



experience results

Big Progress with Big Data Information Management Starts with People

If the business world held a vote for its term of the decade, “big data” might take the crown. In industries from finance to pharmaceuticals, companies are wrapping their arms around strategies to capture massive volumes of raw data - whether from customers or internal operations - and decipher it to create competitive advantages. The oil and gas industry is no exception. Energy companies are using big data to enhance the performance of people and equipment, improve the productivity of oil extraction sites, increase safety and protect the environment.

In most cases, moving toward a data-centric decision-making process isn't as easy as it sounds. It often requires experienced employees to change their dyed-in-the-wool work practices and even relinquish some control. Our client, the information management support organization within a global energy company, faced these and other issues as it sought to build support for its newly developed data management framework - a standard set of practices for all upstream business units to identify their key petrotechnical data, identify gaps and begin to address them. It was the first step toward a centralized, comprehensive big data program that promised to deliver real business value through data governance and analytics. They asked Expressworks to overcome the inertia and help get the program rolling.

Familiar obstacles

Two of the major roadblocks facing our client were typical of many change initiatives. First, the program was extremely broad, reaching into various organizations and departments within the company. With only general, high-level information about the program, the individual business units lacked the clear, specific guidance they needed to take action.

Secondly, as a support organization, our client team had no direct authority to require targeted groups of employees to comply with the new data management framework. Without a strong incentive to change, end users tend to put new programs on the back burner, or dismiss them altogether.

Managing change through influence

To drive uptake of the new framework, Expressworks started by raising the general profile of “big data” throughout the enterprise, communicating about the power and potential of data management. But the critical next step was identifying and working directly with executive and functional leaders to clarify expectations, address key points of resistance, and develop specific tools to help them adopt the new data management procedures in their daily work. Expressworks also worked hand-in-hand with managers of related programs to present consistent messaging and found ways to minimize the resource burden on the business units. By working to turn naysayers into partners, stakeholders began to embrace the potential of big data management, not because they were told to, but because they believed in its value.

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