



How to Effectively Implement
**ORGANIZATIONAL
CHANGE IN A DIGITAL
ENVIRONMENT**

Howspace

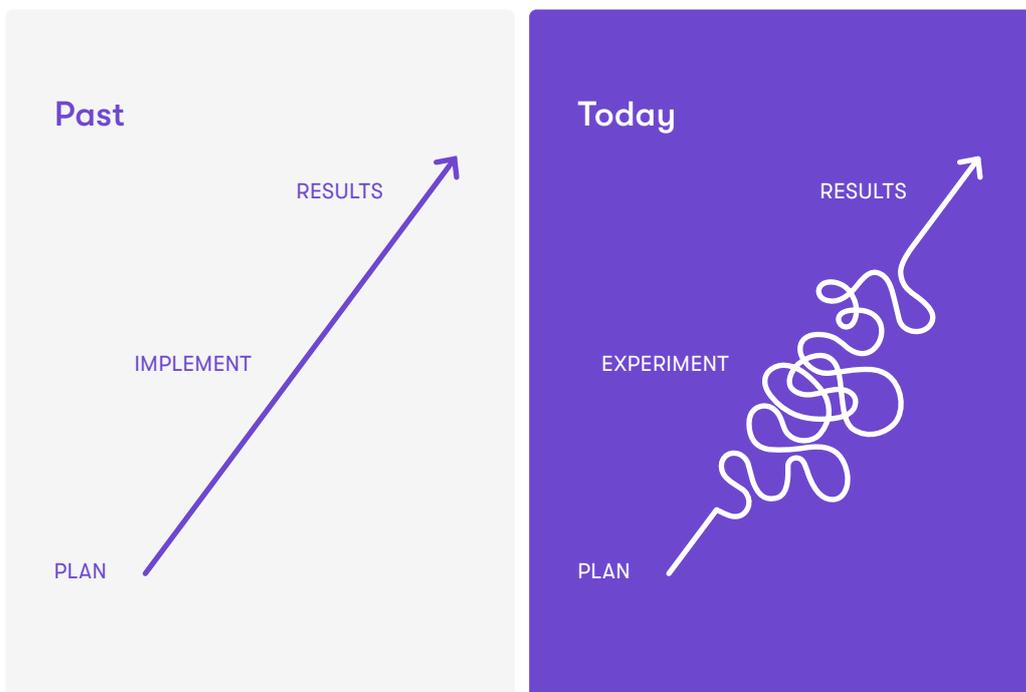
IN THIS EBOOK:

Introduction	3
1. Trends	5
2. Tips	7
3. Case studies	20
Conclusion	23

INTRODUCTION

Today organizations are having to transform in ways they couldn't even imagine. Organizational development programs are being fast-tracked years ahead of plan.

The world is constantly transforming and throwing things at us, which is why organizations need to be nimble and ready for change. In the past, we could build plans, slowly implement changes, and wait for results. Now the cycle of change is much shorter and we need to build resilience by being able to transform our ways of working continuously.



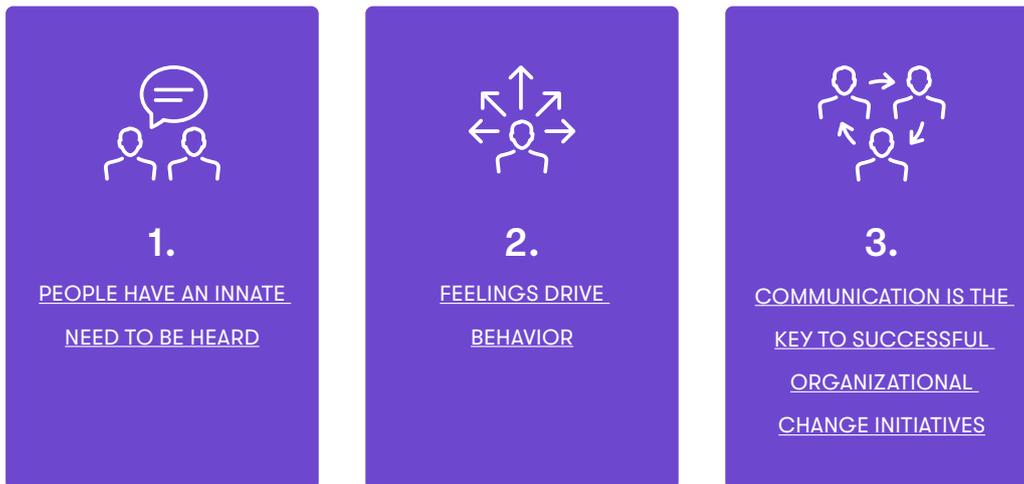
SOURCE: MARTIN ALDERGÅRD, ENPEO CONSULTING

With rapid change, comes many challenges, especially when it comes to digital transformation. In this ebook, we'll share trends, tips, and real-life stories on how to digitally engage participants in organizational development, change, and transformation programs. Our ultimate goal is to show you that with the right mindset and tools, any organizational development program can be run effectively in a digital environment.

