

# UNLOCKING INSIGHTS THROUGH WAYS OF WORKING

*People & Change Case Study*

## CLIENT SITUATION

Like many organizations, our client sought to adopt the tools and techniques for deriving information and knowledge from data, necessitating a focus on user fluency and adoption to ensure long-term sustainment of new ways of working.

The state agency collected significant volumes of data that were confined to individual functional silos or databases that were not integrated. While the client recognized the value of physical assets, employees didn't yet view data as a powerful resource that could be analyzed to glean enterprise information and decision-making insight. Furthermore, data was not managed, maintained, or governed in a structured manner.

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North Highland partnered with a large state transportation agency that was introducing data governance and new business intelligence tools to the organization. Our client has long occupied a strong position as a successful state agency. Yet, at the outset of our engagement, employees had not embraced data governance best practices, business intelligence tools, and data as an enterprise asset. To enable the client's data-driven transformation journey, we provided a variety of services, including procurement support, project management, data governance frameworks, and organizational change management and adoption.

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## OUR APPROACH

In partnership with the client, North Highland established a formal organizational change management plan to accelerate the adoption of the new tools, building employee enthusiasm around those new tools and the value of data in enterprise decision-making. We applied a set of tried-and-true techniques and templates, bringing together the best of Prosci research and proprietary insights.

We kicked off the engagement with a detailed analysis of impacted stakeholders. Next, our team identified, briefed, and trained specific sponsors and change champions to help accelerate the adoption of new, data-driven ways of working. A series of knowledge-sharing events were conducted with stakeholders across the state, employing a variety of communications tactics and channels that included online town halls, monthly newsletters, coaching, and progress reports.

North Highland developed detailed charters for new data governance teams and educated those teams on the terms and vocabulary associated with ways of working. Throughout the engagement, we encountered a few pockets of resistance, solving for those challenges through a root cause analysis that uncovered the following insights:

- **A slow timeline dampened employee enthusiasm.** The lengthy timeline for the state's procurement of new business intelligence tools had frustrated employees.
- **Role confusion stifled adoption.** Employees identified to take on new data governance roles remained confused by the concepts and struggled to apply them to day-to-day ways of working.
- **Siloed efforts limited the impact of data.** Although cross-functional agency leaders were excited about the prospect of wielding enterprise data for decision-making, they perceived the Chief Information Officer and the information technology (IT) office as the primary owners of the analytics function. As a result, many leaders outside of IT were unwilling to champion analytics initiatives.

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## VALUE DELIVERED

North Highland equipped the state agency with a change management plan that took data out of the IT silo and helped to instill sustainable, data-driven practices enterprise-wide. To maximize employee engagement and adoption, we embedded a few core tenets into our approach:

**Timing:** Organizational changes must be timed to provide sufficient advance notification of changes, but also to maintain positive enthusiasm and anticipation of new tools to enhance workers' jobs. If information is delivered too early, employees may lose interest, forget important details, or "tune out" essential facts. Throughout the engagement, we adapted our approach to employee engagement in alignment to procurement timeframes. Thus, once the agency finally acquired the business intelligence tools, employees could better visualize the tangible application to their roles, and in turn, voice more fervent support.

**Business alignment:** To make data-driven ways of working sustainable, ownership and sponsorship of analytics must extend beyond the IT department. As a result, we engaged business leaders from operations and other internal functions as an integral component of our organizational change effort. These business leaders were well-equipped to communicate the benefits of new business intelligence activities and tools to employees throughout the organization. They are also part of the essential end-user community, so they also served as reliable change agents.

**Change agents:** North Highland served as an embedded extension of the agency's internal team to craft messages, develop materials, and organize critical activities. At the same time, we utilized the credibility and familiarity of change agents within the organization to champion the changes underway. Integral to a strategy that resonates with employees and instills lasting adoption, these change agents spoke the same language, were well-versed in institutional lore, and navigated the same cultural work environment as those newly encountering the changes.

To help the client harness data as a differentiated asset, North Highland brought a unique blend of analytics domain expertise, paired with a people-centric approach that engaged employees and nurtured adoption. Our approach not only instilled data governance capabilities but also ensured that those capabilities were sustainable through ways of working.

## ABOUT NORTH HIGHLAND

North Highland is a leading change and transformation consulting firm, recognized for its deep expertise and collaborative, action-oriented approach. Invested in our **client's success** and powered by the belief that **everything begins and ends with people**, we bring together the brightest minds to create **positive change** and **transform businesses** through **customer, workforce and operational lenses**.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., and regularly named a best place to work, North Highland is an employee-owned firm with more than 5,000 consultants worldwide and 65+ offices around the globe. The firm is a member of Cordence Worldwide ([www.cordence.com](http://www.cordence.com)), a global management consulting alliance. For more information, visit [northhighland.com](http://northhighland.com) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).