

Kurt Lewin's 3-step change model



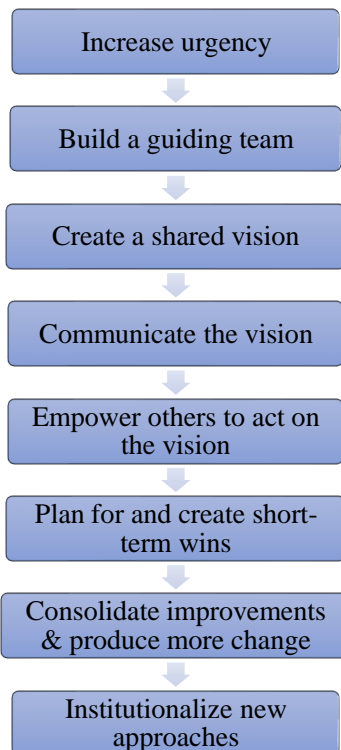
In his studies, Lewin argued that “approaches involving the removal of restraining forces within the individual, group or organization are likely to increase commitment and result in a more permanent change than approaches involving the application of outside pressure for change”

(Hayes, 2018, p. 21). However, as discussed below, a “freeze” approach does not support an agile environment that needs to be quick to react to any new directives of change.

Kotter’s 8-step change model. John Kotter created his 8-step model in 1995 with the expectation each of the steps would be followed in chronological order. This model begins with (1) increasing urgency for a change, (2) building a team to guide the change, and (3) creating a shared vision to support the change. When these tasks are completed, the (4) vision is communicated to the larger audience, and the (5) audience should be allowed to take action to support the vision. Those leading the change should then (6) prepare to create short-term wins and (7) consolidate the improvements and generate more change, before (8) make the change(s) stick.