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Need to be heard

Thanks to scientific research, we now know a lot more about sociology, neuroscience, and organizational development than we did 20 years ago. During that time, scientists have discovered many pivotal lessons, but perhaps most importantly are these three:



More often than not, the source of issues within a company boils down to communication. We dive into many facets of communication within a company, but inadvertently overlook listening. Since people have a natural need to be heard, listening is a vital link in a company's communications but also tends to be the weakest one.

This makes a lot of sense, since classroom instruction focuses on reading, considering it the primary medium by which we learn. There is very little emphasis placed on speaking and practically no training on the skill of listening.

Concentration while listening is also more difficult than concentration during any other form of personal communication. And when you are trying to listen through a laptop, it can become exponentially harder.

One way to start tackling this problem is to devote a workshop to discuss the roles and functions of listening as a business tool. Since this ebook is focused on digital strategies, we recommend facilitating a virtual listening workshop through a [digital facilitation platform](#). We'll dive into more actionable tips on how to do this later.



1. TRENDS

Before getting into practical tips, we wanted to share some organizational change trends, to lay down the foundation of “why” we’re making certain recommendations.

Learning in the core business

The value of every organization is increasingly based on the ability to learn quickly. Learning is not only a department, but it is a crucial part of work in every unit. According to [Deloitte’s 2019 Human Capital Trends](#), 86% of organizations recognize changing the way people learn at work as their biggest organizational development challenge in 2019 and beyond.

Because we are in a world of more uncertainty and less predictability, there is no time to produce formal learning programs and courses for the new emerging topics and challenges. Learning needs to happen in the flow of work.

If you’d also like to learn about the trends that are shaping the organizational learning landscape, check out our other ebook: [8 Ways to Boost Engagement in Virtual Organizational Learning](#).

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Participative Leadership

[Participative leadership](#), also known as democratic leadership, is a style of leadership in which all members of an organization work together to make decisions. Participative leadership is most effective in companies that have defined roles requiring little management or oversight

This style of leadership lends itself to teal organizations. Frederic Laloux's book, [Reinventing Organizations](#), characterizes these companies by self-management, wholeness, and a deeper sense of purpose. They operate largely without management hierarchies, organization charts, quarterly goals, or other traditional management strategies. Instead, they work with self-managed teams, intuitive reasoning, and decentralized decision-making.

Laloux's book has inspired thousands of organizations around the world to take a radical leap and adopt an entirely different set of management principles and practices. Because these practices are quite new, the discussions around what they are and how to implement them are ongoing.

The breakthrough of AI

Practical applications of machine learning and AI are finally entering the market in many different fields. Within organizational learning and development, the power of these applications is in helping people to connect with topics and each other based on their needs and interests. [AI can also help make sense of large-scale dialogue](#).

AI is not something only IT professionals have access to, it can be utilized by everyone. We've already seen many [use cases of AI in organizational development](#).

These are just a few of the recent trends we've identified, if you'd like to dive deeper, check out our blog post on the [Top 7 Organizational Change Trends that are Changing the Way We Work](#).



2. TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Start with the why

Ok, now let's get down to the nitty-gritty of why you're here. Our first tip is to engage the people of your organization early on and start with the why.

When change strategy and execution are managed as two separate streams, you're much more likely to encounter resistance during execution. To avoid that pitfall, invite all stakeholders to share their ideas, hopes, and dreams before you even start crafting the strategy. And remember, that might include customers and other external stakeholders as well.

Before you can expect commitment from anyone, you must help them understand why a change initiative exists and why you're approaching it the way you're approaching it. However, instead of simply sticking to a single "why", you should help people find their own drivers. After all, a single change process is likely to have different outcomes, so let people focus on the ones that matter to them the most.

