Internet Marketing: How to Dethrone the Change Management Process

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Introduction

Change professionals are stuck in an analog world of change processes, checklists, and best practices, while the rest of enterprise has gone digital. The analog change management processes “sort of” worked in the eighties and nineties when information technology (IT) was not a commodity and data was not so big. It’s now time for change professionals to go digital.

Imagine definitive proof that the right people were engaged in an enterprise change effort. The uncertainty of whether or not people cared enough to engage in change at any level could be answered. The technology and tools exist. And part of the answer lies in an unlikely place—Internet Marketing.

Consider Internet marketers; they measure customer engagement throughout an email marketing campaign using the email click-through rate (CTR). CTR is simply the rate an email subscriber is engaged enough to click on a link to learn more. Change engagement could be measured by applying the CTR to check responses to change content in an email. Amazon uses this technique, so do most successful companies on the Internet.

Unprecedented opportunities with IT innovations can streamline change practices. These innovations and data driven feedback can make enterprise change personalized and targeted. Change professionals need to look outside change management, dethrone the change process, and give the power back to the people. Measuring change engagement is the first step.

Change has Changed

The challenge is that change has changed because of IT -- but change professionals have not. They revert to habits in their comfort zone—checklists, process maps, and best practices. These are not bad habits, but they focus on process and procedures and inadvertently cause those people with most to gain or lose to actively disengage from enterprise change.

IT is Changing Change

There are three key reasons why IT is changing change:

1. volume; velocity; and complexity;
2. enterprise to Internet lag; and

Volume, Velocity and Complexity

Moore and Metcalfe’s laws account for the increased volume, velocity, and complexity of IT. This is the same IT that triggers most of enterprise change.

Moore’s law is the observation that transistors on integrated circuits doubles every two years. [1] Moore’s law has held true since it was first reported in a paper by Intel’s Gordon Moore in 1965.

Metcalf’s law is that the value of the network increases proportionally to the square of the number of users connected to it. [2] As IT gets cheaper, it becomes a commodity. As more connections are made to all the commodities, it is harder to identify the dots that an organization needs to connect.

For change professionals who are supposed to connect all the dots, it means there are a lot more dots to connect. This means change professionals responsible for communication need to understand the dots that make up an enterprise change and must use this understanding as the starting point to create an email list to be segmented for change engagement.
Enterprise Lag

Enterprises have a serious technology lag behind mobile and Internet technologies. This gap widens as the volume, velocity, and complexity continues to increase. It gets harder and harder to discard legacy systems and adopt new systems.

Twenty five years ago, work was the place to access the best technology. Most people did not have a computer at home. If they did, it was shared with family members. Back then, geeks and workaholics would even stay late to play with the cool stuff because they did not have anything like it at home.

Now mobile devices are readily available to almost every person in the world. Mobile devices have more power and capabilities than many enterprise desktop computers. Mobile devices can do tasks that used to require dedicated systems – managing email, taking pictures, making videos, listening to music, making a phone call, participating in video conferences, etc.

Change professionals need to empathize with investors, stakeholders, service providers and users that make up change segments. This is especially true when it comes to enterprise lag. This enterprise lag is real. The only way to address it is to accept it, minimize it, and find ways to engage each change segment where they are emotionally.

For example, consider the enterprise change lifecycle, budget realities, and the political climate, as well as how the enterprise change is ultimately going to make each person’s life better. Empathizing with each change segment makes it easier for change professionals to make the connections with people. The people connection ultimately “connects the dots” to accelerate enterprise technology change and decrease enterprise technology lag.

Personas are another idea borrowed from Internet marketing and marketing in general. Personas are about creating a single fictional person your audience can resonate with. Change professionals could create change personas for each change segment. Change personas help create change messages that connect with people because it forces change professionals to “walk in their change segment’s shoes” as they create targeted change content. Change personas are not a proxy for authenticate communication with people, they help create messages that address a change segment’s needs at an emotional level.

Remember the enterprise technology lag is not primarily about technology, it is really about the people. Change professionals could adapt personas and use them to really connect with the people vital to enterprise change.

Big Data

Big Data, combined with business analytics and machine learning, has changed IT and what people expect. People expect IT to make recommendations, organize content, and push information to them. On the Internet this is typical. For enterprises, the capacity to slice and dice data depends on the enterprise lag.

Big Data and the technology used to understand the data make it possible to show historical trends, predict behavior, and correlate data from diverse sources. Big Data and the benefits derived from it are intrinsic to daily life on the Internet from book and product recommendations on Amazon to friend recommendations on Facebook.

Change professionals need to understand how Big Data, business analytics, and machine learning are changing...change. The diverse data sets required for harvesting insights from Big Data add another layer of complexity for
enterprise change. It also gives change professionals a valuable opportunity to harness a little bit of “Big Data” for their use in the service of change.

Change professionals engaged in a change campaign can measure change engagement using the email CTR used in Internet marketing. Once change professionals know their change engagement rate, they will have a clear understanding about how well they are connecting the dots by resonating with people.

If a change segment is not connecting with the content, the change professional can adjust the language or content. They could even do A/B split testing used in email marketing where different email subscribers get the same basic message but the content is modified and split between category A and category B. The point is that change messages could be scientifically tested.

