



Apolitical 5 Minute Listen

Ep 3 - Making Sense of Digital Transformation

Transcript

Imogen: Welcome to this five-minute listen. I'm Imogen, a Content Creator here at Apolitical.

In this five-minute listen, I'm going to be talking about digital transformation – and how to drive it. When the pandemic burst into our lives, it impacted everything we do. The way we shop, work and socialise changed radically. In almost every detail, our lives became more reliant on digital technology.

Governments were particularly active participants in this unprecedented push for digitalisation. As Matt Jukes, an experienced public service digital leader, wrote, "Covid had opened doors previously padlocked, with digital tools widely embraced in organisations and industries that had been slow on the uptake previously".

At the heart of the change we've seen are citizens. Public servants are aiming to ensure that services are made clearer, faster, and ultimately, more usable for the public. To help make sense of digital transformation, we asked Apolitical members taking our *Digital Transformation in the Public Sector* course to share their insights and tips on how to build a digital culture. Let's start with how to tackle an age-old question. How can you get senior management buy-in for a digital-first project?

One potential solution we heard was about “working in the open”. In practice, this translates to being fully transparent on the status of your project - sharing both wins *and* losses with colleagues. Another suggestion is to provide a clear explanation of the benefits for the management team, the employees and the clients they serve which may help ease their anxiety.’ Another strategy would be to create a playbook and include use cases where a similar service has leveraged new digital ways to make the service better.

Elena: *“Hello my name is Elena Chernikova, and I work as a Senior Policy Analyst at Employment and Social Development Services, in Canada. I could definitely observe a generational divide, for the most part, where the majority of senior management is less adept when it comes to technology than the majority of younger and often junior colleagues. This is, I think, where hesitation and stagnation come from. Senior and more busy colleagues tend not to go for training and junior ones are interested in training. One of the ideas therefore, is reverse mentorship, where a senior colleague could provide career guidance and advice, and a junior colleague could be a technology-partner or mentor. The goal is to demonstrate, in day-to-day work, that technology can actually improve productivity, efficiency and timeliness of work.”*

Imogen: Whilst getting leadership on board is obviously of critical importance, another point to consider is how resistance to digital change can be prolific across government hierarchy. When we put this question to our Apolitical course learners, many emphasised the need to enter into dialogue with staff and ensure that the “what’s in it for me” is clearly communicated. We heard this from one of our public servant course learners.

Learner: *“Be sure to allow those who are resistant to change to voice their concerns, reiterate what they said so they feel heard, and discuss options and possible solutions; don't allow the conversation to get stuck in the resistance.”*

Imogen: Getting buy-in is not, however, the only barrier preventing digital transformation. Let's be honest, building a sustainable digital infrastructure isn't cheap. Whilst ultimately it promises to reap huge financial rewards, a lack of funding can often spell the end of a digital initiative. Here's what one of our course learners had to recommend:

Learner: *“A solution would be to take the time to develop the business case for our management. That would demonstrate the costs of not providing the conditions to move on the digital path.”*

Imogen: Let's end on three takeaways:

Point 1: “Show the thing” to get management buy-in.

Point 2: Create channels of communication so your less digitally minded colleagues feel like they're being heard.

Point 3: Develop a strong business case for your digital initiative.

How can you put these tips to good use to drive digital transformation in your own organisation?

A huge thank you to all our Apolitical course learners who shared insights and ideas,

in particular Elena. You've been listening to a 5-Minute Listen from Apolitical. If you'd like to learn more about Digital Transformation, check out our 'Digital Transformation in the Public Sector' course - at [apolitical dot co forward slash microcourses](https://apolitical.co/microcourses) [apolitical.co/microcourses].