



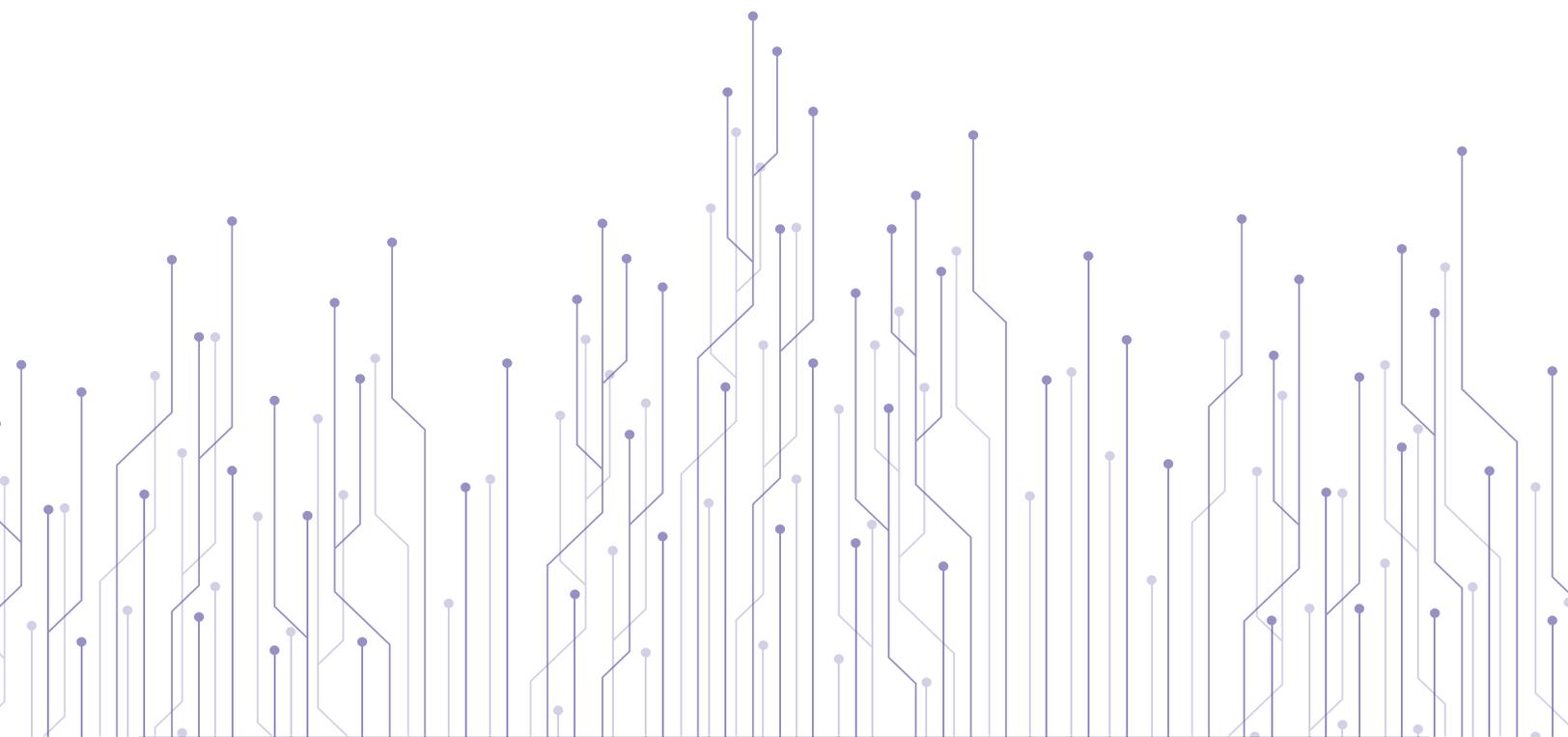
Applying Change Management Strategies To Accelerate Digital Transformation in Healthcare

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Examining perception of change amid urgency for transformation.....	4
Implementing change in healthcare organizations: a how-to.....	5
Managing communication through change.....	6
Leveraging the partnership of data transformations and change management.....	7
About Axuall + Centric.....	8
References.....	8



Abstract

The article explores the critical need for change management within healthcare organizations pursuing digital transformation. We emphasize the importance of embracing change and leveraging data and automation, particularly in the context of healthcare's most valuable asset: its workforce. We also provide a how-to guide for implementing change, communicating a clear vision, addressing risk aversion, and engaging stakeholders through the digital transformation journey.

