

# **Kotter's 8-Step Change Model for a Global Logistics Digitization Initiative**

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## Introduction

Digitizing and standardizing global logistics operations is a complex change endeavor requiring more than a simple shift from paper to online forms. It demands a strategic transformation of both technology and workflows, underpinned by cultural change. John Kotter's 8-Step Change Process provides a research-backed framework to manage such a transformation (Kotter, 2012). Each step – from establishing urgency through anchoring new approaches – addresses common reasons why change efforts fail and offers a roadmap to sustain long-term improvements (Kotter, 2012). In the context of a global logistics firm, this paper applies Kotter's model to implement a digital logistics platform and standardized processes worldwide. A blended leadership style, incorporating servant, transformational, and transactional elements, will guide the change at every step to balance empathy with inspiration and disciplined execution. The following sections detail a plan for each of Kotter's eight steps, supported by scholarly research and aligned with strategic leadership practices.

### Step 1: Establishing a Sense of Urgency

Kotter asserts that over half of change efforts fail at the outset due to insufficient urgency (Kotter, 2012). In global logistics, complacency can be costly – manual processes lead to delays, errors, and competitive disadvantage. Research shows that digital transformation has become “*key to enhancing core corporate competitiveness*” in supply chains (He, Fan, & Fan, 2024), and companies that fail to act risk falling behind more agile rivals. For instance, a recent Gallup study found only **20%** of employees worldwide are engaged at work (Gandhi & Robison, 2021), a sign that most organizations struggle with inertia and lack of excitement for change. Creating urgency means confronting such complacency head-on by making the need for change visible and compelling. According to Kotter, leaders must spark a “*constructive pressure*” for immediate action, distinct from panic, to motivate proactive engagement (Kotter, 2012). In practice, this involves highlighting

both the threats of maintaining the status quo and the opportunities that digital logistics can unlock.

## Plan of Action

To instill a healthy sense of urgency, leadership will communicate candid data and real-world stories that underscore the need for change. Internally, performance metrics will be presented showing how current manual workflows contribute to shipping errors, slow turnaround, and customer dissatisfaction. For example, sharing trend lines of order fulfillment times versus competitors can illustrate a pressing gap. Customer feedback and loss of business cases will be openly discussed to create a shared realization that *“standing still is the most significant risk”* (Kotter, 2012). Externally, market trends such as the rise of Logistics 4.0 technologies (IoT, AI automation) will be showcased to demonstrate that industry expectations are shifting **now**, not in some distant future. The CEO and top team will hold town-hall meetings across regions to deliver a clear message: without swift action to digitize and standardize, the company’s survival and growth are in jeopardy. This message will be delivered not in a fearful tone but as an urgent call to action with a hopeful outlook – emphasizing that by acting promptly, the organization can **lead** the market rather than lag behind.

## Blended Leadership Approach

A mix of servant, transformational, and transactional leadership techniques will be used to drive urgency. From the **servant leadership** perspective, leaders will first *listen* to employees’ concerns about current pain points in logistics (e.g. lost packages, tedious paperwork, temperature excursions) and validate their frustrations. By showing empathy and acknowledging frontline experiences, leadership taps into employees’ intrinsic desire to fix these issues, thereby converting discontent into motivation for change. Concurrently, a **transformational** approach will be employed to inspire a collective vision of a faster, error-free, “smart” logistics operation. Leaders

will articulate an exciting future – for instance, envisioning that automated tracking and standardized workflows could enable next-day deliveries across the globe – framing challenges as opportunities for innovation and growth. This inspirational vision provides a positive pull that makes the urgency feel like a rally rather than a scare tactic. At the same time, **transactional** elements will reinforce urgency through concrete goals and incentives. Management may set ambitious, short-term targets (e.g., a 30% reduction in manual processing errors within six months) and tie small rewards or recognition to teams that hit these milestones. By linking urgent action to immediate, tangible outcomes, transactional leadership ensures that the call to action does not remain abstract – it translates into focused day-to-day behaviors. Together, these approaches replace complacency with *proactive engagement*: employees see that leadership cares (servant leadership), believes in an exciting future (transformational leadership), and is committed to supporting those who act now (transactional leadership). This multifaceted strategy aligns with Kotter’s finding that establishing urgency often requires bold, attention-grabbing initiatives (e.g., town halls, stark performance data, visible crises) to “make the status quo seem more dangerous than launching into the unknown” (Kotter, 2012). By the end of Step 1, the goal is for a critical mass of stakeholders to say, “We cannot wait – we must start this change immediately,” setting the stage for the next steps.