Figure 11

Kotter’s 8-step change model

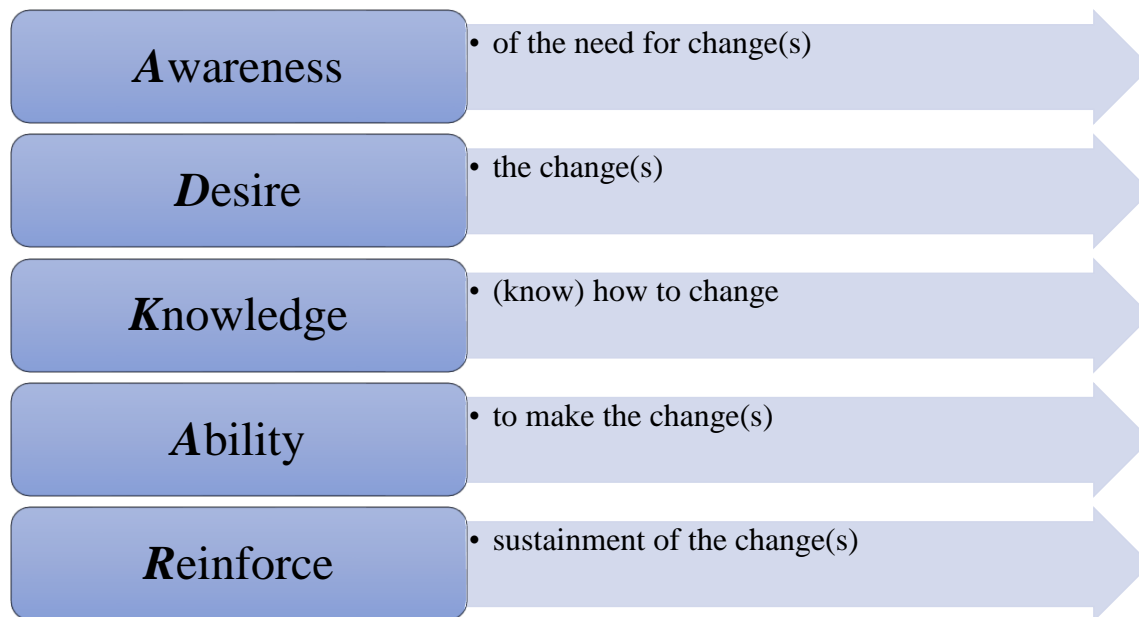


It should be noted that rigidity is built into the model by design. Kotter argued they “should be followed in sequence and that extended overlapping of the steps will compromise success, implying that steps are requisite of one another” (Appelbaum et al., 2012, p. 775). However, this inflexibility does not allow organizations to tailor the model to fit their own culture and ignores the fact not all transformations require each prescribed step.

Prosci-ADKAR. A final existing model to be discussed is Prosci’s ADKAR. The five-element approach includes *Awareness*, *Desire*, *Knowledge*, *Ability*, and *Reinforcement* and all five must be present to make a change successfully (Prosci, n.d.). The ADKAR model can be used to identify why changes are not working, identify resistance to change, and develop a change management plan (Zafar & Naveed, 2014, p. 240).

Figure 12

Prosci ADKAR change model



The ADKAR model finds its strength in integrating management concepts into the change but cannot support large-scale implementations (Bekmukhambetova, 2021). When working with

digital transformation projects on a company-wide level, using ADKAR may not be advantageous.

Issues with existing change models

As previously stated, the three commonly used existing change models were developed between 1947 and 2003 during a time Agile was not the predominant project management methodology being used. It should be remembered that Lewin's model was created roughly fifty years before computers became common and over sixty years before the Fourth Industrial Revolution was declared. While Kotter and Prosci have both released updated versions to address the emergence of Agile, their original (and more commonly known) models focus heavily on *managing* the change and not enough on *leading* the change.

Leading digital change requires a modern approach and strong “digital leadership.” This modern approach:

Does not only mean the usage of the new digital media for collaboration and communication, but also requires the adaption of the leadership strategies and methods to the digital reality. The future leader should be able to utilize the new technologies and solutions, to adapt himself fast to changes and manage them, to have a pioneer spirit and to be able to learn quickly. (Foerster-Metz et al., 2018, p. 6)

Following this approach, leaders should be agile and keenly aware of the digital approach they're championing, including any new technologies they may be considering. Further, they should recognize the constraints of older change models and embrace modern change models that embrace the digital world.

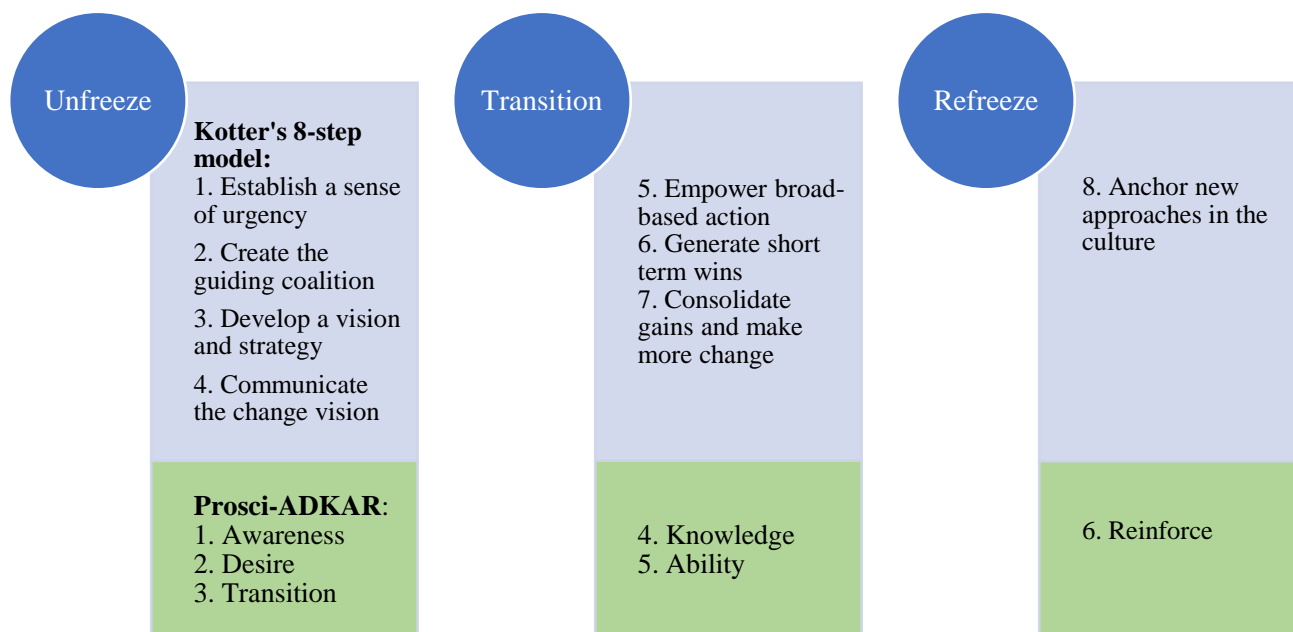
Additionally, Lewin, Kotter, and Prosci's models all lack an emphasis on creativity and innovation (both key in digital transformation projects) and align with an “unfreeze-transition-

