

Transformers and Translators

How collaboration and working
across disciplines is changing
everything

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Transformers and Translators

- Transformers and Translators – what are they and why are they essential
 - Collaboration
 - Innovation
- Characteristics of transformers and translators
- Tips and experiences
- Road blocks
- Final thought

Transformers and Translators – what are they and why are they essential

Transformation is not just making something work faster – it's creating something in a new way, to accomplish something we were previously incapable of doing



Translators help us learn each others' language, sometimes providing understanding for the first time

- If you're the only one who speaks that language, no one will ever talk with you

Collaboration is not a new idea, but it sure looks different these days



Old ways of doing things by yourself in a group won't work anymore

- Cost is too high
- Pace of implementation is too slow
- Maintenance too hard
- Efficiencies aren't there...

And why would I want to, given today's environment?

No man is an island (but that doesn't mean you can't work from one...)

- Transformers are finding new ways to do things together – rapid pace of change is now accepted as 'normal'
- There are more enablers now than ever before – tools and processes/theories are aligning to facilitate change
- Innovation is no longer optional
- Focus is on producing **Value**, not just more functionality for requirements' sake



Characteristics of transformers and translators

- **They grow in all directions, not just their 'silo'**

- Rotations, details, participating in Communities of Interest, networking, listservs, associations (e.g., AABPA, AGA, etc), volunteering to do other work to learn it (expanding their boundaries)
- Know who you need to partner with to accomplish your mission and get to know what drives them – what are their needs, imperatives?
Need to understand the bigger picture/larger context
- Use certifications (CGFM, project manager) and training opportunities/learning events as ways to expand your understanding
- Exposure to terminology and norms (learn proprietary and budgetary USSGL; financial statements and Budget Appendix)



Characteristics of transformers and translators

- **They cultivate the mindset of being a continuous, life-long learner**
 - They grow where they're planted - don't spend so much time looking for other opportunities they forget where they are
 - Understand almost anything is a learning moment if they're looking for it
 - Read, read, read
- **Challenge your own assumptions** (things frequently are not what you think they are!) (click here)
- **Ask questions & listen to responses; dialog, not monolog**
- **Share, share, share**

Characteristics of transformers and translators

- **Learn to recognize “boundaries”**
 - Tons of transformational opportunities (and loose coins) reside in the cracks
 - Easier to observe outside of work setting
- **They recognize that everything they’ve ever worked on and anyone they’ve ever worked with can translate elsewhere or be a foundation for something they’ll do later on**

Tips and Experiences

- **What examples have Shelly and Mark seen?**
 - “enhancements” lists (simple tracker: suggestions, volunteers, action, completion)
 - “post mortems”
 - Hands-on budget training/learning events
 - Navy Bureau of Medicine GIS solution for Medical Facility readiness (later used for Ebola response)
 - Agency responses to Congressional Questions for the Record (QFR)
 - CGFM (self-paced study guides: it’s not for sissies!!)
 - Industry: Uber, the latest iPhone... - one common issue is that in the wake of transformation, there is always chaos as the market tries to adjust to the new reality. Innovators don’t let that stop them from making transformative changes

Tips and Experiences

- **Management philosophy**



- Train people in what they're good at to make them great, not just in the silo but all the peripherals – have to learn to work together (*First Break All the Rules, Buckingham and Coffman; Good to Great, Collins; many others...*)

- Don't try to make folks good at something they don't have the aptitude for - find someone else with those skillsets who DOES have the aptitude and attitude to be great, otherwise you get less than optimal results



Tips and Experiences

- **Rules of Thumb**

- Find a source of inspiration to carry you through
- Start small and simple, but start
- Be wary of lingo and fast or smooth talkers; have them explain
- Respect and empathy for the colored tissue paper people (experts and craftsmen)
- Be wary of the person who “knows the price of everything but the value of nothing”

Roadblocks

- **Those who become so indispensable in their job that no one else can ever do it**
 - Guaranteed to make themselves obsolete over time when they hide in a hole or separate themselves from everyone else
- **Lone Rangers**
- **The nay-sayers (or as the Federal CIO Tony Scott calls them, the ‘anti-bodies’)**
- **No Bandwidth – folks don’t have time to participate**
- **Lack of senior leadership buy-in**



Roadblocks

- **Follow-up, follow-thru**
- **Save us from the “app” developers**
- **"Never buy a Rolex watch from a man who is out of breath."**
- **\$\$ resources; however, necessity can be the Mother of Invention**

Final thought

Learning to communicate, collaborate and work across functional boundaries will make you:

- Smarter;
- Better equipped to do your job;
- Better equipped to work with others to help them do their job; which means you'll be
- Better able to accomplish your organization's mission; which makes you
- Invaluable
- Be the change

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