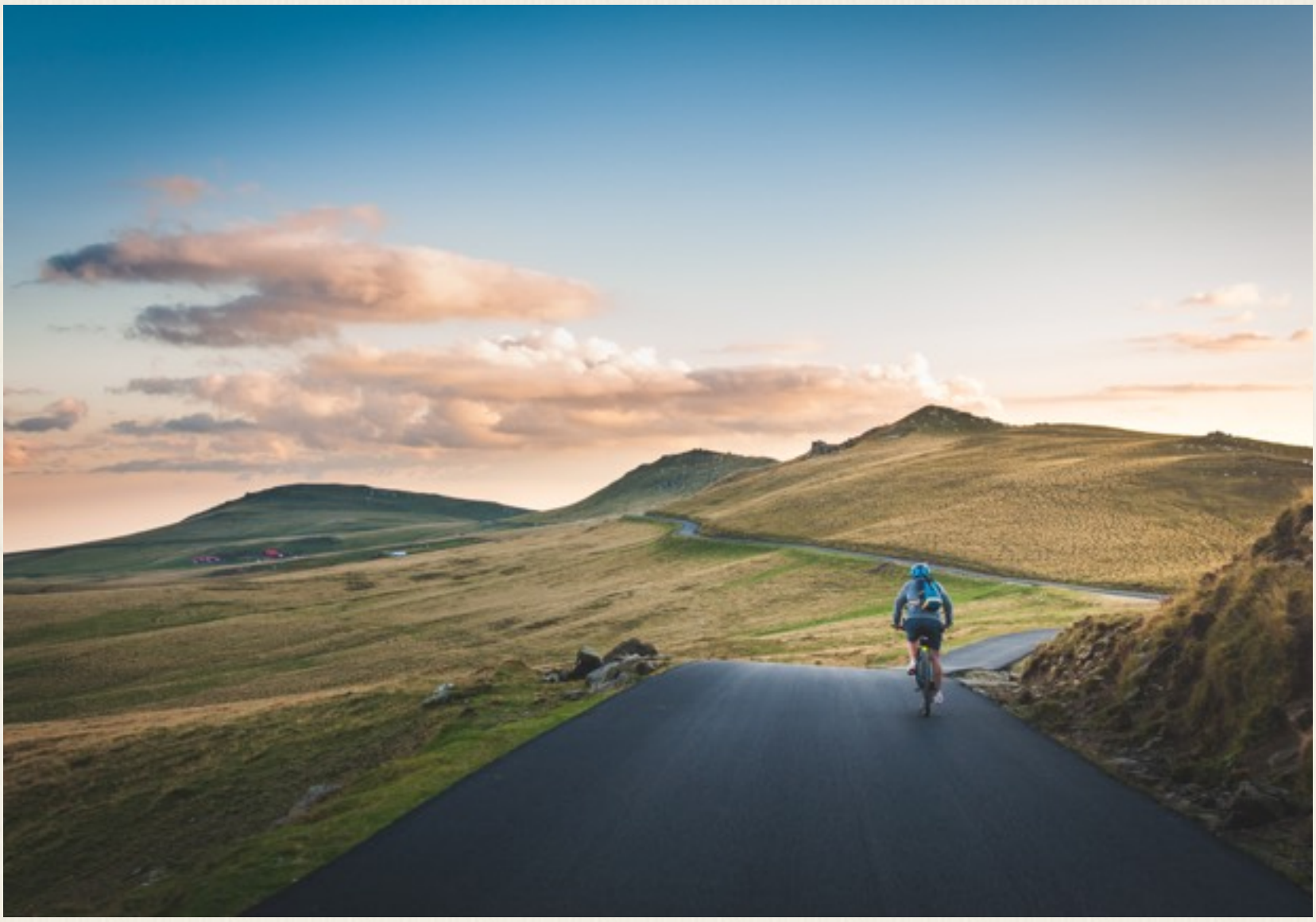
The Master Guide to Digital Adoption

REPHAEL SWEARY

CHAPTER 1

FOREWORD: PRODUCTIVITY AND HUMAN WELL-BEING



Productivity has always been the key to improving human well-being. Prior to the agricultural revolution, people worked physically all day just to provide for their basic human survival needs. The challenges of the agricultural revolution led to the industrial revolution, whose inefficiencies are now giving rise to the digital revolution.

But something is preventing the digital revolution from fully utilizing its potential to drive productivity - the human is being ignored and left behind.

In the digital era, this means that while software is progressing very fast, employees and customers simply cannot keep pace. We are creatures of habit and we hate change. Switching from iOS to Android, for example, can be painful, and for the change to be worthwhile, we need real motivation.

I've been using Microsoft Word since 1995, the same way, every day, with no real motivation to change. The only reason I upgraded versions was if I suddenly I couldn't continue to use the software the same way unless I upgraded. At the same time, Microsoft has spent so much money and time since then on new features, but I'm blissfully unaware of any of it.

Another way to think about this is to ask yourself whether your sales people actually change their behavior with every Salesforce.com feature release. If SFDC has 3 releases per year and their R&D budget was $1.2B in 2016, are users choosing to access and use a proportionate amount of that value?

The gap between digital technology and human capabilities is growing every day and is limiting the power of productivity to increase human well-being.