refreeze” approach. The “refreeze” component is the most critical flaw as it understandably overlooks the founding principles of Agile. The “rigid idea of ‘refreezing’ is inappropriate in today’s complex world that requires flexibility and adaption” (Child, 2005, p. 293).

As we know, change is dynamic and never follows a linear approach. Arguments have been made that Lewin’s “unfreeze-transition-refreeze” approach focuses on group performance, not organization change, and is considered by some as a “partial, linear, monophonic understand of change” (Bartunek & Woodman, 2014, p.158). However, as the founding father of change management, Lewin’s model has influenced many models that have been developed since. This influence is apparent in the eight steps of Kotter’s model as well as Prosci-AKDAR’s model. They each fit within the “freeze-transition-unfreeze” model Lewin originally laid out in 1947.

Figure 13

Kotter and Prosci-ADKAR’s change models adapted from Lewin’s Three Phases



As previously mentioned, Lewin’s model was created before certain technology and software - both key parts of digital transformations - were even developed, much less common in the world.

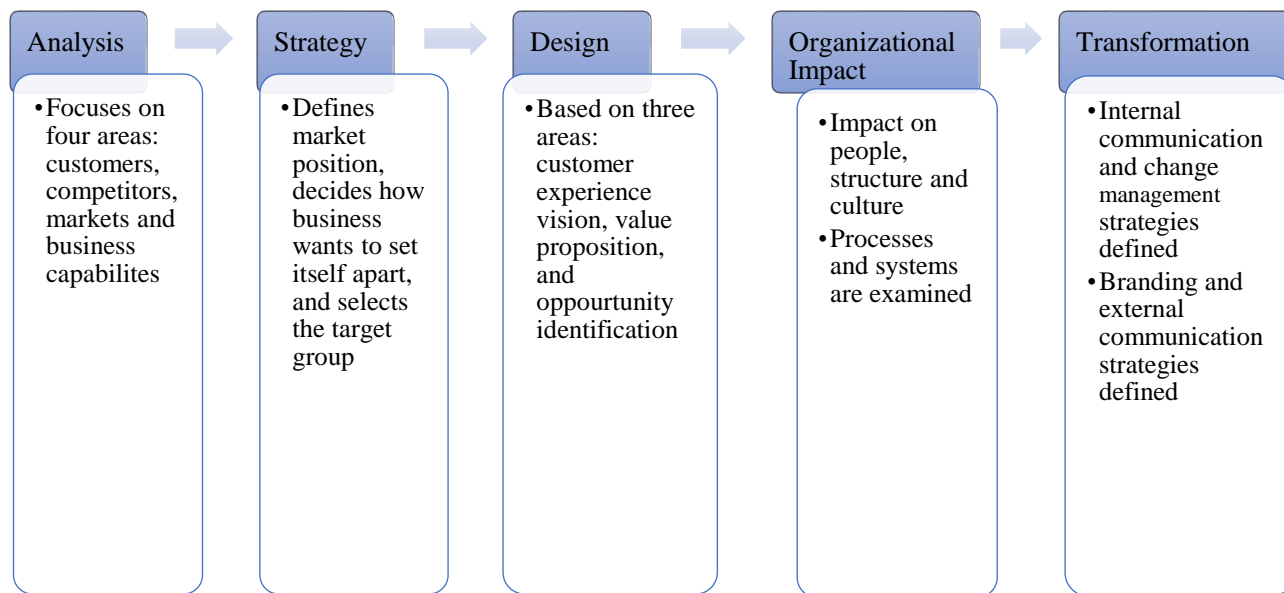
Therefore, the model simply cannot account for the pace and agility required to adapt to the digital world.