## Step 2: Creating a Guiding Coalition

No major change can be driven by one person; it requires a coalition of effective change leaders (Kotter, 2012; Hussain et al., 2018). In a global company, the guiding coalition must bring together influencers from different regions and functions to drive the digitization effort. Kotter emphasizes assembling a team with enough power – formal and informal – to lead the change and “work together like a team” (Kotter, 2012). Research in digital transformations likewise highlights that “*effective leadership and strategic alignment are crucial*” for such initiatives (Mvubu & Naude,

2024). This means the coalition should include not only top executives, but also operational managers, technical experts, and respected frontline leaders who can align technological investments with business objectives (Kane et al., 2018; Mvubu & Naude, 2024). Diversity in this team’s composition is key: members should represent various departments (operations, IT, HR, sales, etc.) and geographic regions to ensure the change has broad support. Each person will bring unique strengths and also potential challenges (“ego” issues or biases) that must be managed for the coalition to function effectively.

## Plan of Action – Find the Right People

The first task is identifying and recruiting coalition members with the credibility, expertise, and leadership qualities needed. Table 1 illustrates a preliminary selection of five coalition members and how their roles contribute to the change effort:

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Key Attributes &amp; Strengths</b>	<b>Manager, Leader, or Both?</b>	<b>Potential Ego or “Snake-like” Behaviors?</b>
<b>Director of Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic thinker</li> <li>• Strong decision-making skills</li> <li>• High-level organizational perspective</li> </ul>	<b>Manager / Leader:</b> Sets strategy and motivates	May dominate discussions if not balanced with other voices
		<b>Plan to Manage / Prepare</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use structured agendas to ensure all voices are heard</li> <li>2. Reinforce collaborative norms</li> <li>3. Schedule regular check-ins to align vision and actions</li> </ol>	
<b>HR Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent communication</li> <li>• Skilled in conflict resolution</li> <li>• Empathetic and people-oriented</li> </ul>	<b>Manager:</b> Focuses on process & compliance	Potentially too cautious in pushing for change if it risks employee dissatisfaction
		<b>Plan to Manage / Prepare</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide data on urgency of change</li> <li>2. Involve them early to craft clear communication and help with staff buy-in</li> </ol>	

Team Member	Key Attributes & Strengths	Manager, Leader, or Both?	Potential Ego or “Snake-like” Behaviors?
		3. Offer guidance on balancing compliance with strategic goals	
Senior Engineer (R&D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative mindset</li> <li>• Technical expertise</li> <li>• Passion for problem-solving</li> </ul>	<b>Leader:</b> Drives innovation	Might become overly technical, losing broader strategic perspective
		<b>Plan to Manage / Prepare</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set clear link between technical solutions and organizational goals</li> <li>2. Encourage simplified briefs for non-technical members</li> <li>3. Recognize and celebrate innovation successes</li> </ol>	
Marketing Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative approach</li> <li>• Customer-centric thinking</li> <li>• Skilled in campaign execution</li> </ul>	<b>Manager:</b> Executes marketing plans	Risk of overcommitting to new initiatives without cross-department and branch coordination
		<b>Plan to Manage / Prepare</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish clear boundaries and expectations</li> <li>2. Integrate marketing plans with overall change timeline</li> <li>3. Regularly review resource capacity to prevent burnout</li> </ol>	
Sales Team Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-oriented</li> <li>• Skilled motivator</li> <li>• Strong client relationships</li> </ul>	<b>Manager / Leader:</b> Manages team; can inspire others	Could prioritize sales targets at the expense of broader change objectives
		<b>Plan to Manage / Prepare</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Align sales incentives with change goals</li> <li>2. Engage in open dialogue about broader mission</li> <li>3. Celebrate wins that tie sales milestones to the organization’s strategic outcomes</li> </ol>	