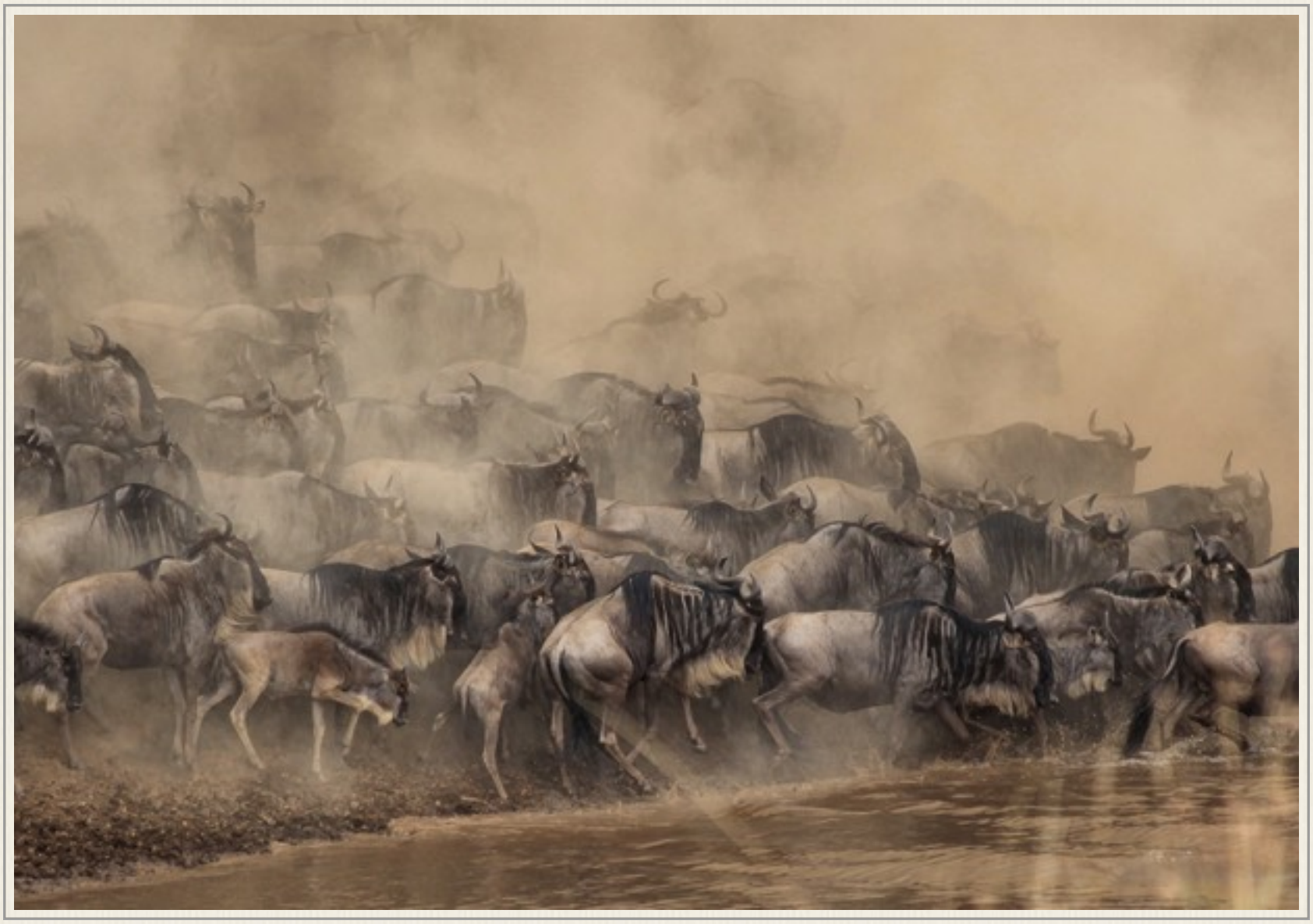
At the organizational level, the digital revolution is being called digital transformation. Whether it's done in order to expand market reach, capture a competitive advantage, or as a defensive strategy, digital transformation is becoming very hard to execute.

This problem has many names within the organization - change management, adoption issues, employee onboarding, self-service adoption, etc. All these names essentially relate to the fact that it's hard for people to learn new technical skills and to change habits. I once heard from Alan Lepofsky, Vice President and Principal Analyst at Constellation Research, that people like to say that practice makes perfect - but in the digital world, practice makes habit. In all contexts with the exception of professional athletes, I could not agree with him more.

If you picked up this book, you are likely already aware at some level that digital adoption is a challenge. In this book, however, I have tried to dive more deeply into the variety of diverse factors that are driving the digital adoption challenge and to provide examples that highlight real-life aspects of the digital adoption journey.

CHAPTER 2

BOARDING THE MOVING TRAIN



You've probably heard the joke about the Buddhist monk who goes up to a hot-dog stand and says, "Make me one with everything." When he gets his hotdog, he pays with a twenty and waits for his change.

The vendor smirks and says, "Change comes from within."

Although this may be true for individuals, in business, many changes also come from without.

Technology, specifically the birth of SaaS and the shift to paperless operations, is the most significant origin of the changes we deal with in large organizations in recent decades.

Digital transformation is disrupting entire industries, starting with the pressure to implement customer-facing digital approaches, and eventually driving organizations to radically transform internal operations as well. Add to this the increasing ubiquity of SaaS systems in workplaces today, and it becomes clear that we are dealing with a new magnitude of digital challenges.

Powerful as they are, digital systems add a layer of complexity to our organizations. Gone are the days when an organization worked with one company for all its IT needs. We now pick and choose from a buffet of software solutions all provided by different vendors. Selecting the best-of-breed also means that we're engaged in multiple, complex adoption processes simultaneously, leading to overwhelmed and disengaged employees.