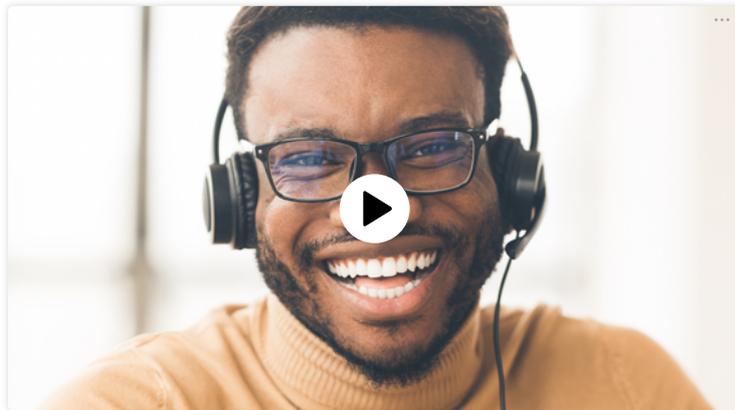
For more insights on the importance of "Why", read Simon Sinek's ["Start with Why"](#).

HOW TO DO THIS DIGITALLY

To do this digitally, create a dedicated digital workspace, so you can cut out all the other noise and distractions, and focus on the program at hand. We recommend using a digital facilitation platform like [Howspace](#), which was specifically created for organizational change and transformation programs.

Here are a few ideas on how you can digitally introduce an organizational development program (all of which can be done within Howspace):

- ✔ **Create an introduction video** - This doesn't need to be fancy, it just needs to be personal and authentic. With today's technology, you can record it directly from your phone or laptop within a few minutes. The key here is to share why an organization is taking on an initiative, the vision, and why it's important for each person to participate. The video can be from the CEO or even from each management team.

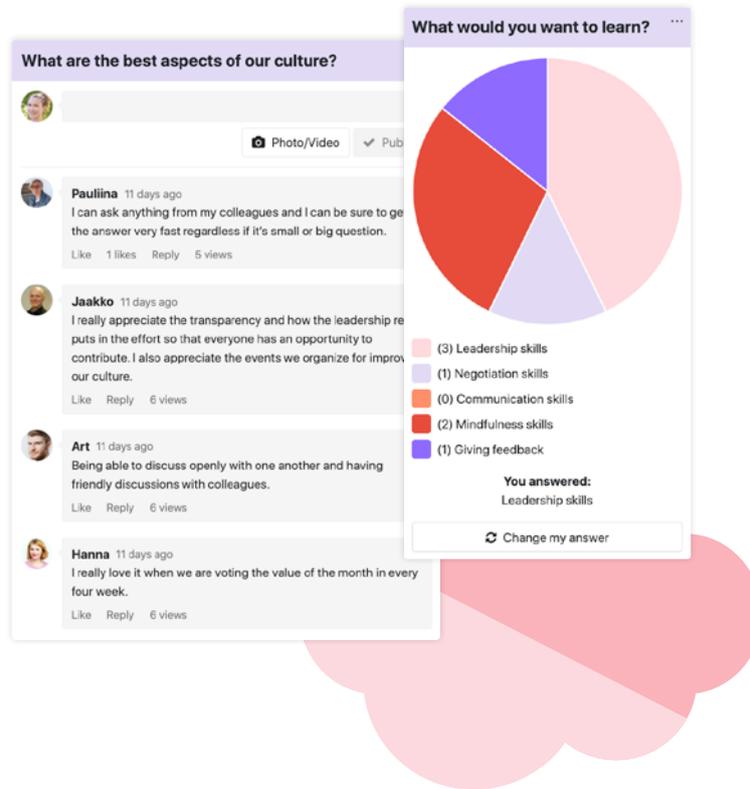


- ✔ **Share the agenda beforehand** - If you're planning to have meetings or workshops (face-to-face or virtually), it would be beneficial to share an agenda ahead of time so participants can get familiar with the objectives and come prepared.



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- ✓ **Create a poll, survey, or discussion** - You can already start listening to your participants by creating a poll, survey, or discussion. These can help to discover current employee sentiments and help shape the agenda.



Sensemaking and co-creation

When we think about the recent trends about teal organizations, and moving towards a flatter and agile type of organization, collaborative leadership, or [participative leadership](#), is a crucial part of this paradigm shift. This style of leadership invites all members of an organization to work together to make decisions.

Participative leadership is highly based on [collective sensemaking](#). Collective sensemaking takes into account several perspectives to figure out what is changing, and what is needed next. Every person has blind spots, and collective sensemaking ensures that the full picture can be seen and all possibilities are uncovered.

According to research by Great Place to Work, [organizations that encourage all their members to innovate can expect 5.5 times the revenue growth](#) of peers who rely on a less inclusive approach.

Why? The key here is that no one person can possibly have the [collective intelligence of a large organization](#). However, by finding ways to listen to the experts of different fields, you should be able to harness the skills, knowledge, and opinions of everyone in the organization, and that way reach your combined potential.

The most successful companies have a strong organizational culture based on commonly shared values that are supported by strategy and structure. By engaging all members of an organization through continual dialogue, you can help them move from awareness of a change, through understanding it, to embracing it.

