

Continuous Improvement Starts at Implementation

By Liz Lugones, COO/Senior Advisor, UpLevel Ops

Congratulations! You have successfully implemented a new process and complimentary technology in your department. You can now move on to the next item on the long list of projects, right?

Not so fast!

Success is not only defined by what happens Day One, but what happens at 6, 12, 18 months and beyond the initial implementation. Establishing governance and monitoring are as important as all the work leading up to the big launch day. Here are some key components of a governance framework demonstrated via the implementation of workflow technology to centralize the intake of legal service requests.

1. Define Success.

Prior to implementation. From the time you start to vet solutions, ensure that the team is clear on what success looks like once the solution is in place. This is true whether you are instituting a standalone process or a process supported by automation.

Sample Success Vision: Legal department desires to increase visibility into the type of work coming into the department for both legal and business stakeholders while reducing reliance on email and manual trackers.

2. Measure.

You may ask, "Measure what?" To start keep it simple. Identify metrics and/or triggers that align with your defined success. The point of this is to both demonstrate the implementation is achieving the original desired outcomes and also quickly identify potential areas of improvement.

Sample Metrics: Phase 1 of your workflow implementation was the creation of intake for 3 contract types: NDA, Procurement and Services agreements. During the design phase of the implementation, ensure that you are able to track and report on the volume of work by each contract type, business area requesting, legal resource assigned, and length of time from original request date to execution.

3. Evaluate and Discuss.

Don't just collect the data and assume that everyone involved in the process is monitoring it and will raise a hand if they spot an issue. Establish a cadence of metric review and use those details to facilitate a conversation with relevant stakeholders to keep a pulse on how things are running. Consider it a "health check" of the environment ensuring that you are achieving the original articulated vision of success.

Sample Evaluation and Discussion: Run a report at two-months post-implementation. In the review you notice that in the first month there were 3 NDA requests and in the second month there was only 1 NDA request. That is odd. Prior to implementation your manual tracking showed that Charlie reviewed an average 10 NDAs a month while Carla was reviewing about 5. Where did all the NDAs go? Show this data to Charlie and Carla and ask a few questions. In this conversation you may discover that Charlie and Carla are still reviewing the same number of NDAs, but they continue to receive them via email and are not directing their business partner to enter via the portal. They acknowledge the value of the tool but they want to provide excellent service to the business and desire

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to be seen as a value to the organization. This signals an adoption issue that will need to be addressed.

4. Observe the Environment.

Ensure you have established mechanisms to know what is happening in the environment that could have an impact to processes. Change is unavoidable. Businesses evolve and mature very quickly. Therefore, do not assume that the same success measure from a year or two ago are still relevant today. Be agile enough to pivot with the organization and implement adjustments to achieve the new desired success.

Sample Environment Shift: Two years ago, the company was scaling fast and speed of contracting particularly in the area of execution of Service Agreements were crucial. The business recently developed a new product line complimentary to the original services provided and needs to be able to track how many of the existing customers are converting to the new product. Your department now needs to evaluate if you have the right processes and resources in place to support this new type of anticipated request. Can it be automated in our current environment? Here is where you go back to Step 1 above and repeat.

Establishing monitoring and governance programs ensure that all the hard work you put into an implementation is fully realized. Further, it establishes a pattern of success by including your teams in recognizing the value and results of the new tool, as well as the framework for continuous improvement for the next implementation project.

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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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