From a management perspective, becoming a digital organization means constantly trying to adapt to new technology. We are forced into a cycle where we are rarely able to achieve the stability required to fully utilize these systems. This phenomenon drives us into a vicious cycle, one in which we are constantly chasing the moving target of digital adoption. The frenzied effort involved in understanding new needs and adapting to them obscures the principle that change is constant. We find ourselves trapped in a mind-set of immediacy, focused on the one change that's happening right now rather than the big picture.

To illustrate how this plays out, imagine a mid-size business that sells school supplies. Customer concerns are straightforward and handled through email, but customer satisfaction surveys reveal that many individuals are dissatisfied with the slow reply time. In response to this problem, the business decides to plant a live chat feature on their web page.

The company shops around for a vendor, makes a selection, and begins to roll out the new system. The platform is relatively simple, after a few weeks employees get the hang of it. The problem is solved…for the moment.

At the same time, the company releases a new product: a smart binder. This binder-tablet hybrid is expensive and feature-rich. Suddenly, the chat feature isn't sufficient means to support customer inquiries. They want a phone call.

The smart binder creates a new issue for the company. While they once got by using only the chat platform, they now need a CRM system to log the large numbers of calls they are receiving daily. Another selection and adoption process begins. Software training starts over from square one.

This is the reality with which businesses are living. There is never quite enough time to adapt to the current paradigm before a sudden change disrupts it. We are chasing our own tails.

I've often compared digital adoption to boarding a moving train. It sounds daunting because it is. The "tech train" is moving whether we like it or not. To board a moving train, you must first pick up speed by running at a clip alongside the car as you prepare yourself to leap. Then, you brace yourself for the jolt of the landing.

Most of us are still walking, and we're certainly not prepared for the jolt.

Digital adoption, as a subject of inquiry and concern, remains marginalized in large organizations. It is easier to just grin and bear it, so to speak, than to address the issue. In my experience, however, I have discovered that many executives, when asked about digital adoption, have a great deal to say.

Upper management aren't the only ones feeling the drag. Across industries, and irrespective of position, employees and leadership at large organizations have stories to tell of the woes of digital adoption. I have heard tales about employees' inability to master a new technology, about their difficulty finding support. I've seen cases in which employees who don't recognize the power of a new software develop hostile feelings to the new technology and nostalgia for the old system.

Leadership, in many cases, is unaware of the challenges of digital adoption. I have also seen on occasion leadership who is aware of the phenomenon—but who don't know the first step of how to approach it.

These professionals admit that it takes almost a year for a new employee to master the required systems, and that this process causes considerable overwhelm for staff members. A year is a long time, especially in an economy that has seen more and more individuals hopping from job to job, often spending only a year or two at any given organization.

Something in the digital adoption process is less straightforward than we feel it "should be." Meanwhile, technology increasingly infiltrates daily operations, and the digital adoption problem grows in significance.

As organizations continue to invest in new digital systems, the fact that technology is not fully adopted poses a threat to business success. Enterprises stand to sink hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars into the most sophisticated digital systems—whether or not they are used to their potential. Additionally, the opportunity cost of training time spent on these systems racks up an equally significant price tag.

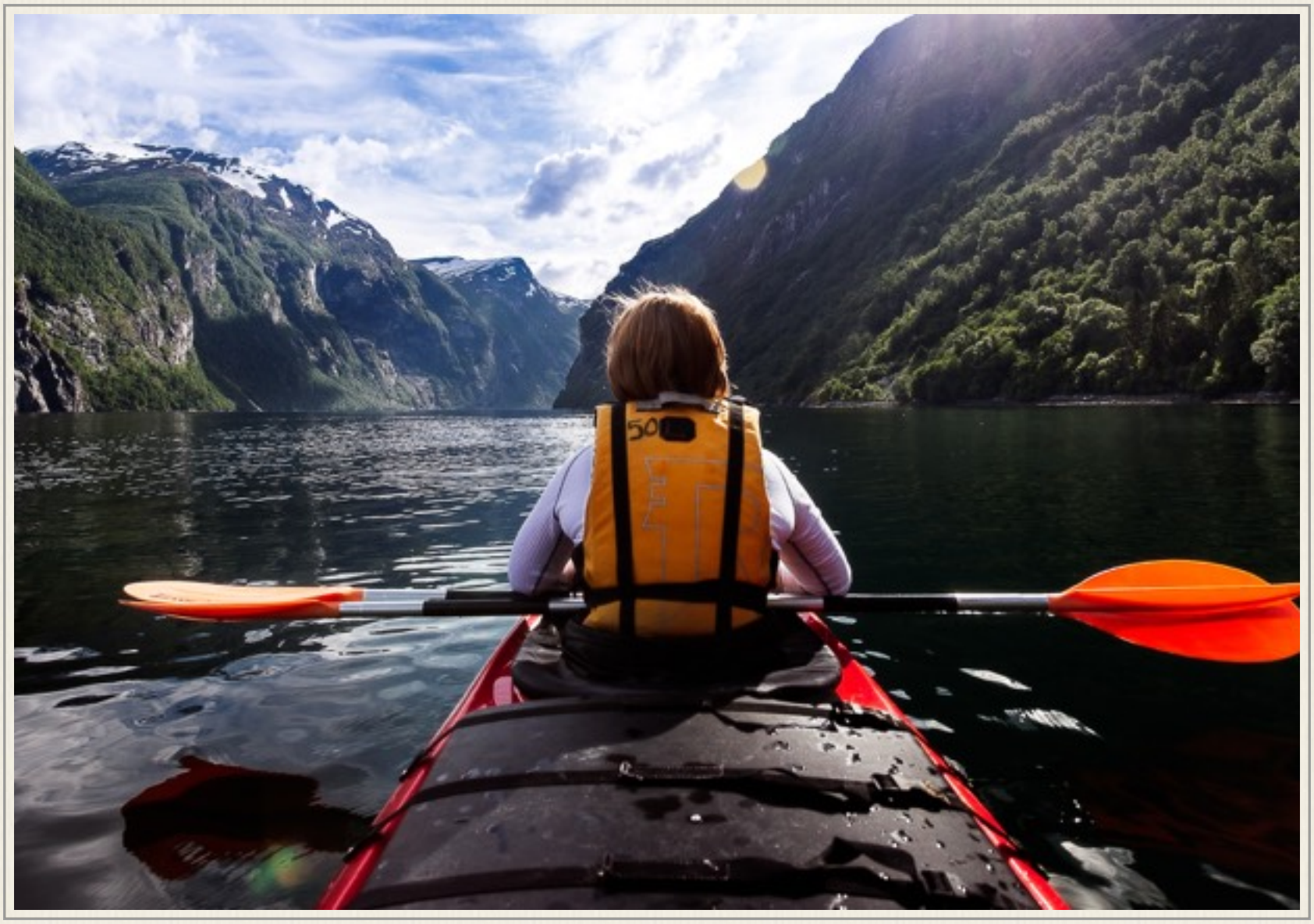
The fruits of the digital revolution are in our hands and yet, somehow, we are not tasting them.