This coalition spans multiple domains: a Director of Operations (to ensure high-level strategic alignment and resource allocation), an HR Manager (to address people issues, training, and change communications), a Senior R&D Engineer (to advise on technology integration and innovation), a Marketing Specialist (to keep the effort customer-focused and shape internal messaging), and a Sales Team Lead (to represent client-facing teams and maintain focus on customer satisfaction). Such cross-functional representation guarantees that decisions reflect diverse perspectives and that no major part of the business is overlooked. Each member was chosen for their strengths (e.g., the Operations lead is a strategic thinker with decision-making authority, the HR manager excels in communication and empathy, etc.) and their ability to influence others in the organization. At the same time, awareness of potential pitfalls is crucial – for example, a strong operations director might dominate discussions if not moderated, or a sales lead might fixate on short-term targets over long-term process changes. To manage this, the coalition leader (in this case, the Chief Information Officer sponsoring the project) will establish norms of collaboration and mutual respect from the outset. Using structured agendas, clear roles, and decision-making rules will prevent any one voice from drowning out others. The coalition will begin with a kickoff workshop where members openly discuss the change vision and their initial concerns. This session will also serve to brief the team on the new leadership framework guiding our effort – namely, the blended servant-transformational-transactional approach – so that the coalition itself models the kind of leadership we expect throughout the change.

## Plan of Action – Create Trust

Once assembled, the coalition must develop high trust and a shared objective. Trust is foundational for a coalition to navigate conflict and make bold decisions. As such, deliberate trust-building measures will be put in place. Initially, the coalition will engage in transparent communication and active listening exercises. Leaders will openly share both “good and bad news” about the change effort – for instance, acknowledging past failures in IT system rollouts – to signal

honesty and credibility. Simultaneously, each member will be invited to voice expectations and reservations. This candid dialogue helps individuals feel safe expressing different viewpoints and lays the groundwork for collaboration. Early short-term wins within the coalition (Step 6 previews) will also be pursued to catalyze trust. For example, if the coalition can quickly resolve a minor process issue (e.g., standardizing one reporting format within a month), celebrating that victory will show the team that working together yields results. Kotter notes that such small wins can reinforce a sense of reliability and build the coalition's confidence (Kotter, 2012). Additionally, the coalition will co-create its shared vision and goals for the change (distinct from the overall change vision which comes in Step 3). By involving all members in defining what success looks like, we ensure everyone feels ownership. For instance, the group might agree on a common goal of "seamless global collaboration" and articulate it both in rational terms (faster throughput, higher ROI) and emotional terms (pride in setting industry standards). Research suggests that when team members participate in goal-setting, they are more inclined to trust the team and its leadership (Huang et al., 2010).

To maintain trust, leadership practices within the coalition will intentionally blend styles. A servant leadership stance will be evident in frequent check-ins: the coalition leader will schedule one-on-one conversations to ask each member how they are doing, what obstacles they face, and how the leadership can help. Showing genuine care and respect in this way deepens interpersonal trust (Cerff & Winston, 2006). Meanwhile, consistency between words and actions – a basic tenet of transactional reliability – will be rigorously observed: if we set a deadline or promise resources, we will follow through as promised. Meeting commitments builds credibility (Kotter, 2012). Finally, transformational influence will keep the coalition motivated: the leader will regularly remind the team how their work ties into the broader vision of a cutting-edge logistics operation, and will enthusiastically recognize innovative ideas that members bring. By praising creative solutions and

linking coalition tasks to a higher purpose, we reinforce trust and team spirit – everyone sees that contributions are valued and that the leadership is invested in collective success.

## Plan of Action – Common Goal and Shared Values

With trust growing, the coalition will formalize a common goal and core values to guide their decisions. According to Kotter’s model, a guiding coalition works best when unified by a shared objective and mutual accountability. In our case, the coalition’s common goal might be phrased as: *“Establish a globally unified, high-efficiency logistics system that improves customer satisfaction, employee well-being, and innovation.”* This goal can be broken into three thematic sub-goals, each with a rational “head” component and an emotional “heart” component.

1. **Elevate Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty** – logically measured by increasing the Net Promoter Score by 15% in 12 months and emotionally framed as demonstrating care for customers through responsive service.
2. **Enhance Employee Growth and Well-Being** – measured by reducing staff turnover 10% and boosting internal promotions and felt through a culture of respect and empowerment where employees can thrive.
3. **Strengthen Organizational Innovation and Impact** – measured by launching three new digital capabilities in 18 months and experienced as pride in becoming a “force for positive change” in the industry, where creative ideas are celebrated.

