

Change Through Storytelling

By Elizabeth Lugones, UpLevel Ops Senior Advisor

CONGRATULATIONS! You have selected a workflow tool to create visibility into the work coming into the department, enable collaboration and self-service, and facilitate reporting and status updates for all involved. Although everyone agrees that there is a need to get out of email, Slack, text, carrier pigeons, and manual Excel trackers to do the work, there is significant hesitancy to be involved in the implementation and adoption of your new purchase. The tool that will bring them the relief they wanted has now become the thing that makes them all cringe. You are left scratching your head and asking WHY and screaming in your head, WORK WITH ME, PEOPLE!

Here are some steps you can take toward building a successful implementation, and, most importantly, widespread adoption.

Tell a Story and Play it on Repeat

Let's take a pause and ask a question that John Maxwell poses in one of his leadership talks: Does everyone understand why this is important? In order to raise awareness and support, use the power of storytelling to connect the "why" to the "what." Answer the following questions for people and illustrate the connection between each:

- What does the company do? What are the product(s), mission, strategy and goals of the company?
- What does each individual do at the company? Be mindful of your audience and tailor this as necessary so that it resonates for the recipient. If you are talking to IP Counsel do not talk in Marketing language.
- What does the team do together?

By the way, do not be surprised if you have to keep repeating yourself. As a matter of fact, PLAN ON IT. Weave the "why" and "what" into all interactions that you have, not just in big communication blasts or status updates. Does your AGC come to you complaining that she keeps answering the same question from the Sales team or that she has no idea what her team is working on and they are experiencing burn out? Instead of just listening and sympathizing how about asking, "Sally, do you have an FAQ for those Sales questions? If so, why don't we include it in a workflow so that Sales can find the answer for themselves?"

See what we did there?

Even senior leaders in an organization need to know the "why" and "what" of a change to be able to lend their support and sponsorship. They want to unleash the talents of their team and empower the business but they have not often dug into the details of the pain points and solutions like legal ops. Tell the story with timelines and be specific in your ask: Tell them what you need and when you need it. Further, you may need to develop a script of talking points they can use as they go about their day. Often, we assume that

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leaders know what to do or say. Having this handy will give them comfort in speaking to their teams and business partners about the benefits and anticipated changes. This may seem unnecessary, but while legal ops is in the weeds of the details and can see the big picture, others are just struggling to envision how they will wade through the daily flood in their inbox.

Connection and Gratitude

The journey to change can be hard and fast or slow and methodical. Keeping everyone focused and motivated towards change is key. Ensure that you connect everyone with the results and progress. Develop metrics to demonstrate desired post-implementation improvements. For example, if the goal is to enable self-service NDAs, share metrics of the 25 NDAs completed in a month via the tool. If the goal is to reduce or minimize manual work tracking by Jim, share the fact that Jim now got 2.5 hours back in his week to work on higher value work or take his kid to soccer. Those stories will give others FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and motivate them to adopt the change in their areas.

Most importantly, express genuine gratitude for efforts big and small. When saying thank you, make sure to express how their contribution is a benefit to the success. At the core, we all want to feel valued and a sense of purpose and connection. Recognition of effort goes a long way, so sprinkle gratitude around like confetti.

Elizabeth Lugones is COO/ Senior Advisor with UpLevel Ops who has built and managed Legal Operations teams in various industries in both public and private companies over her 20+ year career. She excels in global project management and business reengineering, with particular expertise in process improvement, change management, cross functional collaboration and team building, but her true passion is helping others find their own strengths and talents and harness them for the value of all.

Before joining UpLevel, Liz served as the Senior Director of Legal Operations at WeWork. Prior to WeWork, Liz served as Director of Legal Operations at a diverse range of companies, including UnitedLex, DXC Technology, Becton Dickinson, and MetLife. She also worked at Citigroup as Manager, Strategy and M&A.

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