So what's holding us back?

The purpose of this book is to explore this question and to offer solutions. Digital adoption is rarely a primary area of concern for organizations. But as we struggle to make the most of our digital investments, the time has come for an understanding of the adoption process—an in depth look at the unique challenges this process entails. Once leadership brings awareness and foresight to the adoption journey, we can start to do meaningful work to transform our relationship with technology.

CHAPTER 3

SUPER-USERS AND OLD MODELS



The MacGyver Approach

Apple loves sleek, simplified product design. We see it in their laptops, smartphones, and their tablets. Apple has become a giant in the market for the quality of these products as well as their ability to function as fashion statements.

But what happens when a design is too sleek?

I'll tell you: it gets lost in the couch cushions.

I'm speaking about the remote control for the Apple TV. Roughly the size of a teaspoon, this remote is silver, elegant, and slender. With only two buttons and four arrows, it is a far cry from the traditional TV remote—heavy, black, and burdened with countless buttons that most of us will only ever use by mistake—like in Friends when Ross's pet monkey accidentally changes the TV to Spanish dubbing and no one can figure out how to turn it back.

The Apple remote has no mysterious buttons and functions according to a simple, intuitive logic. But there is a flipside to this kind of design.

This minimalist and easy-to-use device is probably the most easily lost remote in the history of home entertainment. It slips between couch cushions with the greatest ease, or else silently drops from the coffee table where it is thin enough to get wedged between the rug and the floor.

A friend of mine in New York explained this to me as she showed me her latest invention. She called it the "Flashremote." Created by attaching the tiny remote to a massive flashlight with duct tape, the Flashremote ensured that she would never again have to plumb the couch cushions in desperation. It was a crude device, and certainly beneath the design standards of Apple—but it did the job flawlessly.

My friend even went on to tell me that the Flashremote had solved two problems. Power-outages aren't rare in New York, and it proves handy to have the

flashlight end of the Flashremote nearby—instead of having to dig through the closet for it with no light.

It's always gratifying to see innovation at work in everyday life, and this was the perfect "MacGyvering" of an everyday problem.

What does it mean to MacGyver something? The name-turned-verb comes from the 1985 hit TV series MacGyver, which followed the adventures of secret agent Angus MacGyver. The show is largely remembered for the unique approach MacGyver took towards getting himself out of tight spots, which usually involved brilliantly repurposing an everyday object in an innovative way.

Decades after MacGyver retired from shorting missile timers with paperclips, fashioning pieces of bubble gum into explosives, and deflecting laser beams with broken binoculars—"to MacGyver" something has come to mean using an everyday item in an expansive and innovative manner.

You can MacGyver a broken chair by rigging it together with a shoelace, or turn a coat hanger into a device to get your dropped keys out from under a parked car. MacGyvering is an approach rather than an action—a mindset that sees the potential in ordinary objects—reconfiguring and combining them to great effect. But for every MacGyver out there, there are about a thousand more anti-MacGyvers doing just the opposite.

Somewhere there is a man who uses his smartphone as a regular phone, except occasionally using the built-in calculator to figure out the tip at a restaurant. There is a woman who purchased an expensive and highly versatile laptop, but uses it only to check her email. Here are two individuals who are losing economic value

by underutilizing complex and expensive technology, and missing out on functionality.

But while consumers like these lose out on both finance and function, it's nothing compared to the losses incurred by large organizations if they fail to make the most of their tech.

Large organizations are making increasingly significant investments in tech, with good reason. Making the most of available technology is essential to surviving and growing in today's market. But these investments are not without risk. When organizations invest big, they are banking on large increases in performance and business success.

So how can they guarantee that they will see the return on investment?

It is all a matter of approach. Someone with a MacGyver sensibility would be able to take a paperclip and turn it into a CRM. But what happens when the staff of a large organization takes a CRM and turns it into a paperclip?