If you're able to replace traditional top-down management with a culture of co-creation and collaboration, your bottom line (and bank account) will likely thank you.

And co-creation doesn't need to end within your own organization. The power of [co-creation can be extended to your customers](#) to ideate, produce, and market products. Companies like Apple, Ikea, Nike, Unilever, and Heineken have successfully engaged their stakeholders (mainly customers) in co-creation initiatives.

The company that probably best illustrates customer co-creation is LEGO. In the early 2000s, LEGO was in a challenging financial position due to over-extended product lines, brand dilution, and excessive growth. With a change in leadership and a fresh approach to open-source product development, [LEGO Ideas](#) was born. LEGO Ideas was a crowdsourcing platform which invited the public to submit ideas, and then let fans vote. The winning creators are recognized in the packaging, marketing, and even earn a percentage of sales.

LEGO's commitment to co-creation has helped lift revenue and strengthen customer loyalty. Needless to say, everyone wins with co-creation.

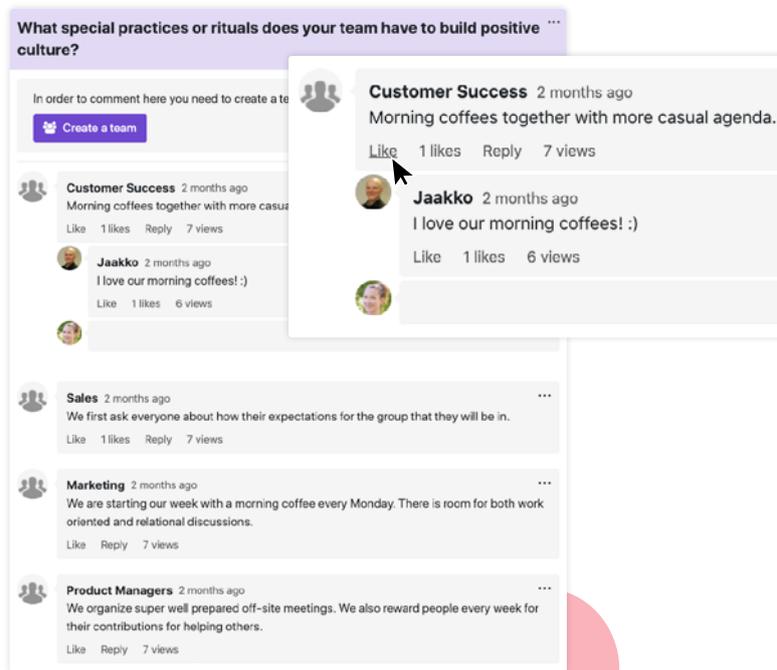
HOW TO CO-CREATE DIGITALLY

Whatever change outcome you're looking for, think about how you're implementing that change. They should match up. For example, if you want your organization to be more agile and participatory, you can't do the change process with just five people in a room.

Another example is if you want your colleagues to challenge ideas to drive innovation, then you need to invite people to actually do that. So how can we accomplish this in a digital space?

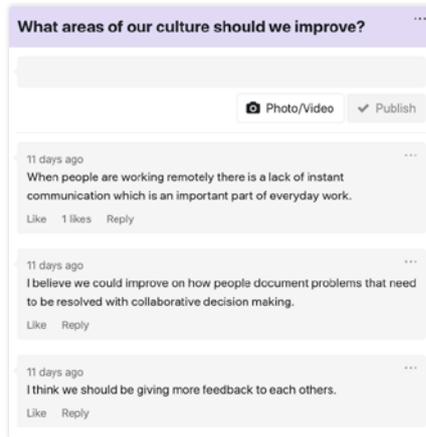
Here are a few ideas of how to do this on Howspace:

- ✔ **Answer as a team** - By letting teams come up with a collective answer, there will be fewer barriers to voicing opinions and more constructive feedback. On Howspace, this can be done by starting a discussion. People can then vote on ideas for prioritization and decision-making.



