10 culture hacks for digital transformation

What if after the second time someone tabled a decision the meeting was automatically over? What if you replaced all PowerPoint presentations with short memos? What if instead of talking about how a drone could reshape the supply chain, you demonstrated a test flight?

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Culture can be a big barrier to change and innovation. Culture hacks, some of which can be implemented in less than 48 hours, can move culture from a barrier to an accelerator.

"By culture hacking, we don't mean finding a weak point to break in to a system illegally," says Mary Mesaglio, distinguished VP analyst, Gartner. "It's about finding vulnerable points in your culture and turning them in to real change that sticks."

Gartner recommends 10 culture hacks that are highly visible and offer immediate results.

1. **All meetings support new strategy**
   Imagine that on a Monday, you announce a new digital strategy. On Tuesday, at your first meeting of the day, ask how this meeting advances the new digital strategy. If there are no answers, cancel the meeting and make sure the meeting doesn't reappear on your schedule (or anyone's schedule) until it does.

2. **Celebrate failure**
   As with the DirectTV CIO, it's important to celebrate failure and the lessons learned with it. By sharing his failures, the CIO was able to increase risk tolerance, which is one type of culture change.

3. **48-Hour decision rule**
   Create a rule that all decisions need to be made within 48 hours. This shifts accountability. This can be approached in other ways as well. For example, a government CIO told his team they get two points for making a decision, and lose one point if it's a bad decision. If you make a bad decision, you're still further ahead than if you made no decision at all.

4. **Reward decisions**
   The example above isn't about keeping score, it's about creating a new mindset among the managers. In turn, the CIO found his team was stepping up and enjoying their jobs more. Plus the CIO went from spending 70% of his time working on internal issues to spending 40% of his time on internal issues.

5. **Remove the furniture**
   Though well-intentioned, meetings can sometimes drag on into extended complaint sessions. Remove every item of furniture from the room. If there is nowhere to sit, slouch, or rest your elbow, there is also nowhere comfortable to settle into a negative space.

6. **Invite hard questions**
   Don't end any meetings until your employees ask you three really hard questions. The types of questions they might ask each other after the meeting ends. In order to change the mindset, you need to be willing to tackle the hard questions in the open.

7. **Don't have all the answers**
   Realistically, you won't have all the answers to the hard questions. The good news is you don't want to have all the answers. This creates a growth mindset and environment focused on learning.

8. **Cancel status meetings**
   CIOs spend up to 70% of time dealing with meetings and email. Cancel status meetings, and replace them with brief written updates. This shifts decision-making authority to project owners, allowing them to move things forward and take action.

9. **Hack your meeting agendas**
   Meetings become unproductive if they drag on or if people show up late. Mix up the structure of your meetings by moving voting and decision-making to the very beginning, and saving discussions for later on.

10. **Establish 15/60/15 meetings**
    Days filled with back-to-back meetings can be stressful and leave little time for reacting or thinking about discussions. Try booking a meeting for 90 minutes, and reserving the first and last 15 minutes to catch up on emails, follow up on meeting takeaways or check on progress for another project.