How do digital workflows make people feel? Ethnographers embedded inside two organizations investigated how employees work and succeed when humans and machines collaborate. They interviewed about 20 employees and executives in their homes and offices, and collected more than 140 hours of film and audio recordings.
Change in the workplace is hard, but a better employee experience—and business outcomes—depends on it.

Through in-depth qualitative analysis inside two very different organizations, we’ve identified six core strategies to improve outcomes from digital workflows.

1. Develop a culture of change
2. Collaborate across all levels of your organization
3. Clarify expectations
4. Show benefits
5. Focus on mission
6. Train employees
1. Develop a culture of change

While change may be a fact of life, it needs to be carried out in a way that facilitates people's adaptation. It needs careful management, so it unfolds step by step.

“Our messaging for change is not a top down situation... Our largest success has come from champions of change in the field.”

– Darris, program manager, U.S. state government agency

“It was hard at first to accept change...but once we saw all the reporting, the data analysis, letting go of that mundane process of just entering data, life is less stressful.”

– Ramona, customer service agent, U.S. state government agency
2. Collaborate across all levels of your organization

Employees appreciate being listened to by leaders and technology professionals—and becoming collaborators in digital transformations.

“...I couldn’t complete in my job what I had to do within the day...I had to find a way to improve things...I didn’t realize I was shaping the future. I was just looking for a better way to work to achieve the work that I needed to be done.”

– Donna, administration manager, Australasian healthcare system

“It is not about the technology. It is about the people and the processes and the outcome that the technology will deliver. It is about spending time understanding what it is that the users want to do.”

– Stella, chief digital officer, Australasian healthcare system
3. Clarify expectations

New technology can erode trust in the employer if workers worry about how it will change their job or monitor their activities. Organizations must clearly communicate how the technology is expected to support employees, what will change, and what will not. Be upfront about the end goal.

“I think upskilling the team with technology is helping them in their day-to-day life. It’s that fear factor. Some people have never even used a touch phone—they’ve only used push button. So, moving those people forward, giving them the confidence…I can see them growing.”

— Tony, orderly, Australasian healthcare system
4. Show benefits

When employees understand how digital workflows will save time, improve outcomes, and enable them to focus on work that matters, they become advocates of technology.

“Previously, when I first got here three years ago, [customers] would be given a paper ticket and then would be called by that ticket number. Now, we are able to call a customer by their name, appropriately, and provide the services that they’re here for. So, now, when they come to the window, we’re better prepared to assist them with the services that they need.”

— Tammi, field management director, U.S state government agency
5. Focus on mission

Employees and executives say their organization’s core mission was strengthened by digital workflows—and communication around the adoption of new technology should focus on how digitization will power purpose.

“We know when people work better, they can deliver. That means that wherever possible, we need to be employing technology in the service of people.”

— Michael, chief people officer, Australasian healthcare system
6. Train employees

Organizations should think carefully before making assumptions about the existing levels of digital literacy among their workers, particularly when introducing systems that require skill sets not present in legacy job descriptions.

“When we are faced with change, I have to ask myself first, ‘Am I prepared for this? What do I need to do to not only embrace the change, but learn enough about it to be able to drive that train and get people onboard?’”

— Bob, field director, U.S. state government agency
Summer 2019: The Leadership Issue

We identified the capabilities and responsibilities of the highest-performing CIOs today through in-depth interviews with influential technology leaders and a survey of 516 CIOs from 12 countries and 24 industries.

Read more: workflow.servicenow.com/quarterly/issue/2/

Fall 2019: The Strategy Issue

Based on in-depth interviews and a survey of 516 CIOs from 12 countries and 24 industries, this issue shows how technology leaders are collaborating with business partners and external vendors, investing in automation, and aligning digitization goals to the broader organization to drive value across functions, including customer service, finance, and human resources.

Read more: workflow.servicenow.com/quarterly/issue/3/

Spring 2019: The Business Value Issue

Do you know how to drive better results in your business? A new global study shows that changing the employee, client and IT experience with automation technologies that digitize workflows makes work better.

Read more: workflow.servicenow.com/quarterly/issue/1/