By articulating goals in this dual manner, the coalition appeals to analytical thinkers and emotionally driven members alike, which research suggests is important for gaining broad buy-in. Alongside goals, the coalition will draft a set of shared values that characterize the kind of culture they want to promote (these will dovetail with Step 8 on culture). Likely values include Collaboration, Accountability, Empathy, Innovation, and Transparency. For instance, *Collaboration* as a value means the coalition commits to breaking silos and making joint decisions; *Transparency*

means information will be openly shared among regions. These values will serve as guiding principles in coalition meetings – the team can hold each other accountable if anyone’s behavior deviates (e.g., if someone withholds information, others can invoke the “transparency” value). By Step 2’s conclusion, we expect to have a strong, trusting guiding coalition that is united in purpose and ready to lead the change. This coalition will be the engine that drives subsequent steps, as Kotter’s theory and numerous case studies have validated (Kotter, 2012).

### Step 3: Developing a Vision and Strategy

With a cohesive coalition in place, the next step is to craft a clear vision for the change and a high-level strategy to achieve it. The vision provides a picture of the desired future state – in our case, what the organization will look like after digitizing and standardizing its logistics worldwide. A well-conceived vision serves to align and inspire employees by giving meaning to the change, answering the question “where are we going and why?” (University of Florida, n.d.). Kotter (1995) observes that a compelling vision helps direct, align, and motivate action, whereas its absence can leave individuals confused or resistant. Moreover, the vision must be easily communicable and appealing both to the **head** and **heart**. In developing the vision, the guiding coalition will draw on its diverse insights and the urgency established in Step 1. It will also consider the company’s core values and purpose, ensuring the change vision is not a detached corporate slogan but resonates with the organization’s identity.

#### Vision Statement

After iterative brainstorming and refinement, the coalition has drafted the following vision statement for the transformation:

*“We will become a nimble, people-centered logistics organization that embraces innovation, champions personal growth, and surpasses customer expectations – ensuring every team member collaborates with passion and purpose.”*

This statement paints a future where the company is nimble (agile, able to adapt quickly through digital tools), people-centered (valuing employees and customers), innovative, and exceeding customer expectations. It also implies a cultural element – team members working with passion and purpose – indicating that the change is not just about technology, but about how people work together. Each phrase in the vision was chosen to address key shortcomings of the present state: for example, today’s processes are slow and siloed, hence “nimble” and “collaborates” in the vision; current culture may neglect development, hence “champions personal growth.” By including both operational goals (innovation, customer service) and human goals (employee passion, purpose), the vision aims to inspire broad commitment. Successful digital transformations require leaders to *provide vision and direction* that connect technological change with people’s values and needs (Mvubu & Naude, 2024). The vision will serve as a benchmark for all subsequent decisions – any initiative we launch should be traceable to achieving this future state.

## Strategy Development

Alongside the vision, the guiding coalition formulates a high-level strategy to reach that future state. The strategy identifies the major initiatives and changes needed to achieve the vision. For our logistics digitization, the strategic pillars will include:

1. **Technology Implementation** – rolling out a unified digital logistics platform (for tracking, inventory, etc.) across all regions.
2. **Process Standardization** – redesigning workflows to a set of global best practices supported by the new technology.
3. **People and Culture** – training employees in new systems, redefining roles as needed, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration.

Each pillar will have sub-plans – for example, under Technology, there may be an initiative to implement an ERP module for warehouse management by Q3, and under People, an initiative to

establish a digital skills training academy. While detailed planning continues in later steps, at this stage the coalition outlines the roadmap: which projects take priority, resource estimates, and how different workstreams (technology, process, HR, etc.) will coordinate. Here, transformational leadership is heavily at play – the coalition, spearheaded by visionary leaders, uses intellectual stimulation to explore creative solutions and challenges old assumptions about “how we do things” (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). For instance, they may challenge the assumption that each region must have completely different logistics processes, instead conceptualizing a globally unified process with minor local adaptations. This creative envisioning is critical to forming a bold strategy rather than a timid one.

During strategy formation, servant leadership also plays a role: leaders ensure the strategy addresses the real needs of employees and customers. They might conduct focus groups or interviews with staff from various levels to gather input (e.g., ask warehouse workers what features a digital system should have to make their jobs easier). Incorporating this feedback not only improves the strategy’s quality but also builds buy-in, as people feel heard. It exemplifies what Sinek (2016) and others note – that great leaders seek *empathy and perspective*, understanding the on-the-ground reality before finalizing plans. Transactional thinking contributes by keeping the strategy pragmatic: setting clear targets, budgets, and accountability for each initiative. For example, the strategy will specify that “by Q4, 80% of global shipments will be tracked in real-time through the new system” – a concrete target to guide action. Research indicates that aligning technology projects with business objectives and allocating resources strategically is vital for digital transformation success (Pellathy et al., 2018; Mvubu & Naude, 2024). Thus, the strategy will align each project with the overarching vision and ensure necessary resources (funding, talent) are assigned.