Lewin's approach requires a significant amount of time to 'freeze' new changes. This is problematic because digital transformation projects require rapid response and transition times. In theory, an organization could be amid "freezing" and adjusting to new changes, while new changes are being identified; this approach would require them to wait until the "freeze" is complete, then start a new "unfreeze" cycle.

Digital transformation of business models

Several business models have already been developed to act as a roadmap for digital transformations and support organizations seeking to make the shift to digitalization and are in active use today. Designed to be less restrictive than their predecessors, these models account for technology, creativity, and a more agile approach to change. They were created with digital in mind.

Esser's 5-phase model. The Esser model was developed in 2014 and consists of five phases that are designed to aid in planning and implementing a digital transformation strategy. Schallmo & Williams (2018) define the phases as the following: Analysis, Strategy, Design, Organizational Impact, and Transformation and warns that they are "very general and therefore specific references to digital transformation are infrequent. Nevertheless, Esser's approach offers useful ideas about which phases and what content should generally be taken into account" (p. 36).

Figure 14*Esser's 5-phase model*

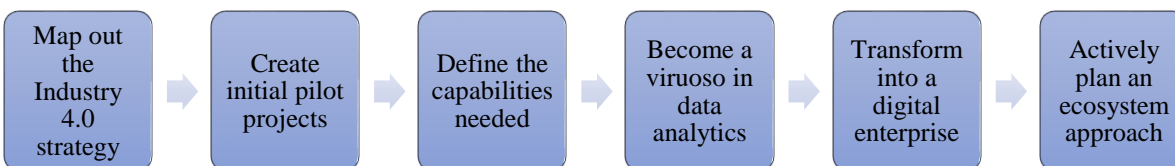
The Analysis phase consists of a thorough analysis of customers, competitors, markets, and business capabilities, while the following Strategy phase allows a company to decide how they want to differentiate themselves from their competitors and determine which customer group they want to target. Once these two steps are complete, an organization can consider what services or products will be popular with the customer group and begin to design the customer service vision in what is known as the Design phase. This phase also allows for the organization to evaluate current and future state design ideas.

The fourth phase focuses on Organizational Impact and determines how the changes will impact the entirety of the organization while also taking a closer look at processes. This phase may include exploring ways to humanize the changes once they are realized. It's within the Organizational Impact phase that governance is established. The final phase is the Transformation, which “ultimately dictates the Roadmap and program management” (Schallmo & Williams, 2018, p. 36).

PricewaterhouseCoopers’ 6-phase model. PricewaterhouseCoopers’ developed a “Blueprint for digital success” that includes six steps which include a focus on people and culture as well as using modern data analytics to drive the digital transformation. This model recognizes that “radical disruption isn’t always comfortable for the people who make it happen, so change management will also be critical and with data analytics becoming a core capability for every industrial company, enhancing skills and organisational structures will be critical” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2016, p. 5).