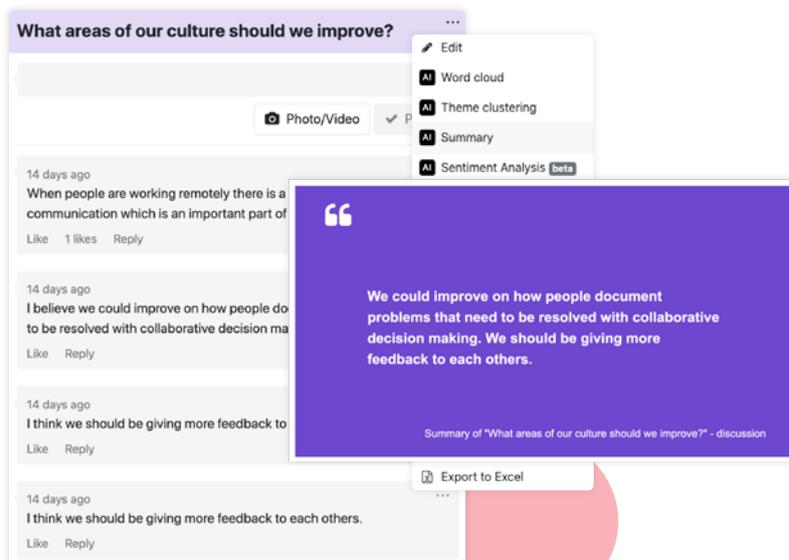
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- ✓ **Anonymize or hide comments** - If people are feeling insecure about sharing ideas and opinions, you can easily anonymize users or hide comments in Howspace to avoid being influenced by other colleagues.



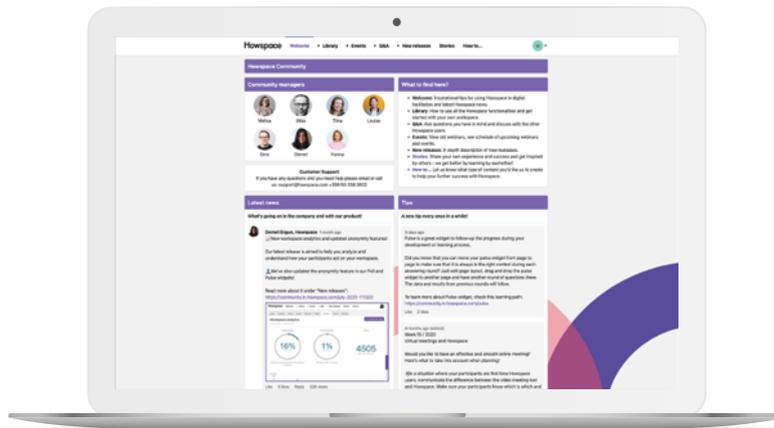
Anonymized comments

- ✓ **Utilize AI summary features** - When you're ready to draw conclusions from a particular discussion, you can use Howspace's built-in AI-powered clustering feature to analyze the data in real-time. Simply choose a discussion, and Howspace can create a summary, cluster, sentiment analysis, or word cloud of the most important topics or answers.



✔ **Create a dedicated workspace for customer crowdsourcing**

- You can easily build a co-creation crowdsourcing platform like LEGO Ideas on Howspace. The best part is, no coding is necessary. In fact, we did just that. [Howspace community](#) is a place for our customers to get inspirational tips, ask questions, share stories, and most of all give us ideas on how to continually improve Howspace. We are constantly pushing new releases, based on what we hear from our customers.



✔ **Culture and values** - An organization's culture tends to emerge over time and a Howspace workspace can be used to define, communicate, and cultivate an organization's culture.



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Facilitate not dictate

Change can't be managed but it can — and should — be facilitated. Perhaps the most important skill an OD practitioner can possess is the ability to give a voice to all the participants. In other words, you'll want to make sure that they feel understood and appreciated. A skilled facilitator can facilitate a dialogue between hundreds if not thousands of people, and help them solve complex problems together.

In organizations, all leaders should be facilitators. Instead of providing ready-made results, true transformation happens when people are having difficult and honest conversations and feel like they are part of the process. When this happens, organizations are able to build resilience and a collective consciousness.

This is the core of the facilitation mindset - know that you don't have all the answers and maybe the answers don't exist yet and need to be co-created.

HOW TO FACILITATE DIGITALLY

A critical part of facilitation and co-creation is providing transparency. One of the best things about going digital is that you can have a central hub for all dialogue and work for everyone to see.

Howspace differs from other online collaboration tools and social networks in a way that facilitators can guide the conversation and empower individuals to use the platform to drive deep change.

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS ON HOW YOU CAN USE HOWSPACE'S
CHAT WIDGET, WHICH HAS DYNAMIC FACILITATOR FEATURES
TO HELP GUIDE YOUR PARTICIPANTS:

- ✓ Crowsource questions
- ✓ Comment as individuals or teams
- ✓ Hide names to comments, which lets people voice their concerns anonymously
- ✓ Guide participants to new discussions to take part in
- ✓ Prioritizing ideas

A popular digital facilitation method is Sociocracy 3.0 (S3), which is a transformational technology that helps organizations improve performance, alignment, fulfillment, and wellbeing. A large part of S3 is a [consent decision-making](#) process that is used to propose agreements that are transparent and that everyone can stand behind.