Turning a CRM into a Paperclip

Information technology is all around us and constantly developing to be faster and more comprehensive. Tech has become an essential part of our lives and businesses. For individuals, digital tools are largely a matter of convenience and entertainment. For large organizations, however, tech is absolutely vital. In this day and age every company is becoming a technology company. Whether or not a business

makes use of available tech is the difference between staying competitive and falling behind, between growth and stagnation, between thriving and surviving.

Despite this, organizations large and small are failing to make use of technological innovation, although not for lack of trying. We are purchasing tech and using tech, but we're not really getting as much out of it as one would assume. The phenomenon has been dubbed "the Productivity Paradox."

The theory known as the Productivity Paradox was first articulated in 1987 when Robert Solow, a prominent American economist, made a startling observation. As information technologies began to rapidly develop and change the landscape of how American industries operated, one would expect to see a corresponding series of leaps in job growth, the GDP, and salaries. But Solow saw no such leaps and remarked famously that "you can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics."

It was true. The 70's and 80s's saw productivity stagnation, contrary to most economists' projections. Across the country economists began theorizing about the so-called Productivity Paradox. It was perplexing—why hadn't the radical advent of IT caused a boost in the U.S. economy? Such boosts had typically accompanied developments in technology throughout the nineteenth century; the lightbulb permitted work at all hours, the steam engine accelerated trade, and the telephone gave us instantaneous long-distance communication.

The paradox has only become more puzzling with time. Solow's observation that the computer age could be seen "everywhere" in 1987 sounds almost quaint. It would have been impossible back then to imagine just how ubiquitous IT would be in 2017. For thirty years economists have kicked this theory around and generated various explanations—many of these going so far as to say that perhaps the Internet just isn't as revolutionary as we assumed it would be.

This, to me, sounds like an exaggeration. We know that the Internet is revolutionary and we feel its power and influence in our lives every day. But there's a contradiction between our experience and the numbers, as if we've stumbled into some kind of economic Bermuda Triangle. We are missing an input into the equation.

Most likely there isn't one single solution to the problem, but a constellation of contributing factors. One amongst them being that there seems to be a gap between the revolutionary potential of tech and what we actually do with it. As the wise teacher, Mr. Feeny, said in the classic coming-of-age sitcom, Boy Meets World, "Guttenberg's generation thirsted for a new book every six months. Your generation gets a new webpage every six seconds. And how do you use this technology? To beat King Koopa and save the princess." In short, we have access to technology's potential—but we're not doing enough with it.

We know what the MacGyvers in our organizations are up to. If they can turn a paperclip into a CRM, just imagine what they can do with an actual CRM! There may also be a few Mr. Feenys roaming the halls and trying to get everyone to wake up and smell the technological potential. But what about everyone else?

The Old Model

Denise calls herself an "old model." When I ask her to explain she says, "They don't make 'em like me anymore. I prefer to write with a pen and paper instead of typing, and prefer to call rather than email. I sometimes think that I was born in the wrong generation."

Denise's attitude towards technology is nothing new, but it is surprising considering how young she is. At 28, Denise is considered a digital native. She was raised with computers and has had a smartphone for a decade now. Still, she finds herself put off by digital media and computers.

She recently started a new job at UCLA doing fundraising for the university. She was hired because of her background in non-profit administration. She wasn't hired for being a tech expert. In fact, over the course of three job interviews, the subject of technology never came up.

Now she's feeling overwhelmed. "The job is tech!" she says. "Everything we do has its own platform. There's like six different systems I'm trying to learn. I thought I was alone in the struggle, but when I turned to co-workers for help, they were mostly as clueless as me."

After looking for help from her peers, she finally consulted with her manager and admitted that she was struggling to master the large range of new systems and technologies that she is expected to use.

"Don't worry about it," her boss said. "It takes people about six to eight months to get the hang of it."

Denise was surprised by the answer. It seemed like an awfully long time to get people on board with technologies that are, after all, supposed to make us work more efficiently.

Super-Users

I continued my inquiry by speaking with Stephen Schultz, Director of Business Development at Supporting Strategies, a provider of outsourced bookkeeping services. His role involves both selling franchises and helping new franchisees as they set up their practice, hire staff, and begin selling their services.

When I asked him what it takes to successfully adopt tech, he told me that what he needs are "Super-Users." Schultz explained that most "Technology has gotten to a point where it's so very intuitive and easy to use that no one actually needs to read an instruction manual for anything anymore. You just take your new computer out of the box and start working with it. No training or anything. That's great."

According to Schultz, this can also pose a problem. This kind of intuitive interface makes it very easy for anyone to become a competent user, but we don't want just competent users. They're not the ones transforming the potential value of technology into reality.

Schultz himself is a self-declared Super-User. With a background in engineering and a genuine excitement for discovering a great new software or application, he loves to tinker with technology. "I want to know what every icon in the toolbar means and what it does. I want to know every feature available so that when I run into a problem, I know how to troubleshoot for myself."

What does it take to be a Super-User? It comes down to curiosity and trust. "You've got to trust the software developers. If you're having a problem with something in Hubspot CRM, one of my favorite tools, you're probably not the first person who has had that problem and the developers have probably created a solution for you already. That's the trust. The curiosity, then, is the ability to start clicking different buttons to find it."

However, employees at Supporting Strategies aren't hired because they're Super-Users— nor should they be. They're hired to be great bookkeepers and salespeople.

"With Hubspot CRM, I can write and save templated emails and sequences of emails. If it's something I'm sending out more than once, I have a template for it. That way I can create the perfect email for a situation and never have to rewrite it from scratch. It's a tool that automates a lot of what we do as salespeople—but the end goal of automation isn't just automation."

