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Dynamics Matters
Podcast

Transformation lessons from a CTO

With Ursula Dolton, CTO - British Heart Foundation

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“Every success story is a tale of constant adaptation and change.” – Richard Branson

It's not easy managing technology projects. There are many bear traps to avoid, egos to massage, and left field events you can do little to predict. Then there's the usual internal politics, budget restrictions, time, resource, skills and so on - many of which you'll have limited power to control. Plus, technology is forever changing.

It's why Ursula Dolton, Chief Technology Officer of HSO customer British Heart Foundation, believes *“Technology is a journey. One that we never quite get to the end of.”* But along that journey you will have successes. And you will make positive change. Change that would have seemed unthinkable just a few years ago.



Technology is at the heart of everything you do

If you have a smart phone, you've now more technology in your pocket than was used to first fly man to the moon. And everyone has a phone. Technology adoption has made it easier to introduce new ways of working. Which is important when you consider the modern business cannot run without it, as Ursula suggests *"I think technology is everything in the running of an organisation, especially in the current environment. With people remote working in hybrid models, every organisation is dependent on technology in one way or another."* The pandemic has taken a terrible toll, but it has forced organisations in every industry to adapt to new ways of working. They've had to. Simply to survive. And this means adopting new technology to support change.

Organisations in the charity sector are no different, as Ursula highlights *"When we went into the pandemic, the British Heart Foundation had launched Microsoft 365 a few months before and we were still trying to get people to have the occasional teams call. The pandemic made sure people had to have teams calls. And now when I go into the office, I see people having teams calls more than face-to-face meetings. I think technology use has really advanced."* This is a common theme. Perhaps you've seen it yourself in your own organisation. Faster technology adoption is perhaps one of the very few positives to come out of the pandemic. But getting to this point hasn't been easy. And those that have adapted fastest will not have gotten there alone.

It takes a partnership to make technology a success

The latest technology brings new advantages in customer engagement and business operation, but it comes at a cost. The cost of time in upskilling staff. And in Ursula's world, where staff churn and skills retention is a challenge, this is time The British Heart Foundation can ill afford. So adopting complex new systems is not practical. This is where having good relationships with technology vendors pays, as Dolton highlights: *"Organisations such as Microsoft are a strategic partner. They supported us before and during the pandemic. They are the tech experts; they know the art of the possible and how to get the most out of our investments because a lot of the time, we make investments based on one kind of recommendation or one benefit in mind, but they know how to connect those dots to give us more. And that's where success is."*

For Ursula and The British Heart Foundation, the vendor relationship is one part of a triangle which also includes the delivery partner, in this case HSO, as Dolton was keen to stress *"It's not just work as a tech provider what they've done is gone out of the way to truly understand the business and what we are trying to achieve. They've then advised us on the right investments for the right platforms."*

Ursula believes the vendor and partner relationship is key to technology adoption and long-term success. But there's one further thing she believes key to any successful technology project.





You need to answer the why

The technology direction you take is determined by the challenges you want to solve, the efficiencies you wish to gain, or the opportunities to take advantage of. But before making any decision, Ursula first seeks to answer two key questions: *“How will it transform the way we work, and how will it improve the way we work?”* The answer brings a technology decision back down to business value.

And this is another piece of advice Ursula imparts to anyone involved in a technology project *“I always say it’s a business solution we’re looking to find because it’s a business problem we are trying to solve. The technology element is simply a part of that solution. It’s an end-to-end implementation.”*

Successful technology projects occur by choosing the right solution to solve real business needs. But it’s also about selecting the right partner to ensure it lands and delivers those benefits whilst having the best chance of adoption.

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