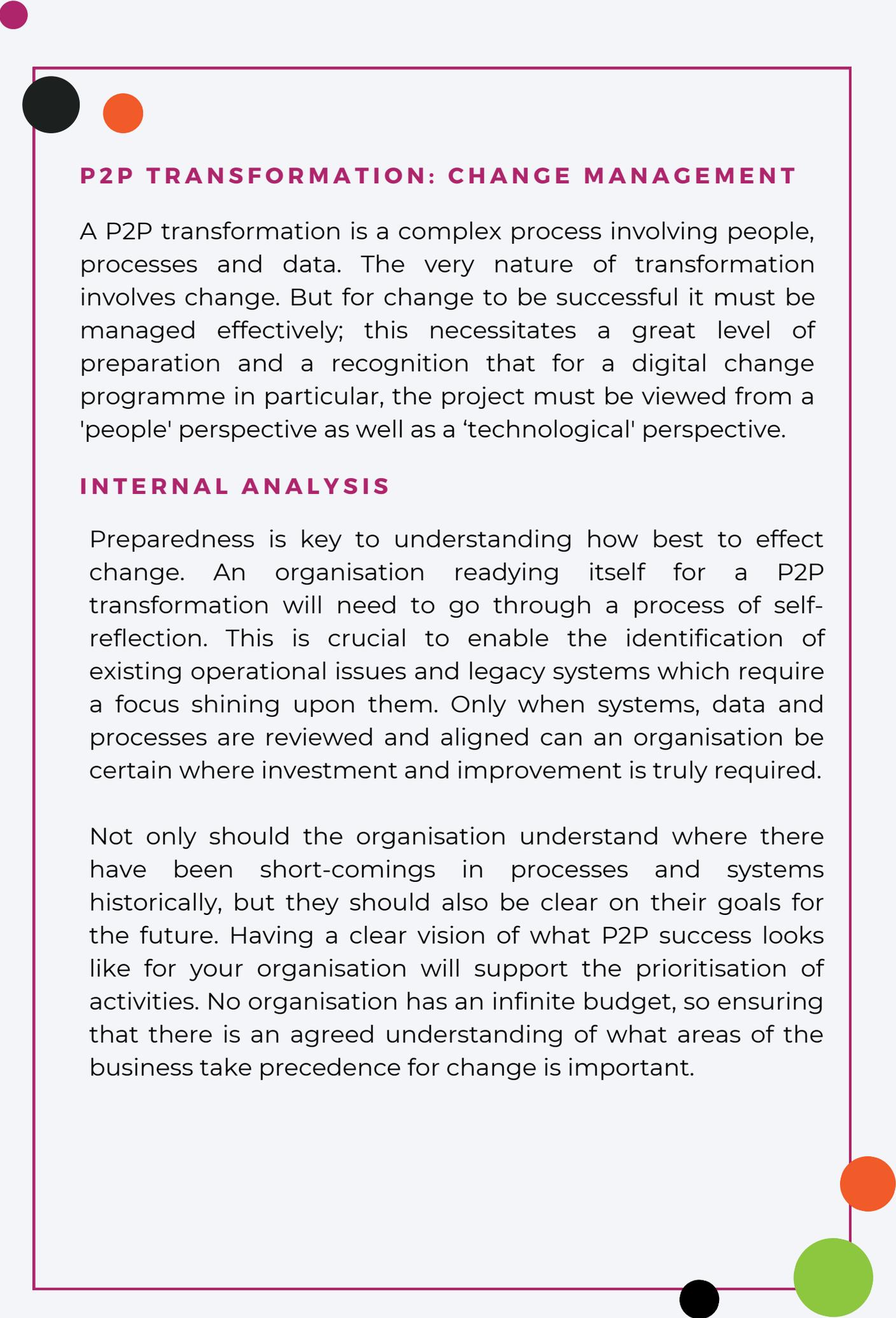# BARKERS
COMMERCIAL CONSULTANCY

CHANGE MANAGEMENT
SUPPORT PAPER

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P2P TRANSFORMATION: CHANGE MANAGEMENT

A P2P transformation is a complex process involving people, processes and data. The very nature of transformation involves change. But for change to be successful it must be managed effectively; this necessitates a great level of preparation and a recognition that for a digital change programme in particular, the project must be viewed from a 'people' perspective as well as a 'technological' perspective.

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

Preparedness is key to understanding how best to effect change. An organisation readying itself for a P2P transformation will need to go through a process of self-reflection. This is crucial to enable the identification of existing operational issues and legacy systems which require a focus shining upon them. Only when systems, data and processes are reviewed and aligned can an organisation be certain where investment and improvement is truly required.