Change professionals are left guessing whether the change content they worked hard to craft and deliver connected, converted, or resonated. They become efficient at collecting data in surveys and driving best practices without the context of whether they are the right practices for the enterprise. They tend to rely on “gut” instinct.

Surveys only help a little. Plus they are a lot of work. Change professionals have to create a survey, mitigate survey bias, and correlate the results. Response bias happens when people respond to survey questions with the answers they think they are supposed to give or people just skip questions. Response bias can also be introduced when the questions are written in negative or positive language.

Surveys provide some insight about what people say they do, not what they really do. Surveys really do not say much about change engagement.

Change professionals need to consider what has worked in the past and forge it with new ideas to help lead enterprise change. If change professionals do not change the way they change, both enterprise and change professional will fall further behind on the change continuum.

**Change Professionals Have Not Changed**

Change professionals focus on artifacts of processes; procedures, and project documents. Artifacts become the emphasis instead of change engagement and content that resonates with people. This often results in a rigid strategy for change instead of an adaptive strategy.

Change professionals have not embraced the power of the Internet to keep up with change. If they have a website, wiki, or blog, they have passive content that may or may not engage the very people they are trying to guide through the change. They do not leverage Internet technologies that provide valuable feedback about the content and whether people are engaged enough to click a link and follow a link.

**Give the Power Back to the People**

Change, whether it is enterprise change or personal change, is an inside job. Change professionals have an opportunity to jump start enterprise change by adapting Internet marketing techniques. Internet marketers have blazed a trail for change professionals to switch their change management processes from analog to digital.
Internet marketers rely on segmented markets to target the content. Internet marketing like creating email lists with market segments, engaging copy targeted to market segments, and monitoring the email CTR rate to measure engagement.

The email CTR, used by Internet marketers, to measure how well their content engaged an email subscriber, is the first step for taking change management digital and focusing on change engagement. Change engagement measures how well people are engaged with change content. It unlocks the mystery of whether a change message is resonating.

Change engagement needs four components, as shown in the figure below:

- **Change Segments**
- **Targeted Content**
- **Measure Mechanism**
- **Home Base for Content**

Change engagement requires a website as a home base, change segments from an email list, targeted content that connects with a change segment and a measurement mechanism so change engagement can be measured.

For example, segmenting the “enterprise change market” would differentiate between users who care how the new system changes affect their business processes and systems integrators who need to know how to put a system together.

Targeted content for a user would steer clear of technical details and jargon. It would focus on what a user would care about – when the system is going to production, how it changes the business, or training that may be required. Systems integrators would care about critical dependencies, sequencing of integration, or timing to move to the cloud infrastructure.

**Home Base for Content**

A home base is a dedicated website set up for an enterprise change effort. This does not have to be a complicated website. It could be as simple as a blog. What is important is to have centralized location to serve as a home base for your change “marketing campaigns.”

**Segmented Email List**

One size never really fits all. This is true for clothes, movies, and enterprise change. People have different backgrounds and respond to messages in different ways. It is really true when you are dealing with enterprise change that is triggered by changes in IT. Understanding functional components of the new solution and legacy solution at a very high level will help change professionals create an email list that can be segmented by investors, stakeholders, service providers, and users. The segmented email list is really about finding which dots to connect for enterprise change.

**Targeted Content**

Resonance and connecting the dots is why targeted content is necessary. Targeted content is the antithesis of what a lot of change content looks like today.

Targeted content has the person’s name greeting them at the beginning. It is timely. It is
relevant to them. It is based on a change persona developed for a people in a change segment to address their emotions, fears, hopes, and idiosyncrasies.

Targeted content serves two purposes: First, it helps create an email message that is engaging enough for a person to click. Second, it is to create content on the home base engaging enough for a person to stay around. Targeted content is really about connecting with the dots (the people) identified in the segmented email list.

**Mechanism to Measure**

In order to measure change engagement, there must be mechanism in place to measure it. For enterprises that can leverage email marketing services (e.g., AWeber, Constant Contact), change professionals can follow guidance provided by the service used to set up an email campaign.

For enterprises where an email marketing services are not viable because they are limited to private networks and do not have access to Internet service providers, change professionals could work their internal IT provider to determine the best way to track referring sources on the home base.

Having a mechanism to measure change engagement allows change professionals to calibrate their change message, see how well they are engaging in change, and modify the message as needed.

**Conclusions**

Change professionals need to move to digital change management practices. Internet marketers have techniques and technology that could be adapted to measure change engagement.

Change engagement is the single most important measure to understand the effectiveness of enterprise change. In order to measure change engagement, a change professional must:

- understand all the dots that make up an enterprise change effort;
- create an email list based on the people identified during the “dot analysis”; and
- segment the email list into discrete change segments like investors, stakeholders, service providers, and users.

The change professional needs to understand each segment well enough to make a connection through targeted content. Change personas, an idea adapted from Internet marketing, helps crystallize how to create targeted messages that will resonate with targeted segments.

Finally, the change professional needs to measure change engagement. Measurement provides hard data about how well the connection was made and will give evidence of whether or not change professionals need to refine their content.

Understanding change engagement is all about people, even though it increasingly depends on digital messages. Using Internet marketing techniques for change management gives change professionals the chance to switch from analog to digital. Plus they get the chance dethrone the old change management process and finally give the power back to the people.
References
