Gaining Employee Buy-in for Your Digital Transformation
Digital transformations within organizations require serious investments of time and budgets, but managing this change across employees is one of the key levers to increasing the impact of the transformation and getting it right. Employees, the actual ‘users’ of these digital interventions, need to learn and adapt to a whole new work lifestyle.

Training and support are usually planned to streamline the transition through the initial phase of the launch. However, we classically start designing the user experience (UX) journey only from the point our users begin interacting with our digital solutions. This may be a little late. Since these initiatives often do not directly impact the end-customer and are internal to the organization, we entirely overlook planning a pre-launch marketing strategy to unveil the digital interventions that are going to come the user’s way. Yet, to get the maximum impact from your target employee/user base, it is important to market these digital interventions to them before they actually get down to working on it. Planning an effective employee user experience (UX) through the entire digital transformation can help you successfully shift the needle to meet this initiative’s planned outcome.

Think of it as internal advertising and marketing communication for the digital transformation that your company is making, and it should be the first touchpoint in your target user experience (UX) journey. The marketing communication should be rolled out before the launch of the digital initiative for it to help generate a positive and receptive environment within your user base and lead to improved and quicker digital adoption. You need to pique their interest, grab their attention, establish context and relevance of the intervention in their roles and connect with them on what will be of value to them. These strategies will help you convince your employees that the time they will spend on the application or new system has clear benefits.

Change for any individual is not easy, and when the change is an unknown entity, there is always skepticism and trepidation on what to expect. Further, digital transformations in organizations are classically a top-down approach and often the target users (employees in this case) have very little knowledge of why this change is really needed. What they need to know is ‘what’s in it for them’; and how will they be impacted for the better. You have won half the battle if you get your users to begin interacting with your digital applications in an engaged and receptive frame of mind, having understood what they are going to gain from it, instead of mentally kicking and screaming and with a ‘mandatory’ sword hanging over their heads!

It is a good idea to put aside a small amount for internal marketing from the big budgets you are investing on the digital transformation, to get the users mentally geared towards appreciating, and looking forward, to this transformation initiative.
So here are few tips to get your plan in place:

1. What should one communicate?

» Design an internal marketing pitch, the messaging needs to communicate ‘what’s in it for the user’ in this digital change.

» Use the pain points and complaints from the earlier way of working as the basis to compare the improvements through this new change.

» Advertise the direct advantages and benefits to the users, but it should be contextual to their work, not broad corporate goals.

» Present a mix of both qualitative and quantitative benefits to create maximum impact.

2. How should one communicate?

» Define a plan and schedule for the communications.

» Build some anticipation and buzz around the release of the digital interventions within the user groups, advertise the upcoming release.

» Design the content using marketing techniques like persuasion, context, benefits to the organization and the personal value the users will gain from this digital transformation.

» Use channels that are visible in their daily workday; e.g. screen savers, posters, internal networks and social channels (both formal and informal).

» Reel them in! Use teasers! Create engagement through videos, motion graphics, animations, competitions and games. Add a bit of lightness and humor in the ads, send the users personalized communications with the ‘what’s in it for them’.

A little bit of creative planning and preparation will go a long way in gaining the acceptance and engagement of your employees for an upcoming digital transformation. While there is a lot more that can be done to build excitement, the tips in this article are a good starting point for your internal marketing plans, and will make all the difference between a well-executed and a poorly planned digital transformation.