## Metaphor to Communicate the Vision

To help communicate the vision (leading into Step 4), the coalition developed a metaphor:

*“Our organization is evolving from a bustling warehouse with workers manually sorting packages by hand, to a sleek, fully automated hub where QR-coded items glide along conveyor belts, ready for swift dispatch via modern fleets. We’re leaving behind the delays and errors of human-intensive processes for a more precise, agile, and data-driven future.”*

This metaphor compares the old way of working (chaotic manual warehouse) to the new way (high-tech distribution hub) in vivid imagery. It encapsulates the essence of the vision: moving from labor-intensive and error-prone methods to technology-enabled efficiency and agility. Metaphors are a powerful communication tool because they make abstract concepts tangible (Kotter, 2012). Here, anyone in the company can visualize the difference between the two scenarios and grasp what the change will feel like. The metaphor will be used in presentations and trainings to build understanding and excitement, helping employees see themselves as part of a *“data-driven future”* that is faster and better for customers. It also subtly addresses the leadership approach: the new hub implies a *“shared vision and engaged team members”* operating it, reinforcing that technology and people must work together. With the vision and strategy defined, the organization is now poised to *communicate* that vision broadly and begin enlisting the wider workforce in the change.

## Step 4: Communicating the Change Vision

Even a brilliant vision is useless if it is not communicated effectively to those who must execute it. Step 4 focuses on ensuring everyone in the organization understands the vision and strategy for change, and feels aligned with it. A common error in change efforts is under-communicating the vision – often by a factor of 10 or more (University of Florida, n.d.). Leaders may make a grand announcement and assume people “got it,” but without reinforcement, the message fades amidst daily routines. In our case, with employees spread across global locations from corporate offices to

port facilities, consistent and compelling communication is paramount. The goal is to transform the vision from a written statement into a shared mindset. This means not only broadcasting the vision frequently, but also doing so through multiple channels and two-way dialogues, and embodying the vision through leader behaviors (Kotter, 2012). Research on successful change communications emphasizes simplicity and repetition: messages must be clear, jargon-free, and repeated so often that people can recite them (Lewis, 2006; Clampitt et al., 2000). At the same time, communication must invite feedback and address concerns, or else employees may quietly disengage or resist.

## Plan of Action – Communication Strategy

We will develop a comprehensive communication plan that saturates the organization with the vision and related updates. This includes:

- **Leadership Roadshow:** Key leaders (the CEO, COO, and coalition members) will tour major branches to hold town hall meetings. In these forums, they will share the vision and metaphor in storytelling format, explaining why the change is happening and how it benefits both the company and the employees. Storytelling – such as describing a day-in-the-life after the transformation – helps employees personally connect with the vision (Gill, 2011). Leaders will use analogies like the *warehouse-to-hub* metaphor to make the message memorable. Importantly, they will also field questions in Q&A sessions, demonstrating openness. By actively listening and responding, leaders show respect for employees' voices (a servant leadership trait), which encourages buy-in.
- **Multi-Channel Messaging:** Beyond town halls, we will utilize emails, internal newsletters, the company intranet, and collaboration tools (e.g., a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel) to keep the vision top-of-mind. Short videos from executives and early adopters will be shared, where they speak about what the vision means to them. Visual aids like infographics will break down the strategy into relatable parts (e.g., a graphic of the 8-step



process or a timeline of the project). According to Kotter, “*communication should be simple and heartfelt*” – thus messages will avoid technical jargon and focus on outcomes that people care about (faster deliveries, less frustration, more learning opportunities, etc.). We will also leverage local languages and contexts: regional branch managers will translate and adapt core messages to resonate with cultural nuances, ensuring understanding across our global workforce.

- **Two-Way Communication:** A hallmark of servant leadership in communication is fostering dialogue rather than just broadcasting. We will establish feedback loops: for instance, an online forum or “open office hours” where anyone can voice concerns or suggestions about the change. Managers at all levels will be encouraged to discuss the vision in team meetings and report reactions back to the coalition. By creating these channels, we tap into frontline knowledge and also show employees that their input can shape the implementation (which increases engagement). One specific tactic is to form a network of “change champions” – employees who are enthusiastic about the transformation – and equip them to spread the word among peers and bring questions/rumors back to leadership. These champions act as communication bridges especially in far-flung locations, reinforcing the message in peer conversations.