The decision-making process following the S3 method can be used to set strategic goals for the year. Here's an example of how to digitally facilitate the process in Howspace:

1. A chat is opened up on a Howspace workspace, where all participants are given an opportunity to suggest ideas over the course of a few days or weeks. A facilitator can provide pre-set categories such as brand, company culture, and internationalization, which can also be done in separate chats to keep topics organized.

2. Howspace's chat AI clustering features can create a summary, theme cluster, or a word cloud of a chat, which can serve as a starting point for a discussion during a virtual or face-to-face meeting.
3. From there, every topic can be discussed in smaller virtual groups that discuss the summary, build on the content, and create suggestions that the group is happy with. Howspace also has a booking feature, in case different sessions need to be scheduled.
4. Once all the suggested goals have been discussed, groups can post the final suggestions in Howspace and create a vote. This helps to prioritize, voice any objections, and make immediate decisions.
5. Objections should only be given, with an improved suggestion. All objections and concerns can continue to be discussed in a chat.
6. Finally, participants can quickly vote again until everyone gives their consent, and only then will a decision be made.

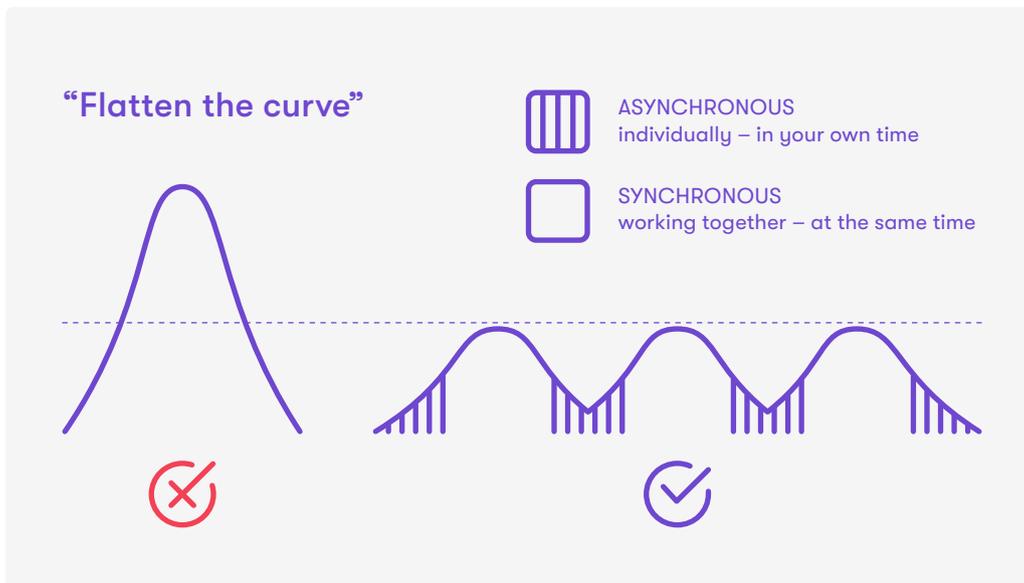
If you're interested in learning more about digital facilitation, check out our [Digital Facilitation Playbook](#), where we provide you with everything you need to get started with virtual facilitation.

Agile and Incremental

Traditionally, organizational change is seen as a process with a beginning, a midpoint, and an end when the goals have been achieved. This approach is being replaced by transformation—that is, continuous organizational development.

We cannot expect that a huge transformation will happen from spending two days together in a conference room. Transformation is often action-driven and involves behavioral change, and that takes time. That's why the most effective organizational development programs take place over several months to a year.

In the past, most work was done synchronously - that is, when we all meet at the same time. Today, more and more work needs to be done asynchronously, that is, when we collaborate at different times — and usually from different geographical locations.



SOURCE: MARTIN ALDERGÅRD, ENPEO CONSULTING

Encouraging participants to work on a segment, then practice and reflect after each experience will make it easier to digest the learnings and accomplish their goals. This also allows the facilitator to guide the process along the way and ensure that a program is headed in the right direction at any given moment.

