

the LavaCon Conference on  
**Advanced Technical Communication  
 and Project Management**

## Speed Bumps and Detours

Navigating Resistance to Change



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## Overview

When technology projects and people meet:

- what can go wrong (that we know about)
- how to prevent things going wrong,

*and if you can't prevent, how to*

- shift into damage-control mode
- minimize the delaying effects




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## Why do CM/KM projects fail?

- The number one reason:
  - Non-adoption by users
- According to LISA's 2006 Global Business Practices Survey:
 

*"Staff resistance to change is a factor that complicates roughly half of all technology implementation projects and severely threatens about one in ten"*



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## The reality:

- CM is a **process** – not a product
- It's never the silver bullet 'they' promised ...
- New System + Old Processes → Failure
- Upgrading or automating a broken system → same failures – just faster



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## Common misconceptions

- It's (just) a technology implementation
- It's (just) an infrastructure project
- It's (just) a piece of software ...
- If we explain what's going on, people will naturally fall in line (and do as they're told)



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## This can go wrong

1. Wrong system chosen
2. Non-adoption by users
3. Governance models didn't change
  - No authoring and review policy in place
4. No-one took ownership of the content
5. IT rolled it out – and washed its hands



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## 1. Wrong system chosen ...

- Prevent:
  - Engage external – independent – consultant to do requirements analysis, and guide the RFP process
- Damage control:
  - Cut your losses – stop the process to reevaluate
  - Work with IT and other stakeholders to adapt, adjust, or replace the system
  - Involves getting more budget

STRATEGY A

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## 2. Non-adoption by Users

- Prevent:
  - Involve key staff from beginning
  - Recruit internal C-level champion
  - Evangelize
- Damage control:
  - Never too late to involve key staff in process
  - Recruit internal advocates, C-level champion
  - Evangelize! Evangelize!

STRATEGY A

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## 3. No change to governance model

- Prevent:
  - Map current processes and workflow
  - Involve staff in identifying and repairing critical faults, bottlenecks, and workarounds
- Damage control:
  - Pause – reassess workflow, work with internal client groups to resolve issues
  - Reconfigure workflow in the system, test ... and test again.

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## 4. Content has no owner(s)

- Prevent:
  - During the content analysis phase, create content management teams for content categories
  - Make CM teams responsible for the content migration and/or rewrites
  - Do **not** outsource the migration!
- Damage control:
  - Do it now, anyway, better late than never

STRATEGY A

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## 5. IT rolled-out ... and was done

- Prevent:
  - Secure equal standing at the project table
  - IT supports and connects; Marketing (or Tech Pubs, or CorpComm) drives the business case
- Damage control:
  - Bring 'em back on board – the job isn't done if the benefits aren't happening!

STRATEGY A

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## Human nature


- Most people ...
  - Do NOT like surprises
  - Care about their co-workers
  - Want to do the best job they can
  - Need occasional reassurances
- Most managers ...
  - Feel overwhelmed with 'special projects'
  - Feel uncomfortable with 'difficult' conversations

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## Managers are people, too:

- Learn to ask staff for input by:
  - Talk about the problem, not the solution
  - Tap into collective memories
- Develop a mentor in the company
  - Use mentor as a sounding board
  - Ask for help dealing with internal politics
- Make time for your high performance staff
  - Face time with the boss should be a reward



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## When you don't get it right:

- Broken processes
  - Dysfunctional behavior; territorialism
- Wait-and-See attitude
  - Passive resistance; apathy
  - Cling to inefficient work methods
  - Jealously guard expertise; no sharing
  - Politicized environment

run  hide  fight 



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## What's the Big Deal?

- New systems = new processes
- New processes = new work habits
- New governance = new power structure

Change Management is:

Getting from "here" to "there"




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## Preparing for B I G Changes

- Secure C-level sponsorship
- Update your knowledge of CM (*Join CM Pros, for instance*)
- Bring independent experts in
- Map the current governance model, and:
- Fix it **before** CMS roll-out
- Talk **with** your people, not just **at** them




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## Transitional emotions

- Discomfort (mild to extreme)
- Loss of (professional) identity
- Loss of status / power

can lead to

- Anger and resentment; frustration
- Passive resistance ... active sabotage
- Cosmetic compliance only
- Depressed morale, rising tensions



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## Getting "there"


- Communicate, communicate, communicate ... a 2-way street!
- Acknowledge, discuss, resolve
  - Use peer-mentoring
  - Focus on positive outcome
- Provide forum for sharing experiences
- Involve users in defining new roles



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## The good news

- Humans are actually very adaptive
- It's all about trust – in the system and in each other
- Model desired behavior – **do** as I **do** – and most will follow
- Bottom-up solutions →Ownership
- Managing by results, not by process gets a lot more work **finished**



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## Focus on the people

- Rule #1 of system implementation success:

**“In vain do we build the company, if we do not first build the people.”**

Carlton Jackson, Co-creator, Humanisphere, Inc.

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