Figure 15

PricewaterhouseCooper’s Blueprint for digital success



The model begins with the organization defining a clear strategy that sets targets and ensures organizational leadership will support the organization’s Industry 4.0 strategy. In this context, “4.0” represents the Fourth Industrial Revolution and indicates this model was specifically developed to support it. After the strategy is defined, pilot projects should be created to prove there is a business value as well as to establish a proof of concept. For the pilot projects, PricewaterhouseCoopers’ (2016) stresses, “Not every project will succeed, but they will all help you to work in a cross-functional and agile approach with customers and technology partner – the new normal of the future” (p. 10).

Regardless of the outcome, in step three lessons learned from the pilot projects are used for determining what capabilities the organization needs to move forward. Harnessing the power of data analytics to drive decisions and improve products or services is step four of the PricewaterhouseCoopers' model. Again, these are smaller projects that may serve as proof of concepts to justify scaling up for the larger organization to be involved in step five. Finally, step six consists of creating the final product or service for the organization and implementing it.

PricewaterhouseCooper advises companies to use this model as a step-by-step approach but to move with purpose to retain early-adopter advantages over competitors. This will allow the organization to realize the benefits of its transformation. As they write, "Industry 4.0 will be a huge boom to companies that fully understand what it means for how they do business" (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2016, p.10).

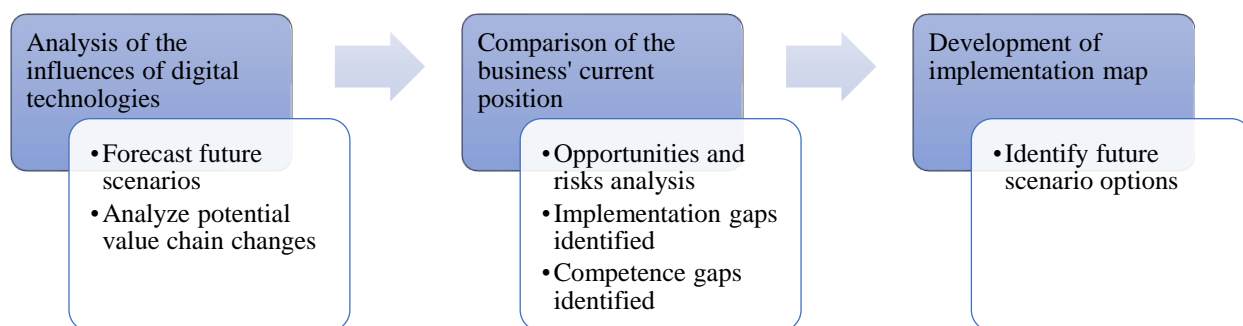
Bouée and Schaible's 3-phase model. In 2015, Bouée and Schaible introduced a model that was created with implementing digital transformations solely in mind. The three steps include (1) analysis of the influences of digital technologies, (2) comparison of the business's current position, and (3) development of an implementation map (Schallmo & Williams, 2018). Within each of the three steps, a set of questions are posed to the organization to ensure they are prepared to embark upon a digital journey.

The first step, Analysis of the Influence of Digital Technology on the Industry, guides the organization to look at future scenarios that may manifest as well as technologies and the associated industry markets. Multiple changes may be identified during this step, but no action is taken to initiate change. The second step requires the organization to look at its current position or, as Schallmo & Williams explains, "the second phase involves an analysis of opportunities and risks for the existing business. Furthermore, affected products, customers, and regions are

analyzed” (p.38). Step two is also when a digital business strategy is established, and implementation or skills gaps are noted. Finally, step three consists of implementing the roadmap.

Figure 16

Bouée and Schaible’s 3-phase model



Bouée and Schaible go as far as considering emerging new technology as well as cyber-security threats within their three-step model (Ahl & Nordberg, 2018). This makes it an ideal model for a company embarking on a digital transformation journey.