As a true New Englander, Schultz ends all his emails with "Go Pats!" as a sign off. "My emails are me, natural and personal."

"When my franchisees ask me to write their templated emails for them, I get the idea that they're missing the point. They're not making the most of the tool. They don't want to engage with it. When they ask me for a document that I know is saved in Hubspot, I get frustrated. They could go find that document themselves, but they still resist interacting with the software. They want to do things their own way, like asking me to send a document by emailing it to them as an attachment, a process that feels more comfortable. Or they expect that the software will come in and act for them without them having to be in the driver's seat."

What this shows is that they aren't Super-Users. They don't see the power of a CRM. Moreover, they don't understand a CRM at all.

We have an issue here. To use a cliché, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. A great CRM can really enhance how a sales team does business. But what tool do you use to get your sales team to engage with the CRM in the first place?

The Reality in Which We Live

The story of Denise anticipating a 6-8-month learning period for the many new software programs and databases required by her new position at UCLA highlights the reality of how employees are relating to and learning enterprise software systems.

According to statistics compiled by Deloitte, more than 80% of companies rate the work they do as "complex" or "highly complex" for their employees. Today, the average US employee works 47 hours per week, while 49% of them work 50 or more and 20% of workers are working 60 hours or more. What's more, productivity statistics have shown that productivity in the US has slowed to a crawl since 2011.

A great deal of this complexity, difficulty, and stagnation is stemming from technology that is supposed to simplify our organizations. This is a clear illustration of the Productivity Paradox—the gap between tech's potential and what we actually do with it. These are startling conclusions. We have at our disposal a range of fantastic tools that are supposed to help us work faster, easier, and smarter. But we are spending more time in the office than ever, and we're not even seeing a comparable increase in productivity.

Let's return to Denise, who was hired for her intelligence, experience, and capabilities. She has been outfitted with a number of technologies designed to put her skills into action. But these tools are slowing her down, and making her feel overwhelmed. Denise herself would say that we should scrap it all. Bring back the pen, paper and the filing cabinet.

But scrapping our current digital systems is hardly necessary. We can, actually, have our technological cake and eat it too. To do so we must understand what our employees are going through when we ask them to get up to speed with a new technology.

The Forgetting Curve

I don't need to tell anyone that training is valuable. We know this, and it's why we are so ready to invest money and time into this effort. And we definitely are investing. According to Training Magazine's annual research, the average training budget for companies with 10,000+ employees was $14.3 million in 2016. This is to say nothing of the time investment, which also comes down to dollars and cents in the end.

The issue really begins with how we think about training. Perhaps we've internalized the scene from The Matrix where Neo downloads Kung Fu abilities to his brain—mastering in just a few seconds a craft that would normally take a lifetime to learn.

Is this what we think is happening when we train employees? If so, we're a long way off. And yet we see over and over again that training programs are designed as a single event, or at the very maximum a cluster of events. A series of videos or modules are watched, information is dispersed, and maybe a few webinars are thrown in for good measure. Time, money and resources are spent on pushing employees through a training conveyer belt, after which the employees are presumed to be done learning the system.

But as it turns out, the average employee only retains about 20% of the knowledge learned during a training session. Six months in and they'll be in need of a review for some of the most basic features of the new system.

This is because, as humans, our learning curve is also a forgetting curve. New knowledge takes time to gain a real foothold because we're constantly forgetting certain elements and having to reacquire them. The concept of the forgetting curve attempts to create a formula for this process. But the rate of forgetting will always be affected by different factors.

One of these factors is personal. Each person will have their own learning style. Based on their natural predilection for tech, each employee will have a differ-

ent experience learning new technology. Not only does this vary from person to person, but it also varies from industry to industry. A high-tech company, for instance, may draw in a technologically fluent staff—but even here we will see a diverse range of aptitudes amongst employees.

Another factor which affects the retention of learned material is the perceived meaningfulness of the information. If I gave you three words to remember, words that had no personal significance to you (let's say "condor, stamp, elegance"), chances are you would not be able to remember all three a month later. Maybe you would have forgotten them by the end of the day. But what if I have told you three words of deep, personal significance? Say they were names of your aunts or your three best friends. You would probably be able to remember. But meaningfulness isn't just about personal connection. It's also about perceived value. If I gave you the first words again, the ones you have no connection to, but told you that if you remember them in a month you'll get a check for a million dollars – I don't think you'd have much trouble.

This issue of engagement is huge. How often are we forgetting to impart to our employees the hugely important, big-picture value of a new technology?

Significance is a Two-Way Street

Much of what bookkeepers do is data-entry, but automation has removed a lot of that from the bookkeeping process in recent years, allowing bookkeepers to take on a new role for their clients. The way Jorgenson and Schultz see it, the bookkeepers at Supporting Strategies are numbers analysts rather than number-crunchers. They are business consultants—counsellors who advise their clients on the financial wellbeing of their businesses.

Leslie Jorgenson and Steve Schultz saw a presentation for HubDoc at a trade-show and had immediately recognized what a powerful and helpful tool this could be for their company. Essentially it would help empower employees to move down a path with less number pushing and more time attributed to consulting. It wasn't until they tried to roll out HubDoc at Supporting Strategies that they encountered first-hand the issue of significance.

"HubDoc does a lot of things," Jorgenson said. Ultimately it is like a smart-filing cabinet. It makes it easy to upload all important documents into one platform and then synthesize and extract that data when you need it."

Jorgenson and Schultz were sold on HubDoc. Who wouldn't love this? It then came time to introduce the new tool to their employees.

