# 100 reasons your transformation failed
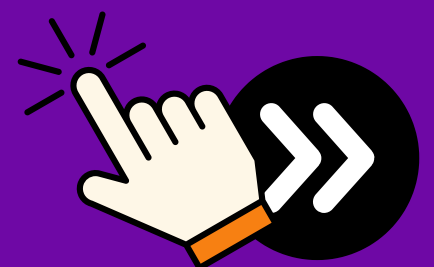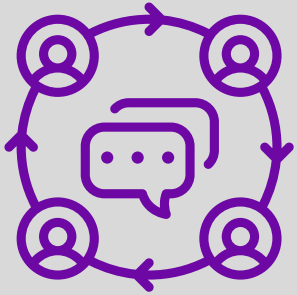
# Purpose, pace, and communications

- It wasn't a transformation at all - just some needed improvements.
- The transformation was given a confusing or inaccurate name or descriptors.
- No one understood why the transformation was happening.
- The purpose of the transformation didn't align with the organization's purpose.
- The purpose of the transformation didn't have a clear value proposition to employees (or even seemed harmful to them).
- The transformation moved too fast.
- The transformation moved too slowly.
- The pace of transformation was inconsistent/"stop and start."
- The purpose of the transformation was presented inconsistently (the transformation kept transforming...)
- The transformation operated secretively/opaquely, which was poorly received.
- The transformation was presented in overly intellectual, ethereal terms, and people struggled to connect it to pragmatic reality.

- The transformation was presented in overly operational terms, and people failed to see the strategic intent.
- The organization had "transformation fatigue" from too many prior efforts in recent memory.
- Celebrations of transformation success rang false - were disconnected from any sense of progress on the ground.
- The transformation narrative was perceived as disenfranchising or insulting (fixing a "problem" not all saw as a problem, for instance).
- The transformation narrative was perceived as a cover for a darker narrative ("this is just a way to cut headcount," for instance).
- People understood the transformation at the beginning, but lost focus as a meaningful amount of time elapsed.
- There was no way to get basic, updated information on the transformation.
- The transformation was overmessaged and people began to ignore it.
- Too much communication was one-way - leaving no room for feedback and dialogue.

**Swipe for more**
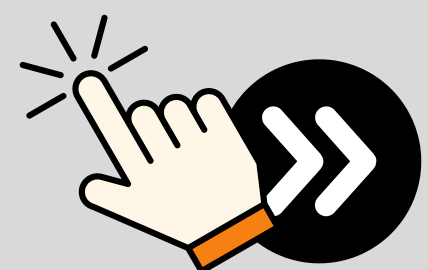
# Governance and structure

- There were too many other transformations going on at the same time.
- It wasn't clear who owned what decisions.
- No one directly connected to the transformation actually owned the decisions.
- The leadership structure didn't make sense.
- The governance structure was too complicated to operate sensibly.
- An informal governance structure erupted which deformed the effectiveness of the formal governance structure.
- The governance structure ignored formal or informal realities of the organization (such as existing org structure, behavioral dynamics, etc).
- A different transformation had directly conflicting objectives.
- Project management structures such as a PMO or TMO (transformation management office) operated as separate bureaucracy, and were not actually helpful to on-the-ground transformation work.

- The governance structure kept changing and no one could keep track.
- There was no single "account of the truth" as to how the transformation was progressing.
- KPIs or OKRs were missing or misaligned.
- KPIs or OKRs didn't properly sync with individuals' goals.
- Decision-making didn't include people who were directly impacted.
- Decision-making didn't include people with critical information.
- Decisions were made too quickly.
- Workstreams were inherently disconnected or even set up at cross-purposes.
- Transformation decisions were made disconnected from availability of organizational resources (for instance, expectations of more work which stretched static headcount).
- Central decisions did not work well across groups, disciplines, geographies, etc.
- The stakeholder groups that needed to be included changed over time, and no one accounted for that/brought those groups into the process.

## Swipe for more
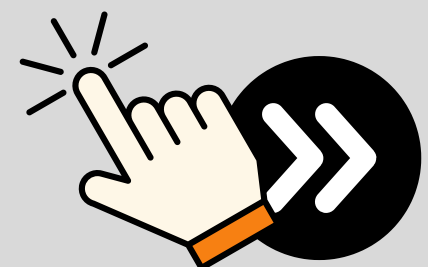
# Collaboration

- There were too many people involved.
- There were too few people involved.
- The wrong people were involved.
- There were too many meetings.
- There were too many emails.
- There were too many people in each meeting.
- There were too many people on each email.
- The meetings didn't have agendas, or didn't have good agendas.
- No one had any focus time to think about the issues.
- Collaboration across traditional silos was awkward/poorly set up.
- More documentation was produced for the transformation than anyone had time to read.
- People used the wrong communications channels for the wrong purposes: for instance, email for real-time chats.
- People from different groups "spoke different languages" about the transformation (literally using words to mean different things).

