

The Soft Stuff is the Hard Stuff

By Randy Storch / Ideon Consulting

In the smart building world, failure rarely comes from bad tech—it comes from forgetting the humans it's supposed to help.

We love to talk about digital twins, AI, IoT, and data dashboards. But too often, those tools fall flat because the people who run the buildings—engineers, soft services teams, facility managers—are left out of the process.

In a recent technology platform deployment at a Fortune 50 company, we did things differently.

We walked basements with engineers. We strolled hallways with soft services staff. We listened. We learned. And then we invited them to co-create.



We held summits where engineers helped us shape the applications we were building. Their insights directly influenced what we prioritized—and how we built it. They were with us throughout development, not just at launch.

The results?

- 82% use the platform at least once per week
- 75% said it makes them more effective at work
- Faster adoption, stronger trust, and real operational value from day one

Here's the truth: **Technology is the easy part. The hard part is change management.**

Digital transformation isn't about software—it's about *people*. If your frontline teams don't believe the new system helps them, it won't matter how advanced it is. They won't use it. Or they'll work around it. Or they'll quietly hope it goes away.

The soft stuff—training, trust-building, user involvement—is the hard stuff. But it's also where the magic happens.

Real change requires:

- Co-design with the people doing the work
- **Communicating not just the “how” but the *why***
- Building new capabilities, not just new tools
- Making time for feedback and iteration
- Backing it all with leadership support

I've seen incredible platforms fail because no one asked the engineers what they needed. I've also seen modest tools create big impact—because they were built with the people who mattered most.

You can't retrofit change management after go-live.

You have to build it in from the start.

Let's stop assuming the technology will speak for itself. It doesn't.

Let's build *with* people—not just *for* them.