Jorgenson put together what she described as a "whole dog and pony show" to unroll the new software. She expected to see the kind of enthusiasm from her staff that she herself felt about HubDoc. But this was not the reaction she got. She described the staff's response as "crickets." In other words, they did not share her excitement.

At first, using HubDoc was not mandatory for the staff. No one had expected that it would need to be. Jorgenson and Schultz had expected that everyone would want in right away. But as time went by, they began to realize just how few people on staff were using this tool.

As it turned out, the staff's attitude toward the platform was fearful and hostile. The bookkeepers, paid hourly, saw automation as a threat to their pay checks.

While they agreed that this would allow them to do their job faster, they didn't agree that this was a good thing. The bottom line was, they didn't see the personal significance of the new technology.

After a few months, the company changed its approach to HubDoc. They made a greater attempt to present the new tech in a way that would highlight its significance to the employees. Yes, they said, this will mean that you spend less hours on each client. But it also means that you will have more time available to take on new clients, and that the time you do spend on each client will not be tied up in frustrating data-entry tasks. They were starting to make progress.

But then something else happened. Jorgenson, on holiday vacation in Denmark with her family, received a call. It was one of her employees who was confused about how to use a certain HubDoc feature.

It's true, motivation and significance are the first barriers we have to pass when getting a staff on board with a new technology. But on the other side of these barriers is the adoption process itself.

This brings us to the next issue that our employees are dealing with: support.

Desperately Seeking Support

Calling the CEO for a small support issue with your workplace software is a bit like calling the Post Master General to ask when your Amazon purchase will arrive. It highlights an issue that many employees at all kinds of organizations are dealing with: they don't know where to turn for assistance.

If we're still thinking about training like downloading Kung Fu, there's no need for support. The employees have been taught everything they need, and now they can move on and put the information to good use. But this just isn't the case. Our employees are individuals. Sometimes the knowledge won't click, and sometimes it will click but not stick.

So what do our employees do when they have trouble? A Super-User may be able to troubleshoot his or her own issues. But what about the rest of us? Denise mentioned that first she went to co-workers who had been there longer than she had, but most of them were just as confused as she was. Then she went to her boss, who told her to just stick it out.

This may have reassured her that the trouble she was having was normal and would pass, but it certainly didn't bring her any answers. And in the meantime, she's sitting in an office eight hours a day and is expected to be doing work. Still new at the organization, she wants to impress, not flounder. And in order to do that, she needs to know how to use all the tech that she's expected to be using.

Denise, despite being tech-resistant, is exactly the kind of employee that large organizations want and need. She's capable, energetic, and hardworking. What's more, she really cares about the university she works for. When her boss told her to be patient and wait six to eight months, she didn't just get worried for herself, she got worried for the whole organization.

"There's high turnover," she told me. "People come and work for a year and then move on to something else. That means that for some employees, the university is investing in eight months of what is essentially a training period for an employee who will only be working a few months after that period ends."

The issue of high-turnover is common to many organizations: millennials, making up the largest percentage of the workforce, commonly change jobs every two to three years. According to a survey by Future Workplace, ninety-one percent of millennials (born between 1977-1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years. However, even if this weren't an issue, all employers would be better off if their employees were working at peak efficiency from day one.

As leaders we are asking employees to trust us when we roll out a new technology. We want them to trust that the new tech is for their own good as well as for the good of the company. But something is getting lost along the way. Our training programs are producing employees who don't know where to turn for support, don't believe in the "help" button, and more seriously, who don't know why they're using the technology in the first place.

These factors are all barriers to successful adoption.

But all the motivation and support in the world will still be ineffective if the software itself is inherently challenging for employees. As Steve Schultz said, we are a society raised on intuitive tech. The days of saving the user manual are behind us. So what exactly happens when employees show up and find software far more sophisticated than the tech they've encountered as consumers?

The UX Paradox

Consumers are being sold a dream about Information Technology. The dream is that tech is seamless, easy to use, and intuitive. We are sold this dream by our phone companies, our retailers, our content providers, and our banks. But this dream, while it may be true enough on the consumer end, is far from the reality of tech experienced by employees of large organizations.

For the learning division at a company like T-Mobile, this disconnect between user-friendly consumer tech and enterprise software is a major area of concern. While the consumers themselves, who are the main goal and beneficiary of T-Mobile's increasingly digital operations, may not feel this effort—it is definitely felt on the employee's end.

As VP of Learning Development at T-Mobile, Scott Tweedy was the first to introduce new employees to the digital component of their work.

"When they show up they're so excited," Scott says. "But then they get here and we put them in training and they're looking at a screen that's a little north of a green screen. It's not pretty… they think: this is T-Mobile?"

According to Tweedy, it takes eight weeks to get a front-line representative ready to have their first interaction with a customer. But most of that time is spent teaching them to navigate systems. "We're not really talking about the product, which is what's most important. It's about how you get through this craziness to get to the product."

Compared to the super intuitive technology we use in our personal lives, enterprise systems continue to lag behind in user-friendliness.

We're left with a problem of expectations. Our staff is used to consumer tech and thus expects user-friendliness. But as we saw with Denise, this is not what they get.

In the Zen tradition, there is a concept of "beginner's mind." When we begin a new practice, whether it's learning a new language, instrument, or working at a

new job, this is the time when our mind is most awake. Without expectations and habits, we stay present with what we are doing rather than snapping into autopilot.

Being a beginner is challenging. This aspect of difficulty is, in itself, a form of training. When a student begins learning how to play guitar, for example, his or her mind is attentive. A new chord, when it's first played, will feel like a bizarre and unnatural contortion of the hand. But with time, repetition, and focus, this chord will begin to become second nature.