Not only should the organisation understand where there have been short-comings in processes and systems historically, but they should also be clear on their goals for the future. Having a clear vision of what P2P success looks like for your organisation will support the prioritisation of activities. No organisation has an infinite budget, so ensuring that there is an agreed understanding of what areas of the business take precedence for change is important.

STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

Whilst system and process alignment is crucial, a significant amount of time should be spent on the human resource element of a P2P transformation.

The culture of the organisation can have a huge impact upon employee perceptions of change. If culturally the business embraces change and views it as an opportunity for progress and improvement, there is an increased likelihood that employees will adopt that mindset too.

When considering the human element of P2P transformation, understanding two factors can significantly aid the Project Manager to anticipate likely reaction and therefore plan accordingly:

- Level of interest
- Level of influence

Those stakeholders who are likely to be most interested in the P2P transformation are teams where the impact will be greatest felt – accounts payable, finance, procurement teams for example.

Identifying individuals or teams who will have the opportunity to significantly influence the P2P project is also crucial. These can include individuals such as board members, who will unlikely be impacted on a day to day basis, but who can hold a significant amount of sway, for example in perceptions of the project organisation-wide.

Once stakeholders are categorised by interest and impact, clear roles and responsibilities should be set out by the Project Owner. This is a crucial phase to empower individuals and enable them to take action where it is deemed appropriate within the P2P transformation process. Your provider will be able to contribute greatly to this process based on their vast experience of successful implementation projects.

As a guiding principle, highly influential and highly interested individuals should be kept close to the project team as they have greatest potential to effect change.
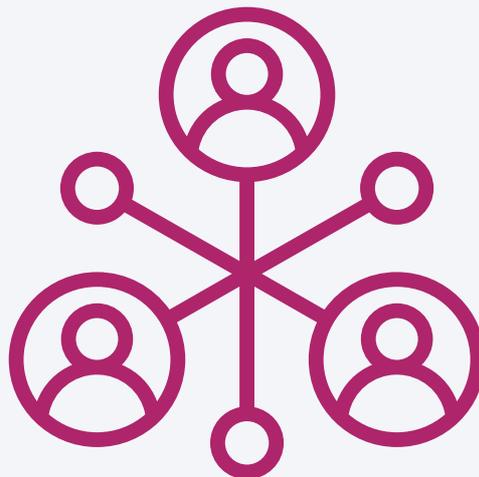
Decision champions should be identified through this process – failure to do this will hinder the progress of a P2P transformation. Once identified, decision champions need to maintain a closeness to the project and be empowered to both draw conclusions and commit action that will drive change and ensure the success of the project.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

One of the most crucial elements of change management is communication. For a project to be successful, the correct people should be engaged at appropriate times in a manner that will facilitate the action required. Often no action will be required, but a communication may still be important to maintain knowledge and interest in the project.

Communication methods used will vary from audience to audience, and may be dependent on their influence and interest levels. For example, for those audiences categorised as low interest and low influence, a newsletter may be sufficient. For those in the high interest and high influence category the communication methods are likely to be much more dynamic, for example change forums.