Introduction

The adoption of innovative technologies in healthcare historically lags behind other industries. From mobile technology to automation to artificial intelligence, tools that improve healthcare workflows and processes are rarely integrated quickly. This resistance to change, driven partly by a conservative “do no harm” culture, has delayed much-needed innovation and automation. As a result, time-consuming, manual processes remain prevalent, costing organizations significantly.

This article explores the hesitancy to change in healthcare and the repercussions of inefficiencies that result from delayed or under-utilized innovations. It explores ways to overcome fears of change in order to embrace technology, as well as strategies leaders can implement to enact an actionable plan for organizational transformation. Decision-makers must embrace and lead change to successfully solve the industry's most pressing challenges through digital transformation and workforce-related process improvements.

Organizations experience workforce-wide hesitancy to change due to several factors, including:



Change fatigue, fueled by burnout related to an influx of pandemic and post-pandemic requests.



Lack of awareness about the reason for change.



Perceptions about a lack of support from or trust in organizational leadership.



Frustration from being excluded from change-related decisions.



Resistance to new or different tasks that will be part of the job role.



General fear of the unknown or fear of losing their employment.

Examining perceptions of change amid urgency for transformation

In a 2022 Gartner survey, only 38% of employees were willing to support organizational change compared to 74% in 2016.¹ This is undoubtedly the case in healthcare, where embracing and executing change has proven challenging—despite the known need for digital transformation. A lack of change results in missed opportunities to innovate and prosper. Patient access and safety, workforce satisfaction, revenue acceleration, and profitability, among other areas, are impacted.

These factors underscore the reality that employees should not be seen as passive recipients of change but instead as key stakeholders in unfolding it. Managing the human component is critical for organizations that would benefit from digital transformation. A study on change and innovation in healthcare cites, “Human dimension is the primary criticality to be managed to impede failure of the re-organizational path.”²

Most of the factors above are fear-based in nature and common among employees concerned about how technology will change their roles or diminish their value. Similarly, digital transformation may be perceived as a threat—rooted in apprehension about one’s ability to adapt or learn new things. Once decision-makers understand hesitancy around change, they can more effectively establish a plan for accelerating a digital transformation that considers and aligns all stakeholders.

Current industry conditions surrounding staffing reveal that transformation is imminent. In a recent Kauffman Hall State of Healthcare Performance Improvement report,³ 66% of respondents say they have run at less than full capacity over the past year because of staffing shortages. Further, 63% are struggling to meet demand within their physician enterprise, with patient concerns or complaints about access to physician clinics increasing at 32% of respondent organizations. Clinicians are under pressure and working longer hours to meet patient demands, which leads to feelings of burnout: more than three in five physicians reported at least one manifestation of burnout in 2021, while between 35-54% of nurses reported symptoms of burnout in 2019, before the pandemic.⁴ These survey statistics demonstrate the real-life consequences of understaffed departments on the workforce at large.



Implementing change in healthcare organizations: a how-to

Before undertaking any significant organizational change initiative, leaders and change agents must take time to identify the most important changes needed within the organization and the impetus behind them. The seven-step process outlined below should be followed to ensure healthcare organizations are equipped with the tools and strategies necessary to implement successful digital transformation.

1

Identify areas for change.

Pinpoint specific areas that require transformations by examining daily pain points and their impact on the organization. Create a vision that supports improvement in key areas.



2

Consider the existing culture.

Ensure the drivers of change initiatives align with the organization's mission, vision, goals, and company culture and are supported by leadership. It is also important to identify which initiatives have worked before, which haven't, and why – in order to create a rollout customized to your specific organization.



3

Engage employees

Identify the role-specific processes that digital transformation may impact. Then, ask employees to share insights on potential areas of improvement in their daily work. It's important to acknowledge the value and role of existing processes in order to determine which evolving technologies are the best fit.



4

Ensure leadership buy-in of the vision.

Achieve leadership alignment, secure executive support, and incentivize the transformation throughout the organization. To do so, the vision for change should address "what's in it for me?" clearly, concisely, and convincingly. Assuage feelings of doubt by educating leadership and employees on the value and return on investment of automated and data-driven processes.



5

Execute a communication-rich plan.

During implementation, consistently share the value of innovation, the vision for change, and progress towards it. This creates an environment safe for feedback and insights across the organization. Even the most robust, data-rich solutions application should be primarily a people-focused endeavor.



6

Establish a commitment to learning and development.

Learning and development are essential components of embracing and executing change. While the unknown often makes participants change-averse, education about new processes, roles, and responsibilities reassures the workforce amid changing conditions.



7

Measure and monitor progress.