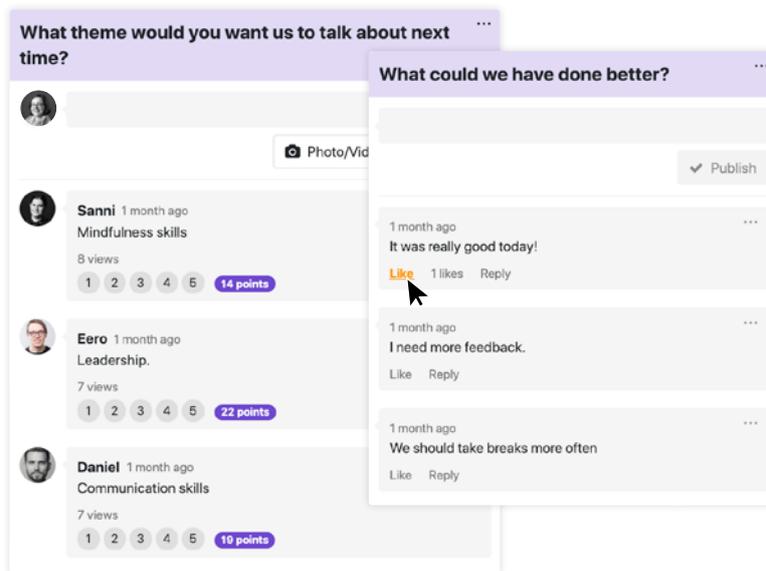
Because the transformation is taking place during the flow of work, this makes for a more agile process, where things can pivot if they aren't working. While creating this mind-shift of doing things more often with smaller impacts takes persistence and patience, it can definitely create longer-lasting results.

HOW TO DO THIS DIGITALLY

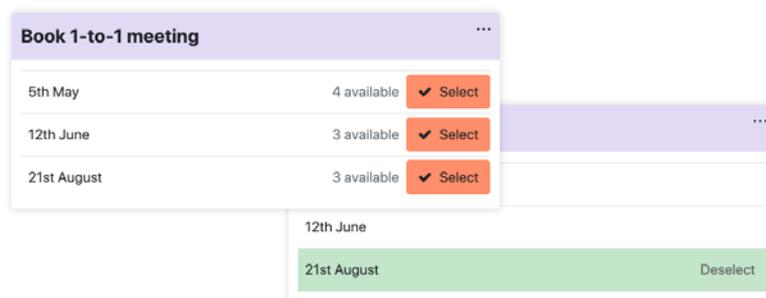
By utilizing a digital platform like Howspace, participants can work asynchronously — that means people can participate from wherever they are at any time that suits them. Here are a few ideas that can be spaced out over time:

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- ✔ **Involve everyone in decision making** — Howspace lets you vote, like, or give points to ideas whenever you're on the platform. Not only does this help to prioritize ideas, but it makes it easy and engaging to involve every participant while making the decision process transparent. Howspace also has a timer feature, so that you can set a deadline for when people can give their input. Finally, you can use Howspace's AI clustering features to quickly summarize a discussion or identify important themes.

