7. Agency Stories

Successes and learnings from change efforts, completed and in progress

This effort is a continuation of our Transformation Tools found at:
OPM.gov/Reshaping

Federal Agencies Innovating for the Future

New technologies generally improve productivity within occupations and industries, effectively making processes faster, cheaper, and more consistent. In so doing, employees are empowered to work on higher value activities. This phenomenon has given rise to the knowledge worker; people who deliver value by creating, designing, analyzing, researching, and "thinking" as their stock in trade. Issues of workforce displacement have typically been offset by the creation of new, higher-value, jobs. In fact, for many, access to these new jobs has been technology-enabled. In order to keep pace with a rapidly changing world, the Federal Government must adopt a growth mindset and incorporate procedures that operationalize technology adoption, change management, employee reskilling and upskilling, and strategic talent management as the new way of doing business.

Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Task

Fingerprints are submitted to the FBI and then compared to federal records to determine if the person had a criminal history. With requests sometimes numbering over 200k per day and a backlog exceeding a year, the FBI realized the need to automate and embarked on a major project with four goals in mind. Their goals were to become more accurate, reduce response times, reduce/eliminate the backlog, and increase capacity.

Technology

As the FBI integrated new technology, a communications campaign kept the workforce informed of progress and impacts. Employees, anxious about the potential for job loss, were won over by ample opportunities to provide feedback, new job duties, and improved performance results with less errors and greater efficiency. No employee, who wanted to work for the FBI, lost his or her job.

Takeaways

- Employee work roles became more agile as they now oversee and manage a system to ensure peak efficiency.
- The organization embraced incremental change, leading to significant results over time.
- Innovation begets more innovation. As staff began to see the benefits of automation, they identified new ideas to leadership.
- Employees were less fearful, more engaged, and better risk managers, decision makers, and communicators.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Task

The Financial Management Office in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer manages the HUD Robotics Initiatives throughout the agency. HUD identified a total of 38 projects and over 50,000 hours of work where RPA could be used for process improvement. To date, there have been six completed robotics projects; nine projects are in the execution phase, and 20 are in the queue for execution with two more potential candidates.

Technology

HUD is in the process of establishing a Digital Service Program Management Office (PMO) to manage and drive all initiatives related to Digital Services. They are currently focusing on building the IT policies, governance process, and business model to operate as a shared service to efficiently deliver Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and other intelligent automation services throughout HUD.

Takeaways

- Verified 2,338 hours have been saved though the completed robotics projects.
- Fostered a workplace that encourages new projects and innovation to save more hours.
- Publicized areas with significant savings including Payroll Fraud Data Analysis and Travel and Credit Card Fraud Analysis.
- Explored additional RPA initiatives including technologies like chatbots, Optical Character Recognition, and Machine Learning.

Department of the Interior (DOI)

Task

DOI is looking to leverage 'bots' and other technology to improve capacity and streamline their processes. To get started, the team has begun baselining their terminology, looking at training paths for operating adopted technology, and identifying tasks that might be automated.

Technology

While in the early stages, the dialogues have sharpened leaders' focus on strategic workforce planning. They are now envisioning a workforce that has new capacity with work processes that have been streamlined and automated.

Takeaways

- New roles are emerging such as technology administrators, process managers, and programmers.
- Change is expected to occur organically: As workers retire, technology will increasingly augment the workforce.
- A dedicated integration team supports managers with consultation, training, and coaching.
- Support for automation should help change integrated workforce strategies and influence top-level discussions.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Task

To translate Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) data into action, NIH created a tool that aggregates data and visually translates it into a format that defines HR challenge areas. The tool, dubbed EVS ART, has reduced analysis time as it quickly identifies relevant pain points with a focus on the drivers of effective culture change. Now, the agency can better identify the return on investment of training expenditures by providing a clearer articulation of needs.

Technology

While the tool has not replaced any jobs, staff can now focus more time on implementing high-value interventions, including more effective strategies for dealing with poor performers and other interventions to improve the work environment.

Takeaways

- Leaders should visibly express their support with a sustained commitment and speak in terms of real value such as career progression, satisfaction, and productivity.
- Promote effective employee development programs to provide real solutions to many employee performance issues.
- Foster a culture that promotes systemic, global change with aligned, synchronized projects instead of ad hoc initiatives.
- Reward and celebrate high performers, which includes substantively addressing poor performance.