Whether through surveys, conversations, or hard metrics unique to the organization and its change initiative, ongoing data analytics tracking and review will reveal if the transformation efforts are successful. The data will also highlight early wins and the areas that may require attention or adjustment.



Managing communication through change

Before and during implementation, frequently communicate with both leadership and affected employees utilizing varied, salient touch points that fit with organizational culture, potentially including email, company-wide meetings, one-on-one discussions, company intranet platforms, and E-newsletters.

Through these channels, change agents will establish trust in the initiative by:



Explaining the significance of clear and effective communication in the change management process.



Discussing the importance of inclusivity and engaging employees throughout the change process.



Offering strategies for effectively conveying the vision for change to all stakeholders.



Highlighting the need to create a culture of collaboration and innovation that continuously supports the change initiative.



Explaining how change management helps bring people along on the transformation journey to achieve the intended goal and ultimately improve healthcare delivery.



Addressing how data and automation solutions will contribute to workforce productivity and enable the organization to evolve to overcome current challenges.

In these communications, change agents must note the impact of automation and highlight its interplay with human labor, which demonstrates the following tendencies:⁵

- Machines substitute for tasks, not jobs.
- Automation complements labor.
- Automation can increase demand, therefore creating jobs.
- Capital and labor augmentation spurs innovation.

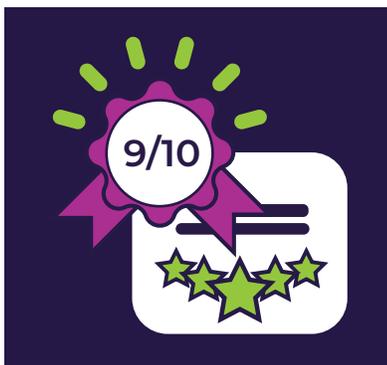
This is especially important in healthcare, where reducing the burden from remedial tasks improves the ability to focus on the cognitive ones. Addressing these attributes early and often through various touch points is critical in securing employee buy-in for transformation.

Leveraging the partnership of data transformation and change management

When embarking on a digital transformation initiative, applying change management strategies for guidance with the support of data-driven insights will ensure successful adoption. As healthcare continues to navigate staffing shortages and patient access demands, leaders must rethink the manual processes still foundational to executing daily tasks, particularly as they relate to the workforce. It's critical to recognize that data and automation are strategic assets that will drive change, promote efficiency, and ensure an agile future.

Workforce optimization brings power to organizations through a deeper understanding of intricacies within staffing supply and demand curves. With data fueling informed decision-making, management can embrace technology solutions to optimize the staff they already have using key insights about their and their clinician demographics, license types, service lines, facilities, markets, procedures, practice affinity, and patient populations. The results of a transformation founded on quality data include reduced costs, improved scheduling, and increased clinician engagement and satisfaction, all significant benefits that allow an organization to evolve and adapt internally amid mounting external challenges.

While sticking with the status quo feels safe for some organizations, failing to embrace digital innovation is a missed opportunity. Workforce intelligence eliminates information bottlenecks, drives better decisions, and facilitates faster onboarding to maximize provider value, save time, and protect revenue. When harnessed with focused intention and genuine enthusiasm, this clinician data can propel healthcare organizations forward to meet patient demand, maintain fiscal health, and attract clinical talent for high-quality care.



By connecting to thousands of real-time data sources that make up a complete picture of a clinician's profile, career, accomplishments, and credentials, Axuall's workforce intelligence platform consistently reduces clinician paperwork and turnaround time by over 70%, reducing onboarding time by an average of 15 days. One simple connection verifies hundreds of thousands of timely and accurate data points, solving numerous clinical workforce challenges while boosting clinician satisfaction and engagement. Axuall's clinical workforce intelligence solutions boast a 9 out of 10 clinician approval rate.

Leveraging this robust clinician data through a well-defined change management framework enables successful digital transformation within healthcare organizations, empowering forward-thinking healthcare leaders to step into the future of operational excellence.

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About Axuall

Built with leading healthcare systems, Axuall is a workforce intelligence company powered by a national real-time practitioner data network. The technology enables healthcare systems, staffing firms, telehealth, and health plans to dramatically reduce onboarding and enrollment time while providing unique, powerful data insights for network planning, analytics, and reporting.

To learn more, visit www.axuall.com.

About Centric Consulting

Centric Consulting is an international management consulting firm with unmatched expertise in business transformation, AI strategy, cyber risk management, technology implementation, and adoption. Founded in 1999 with a remote workforce, the company has established a reputation for solving its clients' toughest problems, delivering tailored solutions, and bringing in deeply experienced consultants centered on what's best for your business.

To learn more, visit www.centricconsulting.com.

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