Frequency of communication should also be considered at this point, and a Communications Plan established that is overseen by the Project Owner. Crucial to your communications will be providing opportunities for stakeholders to feedback comments and suggestions. You should make it as easy as possible to facilitate this dialogue and ensure mechanisms are in place to enable this.
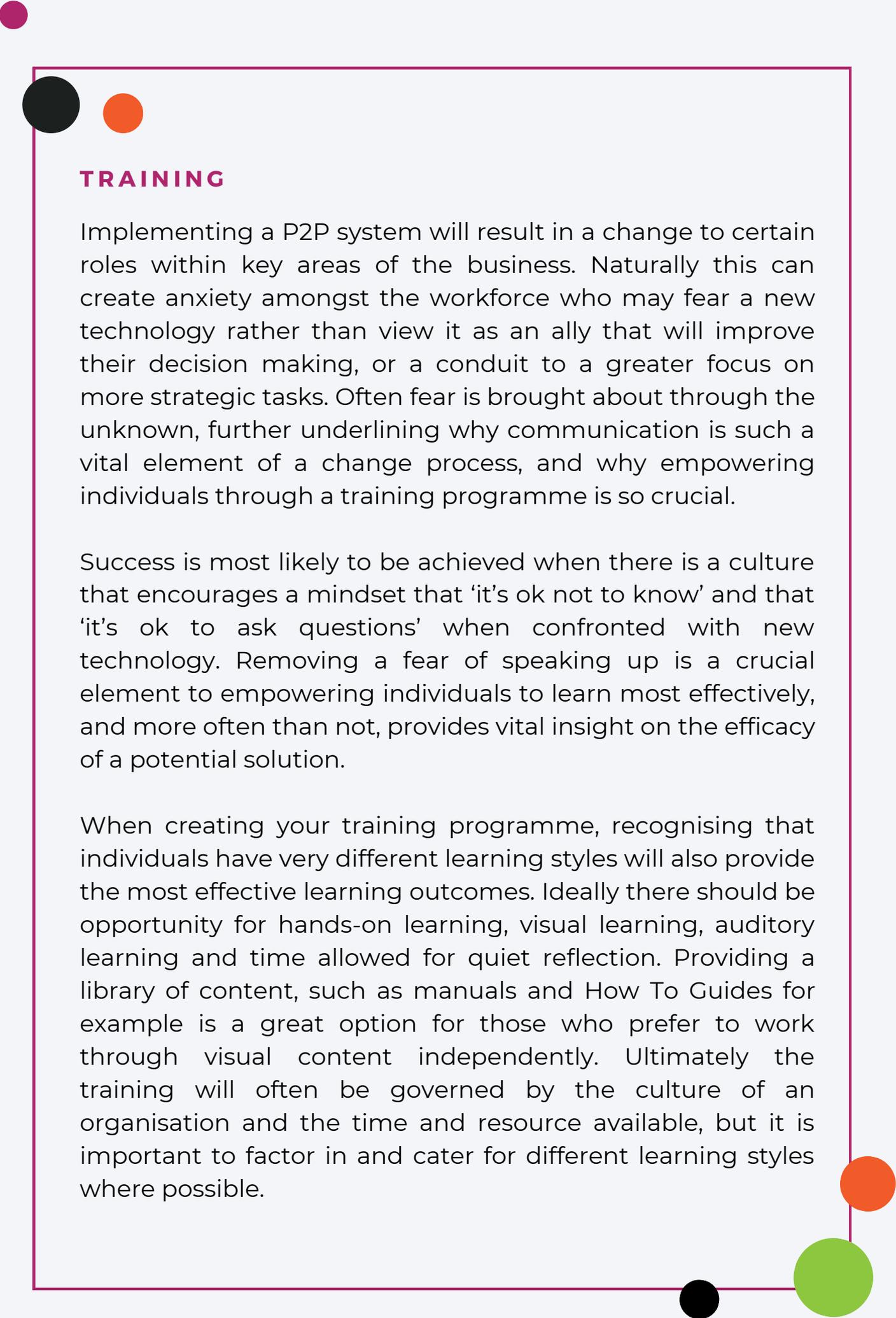
TRAINING

Implementing a P2P system will result in a change to certain roles within key areas of the business. Naturally this can create anxiety amongst the workforce who may fear a new technology rather than view it as an ally that will improve their decision making, or a conduit to a greater focus on more strategic tasks. Often fear is brought about through the unknown, further underlining why communication is such a vital element of a change process, and why empowering individuals through a training programme is so crucial.

Success is most likely to be achieved when there is a culture that encourages a mindset that 'it's ok not to know' and that 'it's ok to ask questions' when confronted with new technology. Removing a fear of speaking up is a crucial element to empowering individuals to learn most effectively, and more often than not, provides vital insight on the efficacy of a potential solution.

When creating your training programme, recognising that individuals have very different learning styles will also provide the most effective learning outcomes. Ideally there should be opportunity for hands-on learning, visual learning, auditory learning and time allowed for quiet reflection. Providing a library of content, such as manuals and How To Guides for example is a great option for those who prefer to work through visual content independently. Ultimately the training will often be governed by the culture of an organisation and the time and resource available, but it is important to factor in and cater for different learning styles where possible.

MAINTAIN THE CHANGE

Change management is a thread that weaves its way through the entire P2P transformation process, from initial explorations right through to adoption. As you work through this journey, stakeholders will change, as will methods and frequency of communication. But what is essential is that throughout the venture, stakeholders are reminded of the reason behind the change. A regular drumbeat of success stories will reinforce the effectiveness of the transformation, driving inclination to use the system, providing affirmation that the steps that have been undertaken so far were correct, and quashing the voices of cynics (of which there will always be some).

Crucial too is that whilst planning is vital, your plan is not so rigid that you cannot divert from the vision if you need to. An effective transformation is a living concept, fed by ideas, feedback and suggestions. Adapting the plan is not an indication of failure, it's about acknowledging that no project will ever be perfect from the outset. What matters most is how quickly and effectively you adapt and change. Through careful planning, stakeholder alignment, engagement and maintenance, you give your organisation the best opportunity to manage that change and change successfully.

Barkers are a procurement consultancy offering specialist support to enable organisations' to maximise value through their procurement functions. Barkers are digital procurement specialists offering exceptional insight into P2P system solution providers. They are an approved Coupa implementation partner for the mid-tier market in the UK and Ireland.

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