

CHANGE MASTER SERIES

Driving the adoption of new software applications

Three classic mistakes

By Edmond Mellina



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Driving the adoption of new software applications

In a previous article (“*Circling the pyramid of change – The five keys to commitment or resistance*”¹), we presented a pyramidal model that helps leaders build lasting commitment to any kind of change.

This short article looks at the model in the context of a new software application. It discusses three areas that are typically overlooked, resulting in resistance to the new software and troubled implementation.

Failing to generate excitement

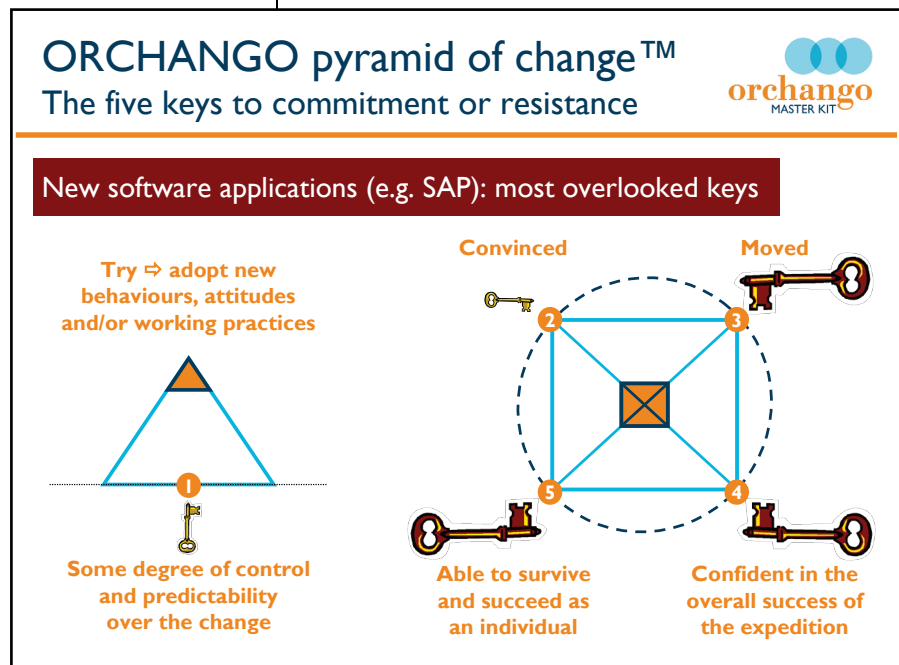
Project teams tend to focus on articulating a business case for the software that is rational, generic and big picture. If it helps convince end users that the project will benefit the organization, it doesn't generate excitement.

For example, the fact a new applicant tracking system will save tons of money won't overjoy your recruiters. “Great, but what's in it for me?” will likely be their reaction.

The project team must make a conscious effort to communicate how the new application will benefit the various users. It should make it as

personal as possible by linking the benefits to the passion and values of each individual.

Among a team of recruiters, Julie might speak passionately about the importance of cultivating great candidates when no position are currently available for them. Her colleague Peter might be more interested in providing first-class service to the hiring managers. Like marketers, the project leaders should uncover these unique passions and position the new application differently with Julie than Peter, in terms that truly resonate with their respective values.



Such an emotional commitment will go a long way in driving acceptance of the new application. As 19th century French writer Joseph Roux once said, “nothing vivifies, and nothing kills, like the emotions”.

In the collective memory of any organization, there is no shortage of failed software initiatives. These horror stories re-surface as soon as a new software project is announced, creating a deep sense of scepticism among end-users.

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Failing to build enough confidence in the project team

In the collective memory of any organization, there is no shortage of failed software initiatives. These horror stories re-surface as soon as a new software project is announced, creating a deep sense of scepticism among end-users.

As a result, building confidence in the initiative represents an uphill battle from the get go. The key recommendations are:

- Ensure the overall sponsor has the organizational power necessary to sanction the change, fulfills her role effectively, and is committed to see the project through completion.
- Select as project leader a respected individual with a solid track record with technology change. Complement the team with highly competent people – including from the user community. Select proven consultants or vendors.
- Work hard to enlist the managers and opinion leaders of the various groups impacted by the change. These influential people will be instrumental in helping drive local adoption for the new application.
- Break down the rollout into small phases, aiming at delivering value rapidly and every couple of months thereafter. Nobody has confidence in mammoth technology projects!

Failing to ensure end-users are able to succeed with the new application

People want to succeed in their job. They resist new software that is not user-friendly or for which they have received ineffective training.

The screens must be designed with usability in mind. Test all your workflow assumptions in a lab, with real users working on real-life scenarios.

Refuse off-the-shelf training from vendors. Work in tight collaborations with your users to

tailor the software training to their specific needs. Complement the initial classroom sessions with refresher courses or on-the-job support.

In other words, do everything you can to help your end user succeed with the new software application.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Edmond Mellina is president of ORCHANGO – a provider of innovative and proven learning programs especially developed for organizations in transition. With its flagship Change Master Program, ORCHANGO is known for world-class change management training.

Edmond is internationally recognized as an expert in the field of change and transition management. He is the creator of the ORCHANGO Change Management System™ and the ORCHANGO Learn-and-Execute System™.

Edmond's articles have appeared in leading business publications around the globe; the media regularly interview him as an expert source.

As a speaker, Edmond addresses audiences on change management, leadership development, multicultural teamwork and the art of influence.

Edmond holds a Master of Engineering from the prestigious “Grandes Écoles” of France, and is a graduate of the Ivey Executive Program. He is fluent in both English and French.

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