While Bouée and Schaible’s model was created with digital implementation in mind, each of the three models is more than capable of supporting a digital project. However, the success of a project will still be largely dependent upon an organization having an agile culture in place to support such a transformation. These items, combined with an adequate change management strategy and organizational leadership, will ensure the necessary comprehensive framework is in place for digital transformation projects.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In 2021, around 12% of global projects were deemed a failure (Project Management Institute, 2021). As previously mentioned, the failure rate of transformation projects is estimated at 70% (Bucy et al., 2016). These initiatives fail for a variety of reasons and are not cheap for the organizations involved. For example, in 2018, only \$400 billion of the \$1.3 trillion spent on digital transformation was money spent on successful transformations (Tabrizi et al., 2019).

Denning (2021) argues that most digital transformations within big corporations are “initiatives with limited scope, often led from the middle of the corporation, with mostly passive support from the top management, initiatives that are merely tacked on to internally focused command-and-control hierarchies.” From an organizational leadership perspective, this is plausible. To be successful in a digital transformation project, senior leadership’s involvement is key, and they cannot take a passive approach. Employees should see their leaders actively engaged and championing the transformation, not merely sitting on the sidelines celebrating wins as (or if) they occur. It is equally important that organizations ensure employees know how things will change as well as how they can be involved in the change(s) (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2016, p.17).

Not only does senior leadership need to be actively involved in the change(s) and communicate the change(s), but how they lead the organization during this time is key as well. A transformational leader, with the ability to “inspire employees to look ahead with a focus on the greater good and to function as a single unit with a common goal in mind,” would be ideal for an organization going through a digital transformation (DiFranza, 2019). Transformational leaders motivate their employees to willingly follow them and, in turn, support the changes they try to implement. DiFranza (2019) further writes that transformational leadership “relies on

encouraging and motivating followers to participate in molding a successful future for an organization.”

For a digital transformation to be successful, the organization’s culture must support the agile approach. If a previously traditional organization (i.e., not embracing agile), a transformational leader will also be able to garner support to transition the organization’s culture into one that welcomes and supports agile. De Smet et al. (2018) write “Given the openness and freedom people experience in an agile organization, culture arguably plays an even more important role here than in traditional organizations.”

Organizations should also recognize that an agile culture goes further than aiding with digital transformations. During the early days of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many organizations had to pivot operations and rush to make services and products available digitally. Jurisic et al. (2020) found that “agile organizations responded faster to the crisis, while those that do not embrace agile working may well forfeit the benefits of speed and resilience needed in the “next normal” after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Further, when subscribing to a change theory strategy, organizations should be keenly aware of the negative suggestions a “hard” Theory E approach can have to employees. Notably, if there are uncertainties around their job security, employees will have no reason to embrace any suggested changes. However, a Theory O approach will not solve a specific problem and may not yield the necessary solutions. Overall, a combined approach using both theories may yield the best results.

Finally, organizations must adopt newer change models to support their endeavors in digital transformation. While Lewin and Kotter’s models provide frameworks for some changes, they are not ideal for modern-day digital transformations. Instead, organizations should shift

towards one of the three digital models designed by Esser, PricewaterhouseCooper, or Bouée and Schaible. It is worth noting that Schallmo and Williams (2018) describe Bouée and Schaible's 3-phase model as "a digital transformation master plan that is specifically designed to address a digital future" (p. 36) and it may be ideal for organizations to utilize.

However, there is no "one model fits all" approach to selecting a digital change model. Bugubayeva et al. (2017), warn the "choice of a particular approach should be based on consideration of real conditions, as well as when integrating several models" (p. 206). An organization starting a digital transformation journey should evaluate its capabilities, including agile maturity, and determine which of the models work best for them. Additionally, they can learn from the lessons (both of success and failure) of other organizations that have gone through similar transformations.

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