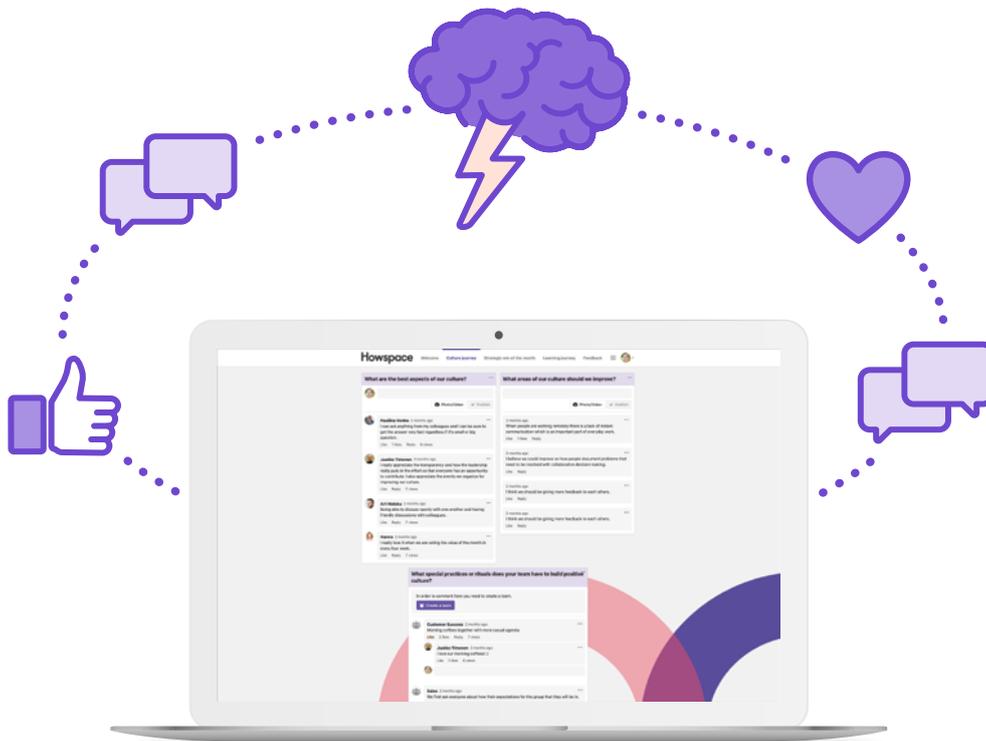


- ✔ **OD interventions** — Howspace makes it possible to organically do small interventions within the daily workflow. Interventions can be customized at the group or individual level. By incorporating organizational development interventions regularly, interventions become a visible part of everyday work. Howspace also has a booking feature where you can schedule or book interventions directly on the platform.



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- ✓ **Make good practices visible** — Howspace is the ideal place for sharing experiences, stories, and ways of working that already exist within an organization. This is a fantastic way for people to get heard and also receive recognition, not to mention it should align with the ongoing transformation process.



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3. CASE STUDIES

If you're wondering how this all works in practice, here are a couple of case studies to show how organizations have effectively utilized digital tools and remote work practices to engage participants in development programs.

Finnish Medical Association



FINNISH MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION

When the Finnish Medical Association (FMA) started to prepare its basic principles of healthcare in late 2018, it wanted to involve all members in the discussion on how to make healthcare more effective in the future. Since the doctors are the ones who are most knowledgeable about what is going on in the field, their ideas needed to be heard.

Previously, healthcare guidelines were prepared by a small group of experts. With Howspace, the FMA was able to simultaneously invite more than 26,000 doctors from all over Finland.

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The facilitated discussions enabled doctors to share their views on the best ways to ensure things like patient autonomy, access to treatment, and implementing evidence-based treatment practices.

“We received more than 600 pages of text, including complete articles. Reviewing that much text would have taken months. Artificial intelligence helped us review the text mass and streamlined our work,” says **Heikki Pärnänen**, Policy Director at the Finnish Medical Association.

Altogether, three polls were organized on the Howspace platform at two-week intervals to collect the doctors’ votes. Between the polls, the work continued. The doctors were able to participate in processing the topics that they felt were most relevant to their practices.

In the future, the Howspace digital platform will be used as a discussion platform for working groups with limited participation, and as a tool that offers help with preparatory work and meeting practices.

“The platform is very convenient. We want all of our members to participate in our activities, not just those in a position of trust and the members of our preparatory bodies. Everyone will be able to truly have an impact on decision-making and their medical practices.”

Milestone Coaching & Consulting



Milestone Coaching & Consulting is a coaching and development agency with over 20 years of history in human-centered change. They build their customer relationships, coaching processes, as well as change and strategy processes all around the same basic principles: how we are as humans.

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Aktia is a bank and financial services provider with an extensive history ranging back to 1825. Today it has around 900 employees and functions around Finland. Aktia and Milestone are working together to develop their corporate culture.

“Banking is a traditional industry with a lot of hierarchical structures. At the same time, it’s going through major changes with digitalization and customer behavior shifts. Aktia recognized that they wanted to develop openness and a sense of community in the organization, along with building more self-directed teams,” explains **Elina Aaltolainen**, Culture Strategist from Milestone.

“With the Howspace platform, we got the opportunity to also involve line managers in the organization straight from the beginning. Using digital tools combined with service design methods allowed us to grasp the big picture fast,” Elina describes.

Aktia was also planning an “Aktia Day”, but with the advent of COVID-19, they quickly needed to transform Aktia Day to a virtual experience. Their biggest goal was to create an interactive experience to get away from all the Zoom virtual meeting fatigue people were experiencing.

Milestone and Aktia utilized Howspace for all the pre-planning work and ended up building the entire event on Howspace as well.

“The digital ways of working have brought about tools that bring more participation and equality to the process. Everyone’s voice matters the same on a digital platform. You can even do some parts anonymously when needed. Working with AI-tools makes it possible to involve a lot of people in a dialogue real-time and summarize the discussion then and there. This is a possibility for leaders to hear what people in their organization are saying, at a new scale,” shares Elina.

Aktia Day ended up exceeding their expectations. “In general, I think we are only scratching the surface of what these tools can bring to the world of involvement and human-centered development” Elina summarizes.



CONCLUSION

As the world continues to transform in unexpected ways, organizations need to be ready to change alongside. We hope this ebook has given you a springboard to inspire your entire organization to get involved in moving change forward.

If you're ready to go start making a change, why not give Howspace a try? You can build a free workspace for your organizational development program today.

Start your free Howspace trial →

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www.howspace.com