

# Connected Organisations

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We talk a lot about connectivity in the telecoms industry, but how often do we consider how connected our organisations are, internally and within our wider eco-systems. What even is a connected organisation?

This is a subject I focus a lot on with my clients within the telecoms industry. For me, a connected organisation is one where people, process, data and technology all work together to create organisational flow. Organisational flow is where work flows through the organisation in as frictionless a way as possible, creating opportunities for growth and improvement along the way and providing benefits at a business and individual level.

So often we see silos in organisations with departments operating independently and technology being viewed as a separate entity to people. I've been in the IT sector within the telecoms industry for over 30 years and technology was often seen as a barrier, a frustration to work with, not providing the capabilities required for organisations to work effectively. Technology has evolved and is still evolving at such a pace, but successful use of technology can only be achieved if it is understood within the wider context of people, process and data.

Let's take each of these elements in turn but consider how there is opportunity to ensure they all work in harmony.

## People make it happen

There are people much better qualified than I to talk about culture, D&I, performance and reward. What I look at within an organisation is how well considered the structure is. What capabilities are required to operate the organisation effectively? Are the responsibilities for those capabilities well defined and understood? What is the experience like for the people performing those capabilities? Often there is a gap in this area with individual departments responsible for defining their own structures with no overall view of whether there are any capability gaps across roles. If roles are defined effectively,

setting expectations on responsibilities within roles, then we can consider what will make a person effective in their role. This leads into technology and data which can make or break effectiveness in a person's ability to perform at their best.

Often technology costs are held in separate budgets with pressure on IT teams to reduce their cost, but why not consider them as part of a person cost? For example, in order for a salesperson to be fully effective they need access to CRM technology and data with visibility of what products and services are available to a prospective customer and when and even how easy or complex it will be to provide service. Technology is so fundamental to people that surely it should be considered a cost of the role and not a separate technology cost.

### Process connects the dots

Once a person's role is better defined, this leads onto process. I'm not talking about endless documentation, but how far are end-to-end processes understood and implemented. Do people understand where they sit within a process? How does their input affect someone downstream? Understanding at a high level how the organisation works and where an individual fits helps to illustrate not only why it is important but also the wider picture of what the contribution is to the whole. It's a great exercise to take an end-to-end process, Lead to Activate, for example, and ask people to organise themselves in the order in which they contribute to the process. This can tease out gaps, but also helps understanding of what lies upstream and downstream and how this can be impacted; not only how work is carried out but also what data is being captured at each stage.

### Data drives decisions

Like other industries there is a buzz around AI and big data. We are flooded with data from monitoring systems and insight from customer experiences but often organisations struggle to even just get the fundamentals right.

How do people use the data actively within their work? This isn't just about data input but having the right information at the right time to serve customers and interactions with other departments. How is this data then used to drive decisions both human and system? The more automated organisations become, the more important data quality is, as is the understanding of how joined up and accurate it is. Our industry is focused on growth and scalability which drives more automation but successful automation relies on accurate data to drive workflows down the right path. For example, accurate 'as built' data from build partners drives serviceability checks and informs fulfilment of orders in true end to end automated customer onboarding journeys. Thinking back to role profiles, there is a an opportunity to determine the data that a role owns, or is responsible for in maintaining quality control.

As the industry matures, more focus will be placed on longevity of the networks, reliability of service and customer retention. It will be essential for successful organisations to understand their networks, external and internal, the services that are provided over them and who will be impacted in the event of a risk to service or an actual service failure. This leads to new roles such as technology, application and business service owners with responsibilities to ensure that the supporting data is accurate and connected. Also, in a world of increasing amounts of data generated, how do we ensure





what is seen is relevant and meaningful? We can only know this by understanding the context in which it is used.

## Technology enables effectiveness

Technology within an organisation should not be viewed as just a passive receiver of data, but is a fundamental part of making sure a person is effective in their role. To enable organisations to operate at scale, technology should automate the routine, volume tasks and provide people with great experiences that enable them to be effective, whether that is serving customers, creating products and services, building and maintaining the network or providing business support. Consider how the technology works together across the whole end to end process and externally to customers and partners within the wider ecosystem.

Providing people with the tools and information they need is also essential to attracting and retaining talent. Again this will be role-specific, with different roles having differing needs for technology, requiring different levels of digital skills. As technology grows and evolves within an organisation, keep on asking the questions concerning the likely impacts on people, skills levels and training requirements.

## Bringing it all together

Which brings us nicely round to people again. The technology industry has been and is still extremely male dominated and at

the risk of hugely over-generalising, there is a perception that technology is more appealing to a 'male mindset'. By widening the perspective of technology to consider how it connects to people, we can think about other avenues to pursue, in order to attract more diversity to the industry.

My role on the board at WICT UK & Ireland is hugely important to me to help change the perception of our industry and to provide a support network for diversity and provide inspirational learning opportunities. My main motivator has never been to work in technology but to help people become the best they can be as they contribute to the wider organisation and beyond.

It's fascinating to see how organisations work and to help everyone involved create flow and a truly connected organisation. Widen this perspective again to envisage what our industry will help unlock as we build a connected nation of digital economies, healthcare and communication, I believe it's essential to think beyond technology and bring a people-focused view of not only our individual organisations but also a connected society.



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