- Incentives didn't exist for different groups to collaborate in service of the transformation.
- Mechanisms (formal or informal) didn't exist for different groups to communicate in service of the transformation.
- Mechanisms set up for communication or collaboration (for instance, SteerCos) were ignored, underutilized, or misused.
- Moments of collaboration became routinely combative with no way of re-setting the tone.
- Critical tasks (governance, communications, etc) lapsed/were neglected due to organizational overload.
- Efforts to bring working groups down to a manageable size failed (more people were added back in).
- No agreement on collaboration technology existed, and communication was impeded as a result.
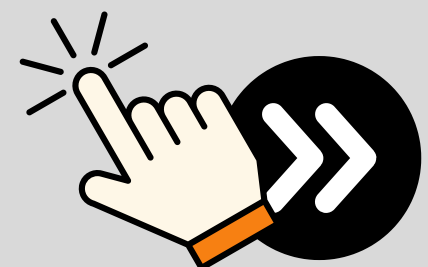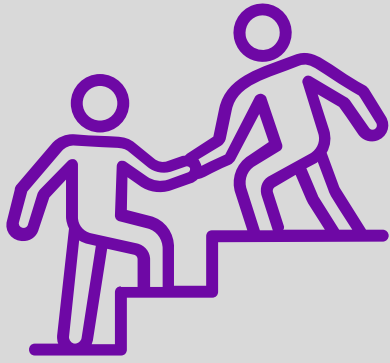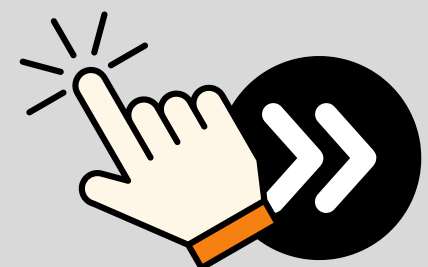
# Leadership

- The wrong person was chosen to lead.
- The wrong people were chosen to lead.
- The right people were chosen to lead the transformation, but they didn't receive organizational support.
- It was not clear exactly who was leading it.
- Leaders had other things they cared more about.
- Leaders were too burnt out to care.
- Leaders didn't understand how to message the transformation day to day.
- Leaders struggled to team with their peers around the transformation.
- When conflict arose between leaders, it was handled improperly.
- Leadership reward systems were misaligned to transformation goals.
- Leaders were allowed to exploit the transformation for "clout" without producing results.
- Too-high leadership turnover meant that the transformation lacked consistent guidance.

- Too-low leadership turnover meant that the transformation turned into a stagnant echo chamber.
- Leaders passive-aggressively undermined the transformation.
- Leaders used the transformation as a battleground to fight pre-existing turf wars.
- High-level transformation leadership was disconnected from the day to day reality on the ground.
- Leaders lacked empathy for the challenging nature of transformation.
- Leaders struggled to connect the transformation to their business goals.
- Bureaucratic requirements of the transformation (reporting etc) overwhelmed leaders.
- Leaders at the same level failed to team appropriately in service of the transformation.

**Swipe for more**

# Technology

- The technology supporting the transformation was not good.
- The technology supporting the transformation was inherently good, but not properly set up/configured for the organization.
- Leadership secretly didn't understand the technology involved.
- The technology supporting the transformation was poorly explained.
- The technology supporting the transformation conflicted with other technology already in use.
- The technology supporting the transformation was powerful, but clunky to use.
- The technology supporting the transformation was easy to use, but didn't accomplish what it was meant to.
- Too many different technologies were involved.
- Technological choices changed in unpredictable ways.
- Technology governance was poorly integrated with other governance in the transformation.

- Technology governance was poorly integrated with other technology governance in the broader organization.
- Technological change in the world moved faster than the transformation could handle.
- Technological failures weren't handled properly (concealed, ignored, poorly messaged, etc).
- Technological progress was communicated in overly technical terms.
- Technological progress was communicated in overly simplistic terms.
- Technology leaders had too little say in the transformation.
- Technology leaders had too high a share of voice in the transformation.
- Outside technology partners were mishandled.
- Technology budgets were mishandled.
- Needed technology upskilling didn't happen effectively.

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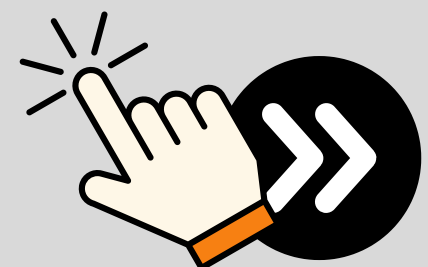
# Resonates?

## Let's talk.

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