When the player then begins to learn an even more difficult chord, he or she won't be expecting ease, but instead, will be familiar with the discomfort of challenge. This is significant. It means that when the player first tries to spread their fingers with dexterity across five frets, he or she might feel frustration but also knows that, eventually, there will be a payoff.

It will get easier.

Now imagine this process through the lens of consumer technology.

Imagine if anyone who picked up a guitar found that they could play a number of basic songs with no training whatsoever. This user-friendly, intuitive guitar would allow anyone to master the standard campfire classics with ease.

But then, when the user tries to play something outside of this repertoire, they will encounter difficulty for the first time. Their hands will hurt. The sound will come out uneven and off-tune. As beginners they had no trouble whatsoever and now, suddenly, they have lost their rock star status.

Most of us, in this situation, would return to the safety of the intuitive, beginner's repertoire. Without any sense that this difficulty will lead anywhere (to mastery), why suffer? After all, we already have enough songs to have a nice little singalong and impress our friends.

This is exactly the position employees currently find themselves in with a great deal of enterprise software.

There is no focus required of us when using consumer technology. There is no sense of overcoming of obstacles, and very little troubleshooting. This means that when we encounter challenging software at work, we quickly become frustrated.

This frustration happens when an individual switches from simple consumer tech at home to complex enterprise tech when they clock in. Many software systems used by employees are simple up to a point, but become challenging when the user attempts to do anything more advanced than the most basic functions.

Struggling to get past the proficiency plateau has been my own experience with Microsoft Word. I've used Microsoft Word for decades. I've used it so much, in fact, that if it had been a guitar instead of a word processor, I would probably be on a world tour right now. And yet, I'm no master. Microsoft Word, as a basic typing software, has a training time of 1 second. If you know how to type, you know how to use Word. It wasn't until I was trying to format a long and complex document last year that I realized how little I understood about this software.

Difficulties with formatting and creating a table of contents caused me huge frustration. I had been using Word for two decades without ever trying to do something complex. Why couldn't they have worked all this out before it became a problem for me?

I turned to Google for support, and came across a few forums discussing the exact issue I was dealing with. Turns out that the people at Microsoft had worked out these issues. It was then that I first started glancing at the Microsoft Word's toolbar cluttered with dozens of little icons and buttons. It dawned on me that each one of those buttons did something. I began to play around with all of them.

In the twenty years since I started using Microsoft Word, teams of experts and geniuses at Microsoft had been engaged in a nonstop effort to improve the software's functionality. Countless updates and new versions, and better features had been released —all intended to benefit me, the user. But I had been using Word the same way I used it on day one. I had fallen into the trap of plateauing at competency.

It's not as though we haven't seen progress in the area of enterprise tech UX. User experience designers have done a pretty good job at simplifying the user ex-

perience. The computers of the 80's were massive in scale, not to mention the equally cumbersome software. It was only the solitary IBM technician, armed with specialized training and preparation, who had the power to tame the beast.

For every software we use you can be sure that there is a highly skilled team of individuals somewhere working tirelessly to deliver us a better user experience. They want their product to be slick, easy to use, and intuitive so that users can make the most of its benefits and get on with their core work.

They've made great progress. Today's software is carefully designed with the human user in mind, but we still have a problem.

Perhaps you are familiar with Zeno's Paradox. According to this logical paradox, if one were to stand ten feet from a wall and decide to walk to that wall, he or she would first have to arrive halfway before getting all the way there. So one walks five feet, and now five feet remain between the person and the wall. Now to cover this last five feet one will still have to go halfway before getting all the way there. This is simple logic. So one walks 2.5 feet. This process of division by halves will continue until the individual is so close to the wall as to touch it—though logically he or she can never actually arrive.

I propose a similar theory, which I'll call the UX Paradox. While UX will continue to develop in comprehensiveness and ease-of-use for each one of the software systems at use in a given organization, we have yet to see it arrive to, or even get close to, the point at which adoption becomes an intuitive and smooth process.

This is for two main reasons: the first being that absolute standards of UX don't exist.

No matter how intuitive a system's UX may be, it will always only be intuitive according to that system's own internal logic. The diversity of systems at use in any given organization thus present a barrier to skilled technical use. Each system will have its own platform design, method of login, password requirements, and general style of use.

The second reason is the dynamic internal development of the software itself. The platform will continue to evolve. New features will come out and other features will disappear or be modified. The nature of UX is to evolve, and this evolution of UX within a platform can become a barrier to skilled technical use of the platform.

Were these systems static, we could expect employees to eventually "master" them. This is not the case. Not only are these systems dynamic, but organizations are dynamic. Thus the body of knowledge and knowhow needed to use these systems is also dynamic—a fact which, for the overwhelmed employee, can be quite distressing.

The sum total of these problems – overwhelm and motivation, training and support, and expectations and ease-of-use—is a significant obstacle for any large organization attempting to successfully adopt new technology. But so far we have spoken only about the obstacles experienced by employees. We must also consider the lack of organizational awareness and transparency for the new technology usage – an issue of equal importance that can undermine leadership's adoption efforts if left unaddressed.

About The Author

Rephael Sweary, cofounded WalkMe, the leading digital adoption platform, in 2011. Previously, Rephael was the Co-founder, CEO, and then President of Jetro Platforms which was acquired in 2007. Since then, he has funded and helped build a number of companies both in his role as Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Ocean Assets and in a personal capacity.

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