**Consistent and Credible Messaging:** Kotter stresses that communication must be not only frequent but credible: “*Without credible communication, and a lot of it, employees’ hearts and minds are never captured*” (Kotter, 2012). To ensure credibility, our leaders will “*walk the talk.*” This means demonstrating the change vision through their own actions at every opportunity (Kotter, 2012). For example, if the vision calls for collaboration and transparency, leaders will model this by openly sharing project updates and admitting when they do not have all answers. When employees see a branch manager from New York collaborating seamlessly with a counterpart in Singapore on

the new platform – and both referencing the shared goals – it powerfully reinforces the vision more than any poster could. We will highlight such behavior in internal communications as “Living the Vision” examples. Additionally, to avoid mixed messages, any legacy practices that contradict the vision will be addressed. If, say, a certain report remains in paper form “because that’s how it’s always been,” leadership will publicly question and change it to align with the digital ethos. This consistency builds trust.

In communicating the vision, repetition is key. People need to hear a message multiple times to internalize it. We plan to infuse vision reminders into daily routines: for instance, starting each weekly operations call with a one-minute recap of a core vision element, or including a vision tagline in email signatures. Most leaders are guilty of under-communicating change – they must communicate the vision *“10, 100, or even 1,000 times more”* than they think necessary (University of Florida, n.d.). Our approach will be to err on the side of over-communication. If some employees playfully joke “here comes that vision speech again,” it is a sign we are reaching saturation. The payoff is that eventually, the vision becomes “the new normal” in conversations.

## Blended Leadership in Communication

Each leadership style contributes to effective communication. Transformational leaders will communicate with passion and optimism, using inspirational language that captures hearts. They will share a compelling narrative of how this change will make the company a frontrunner and improve everyone’s work life. By projecting confidence in the vision, they instill confidence in others. Servant leaders will ensure communication is a dialogue: they will seek feedback, listen empathetically to worries (e.g., an employee might fear automation will eliminate their job), and address those honestly. For instance, if job security is a theme, leadership can communicate plans for retraining and new opportunities, thus showing care for employees’ well-being. Transactional leadership plays a quieter role but is evident in communicating expectations and reinforcing

messages through incentives. Managers will communicate not just the “why” but also the “what’s expected of you.” For example, they will clarify that adopting the new digital system is part of performance evaluations (setting that expectation), and they will recognize teams in communications who achieve quick wins (rewarding compliance with the new ways). This mix ensures that communications are inspirational yet practical.

By the end of Step 4, every employee – from headquarters to the remotest branch office – should be aware of the change vision and generally understand its meaning. More importantly, they should feel that leadership is genuinely committed and that they themselves have a role in it. When people start talking about the transformation in their own words, asking “what can I do to help?” or suggesting ideas aligned with the vision, we know our communication is taking hold. This widespread buy-in paves the way for empowering employees to act on the vision.

## **Step 5: Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action**

With the vision communicated, the organization must eliminate obstacles and empower employees to take initiative toward the change. Step 5 is about removing the barriers – structural, cultural, or emotional – that block people from implementing the vision (Kotter, 2012). In a global logistics digitization, examples of obstacles might include: outdated policies (e.g. a rule requiring paper signatures that contradicts digital workflow), resource limitations (insufficient IT support staff to roll out new systems), skills gaps (employees who lack training in new tools), or resistant managers who refuse to adopt standard procedures (APAC leader who believes his region is too unique for global processes). Kotter also notes that sometimes the organizational hierarchy itself can impede change; thus empowerment may involve changing roles or reallocating decision-making authority to enable quicker action (Kotter, 2012). The objective in this step is to liberate people to experiment, propose solutions, and drive the change at their level without fear of

repercussion. When employees feel empowered, the change no longer relies solely on the guiding coalition – it gains momentum across the organization.

## Identify and Remove Barriers

The guiding coalition will start by systematically identifying what is preventing employees from embracing the new digital processes. This might involve surveys or focus groups asking, “What would stop you from using the new logistics system or following the new process?” Common feedback might be: *“The old software is still in use and conflicts with the new one,”* or *“We’re swamped with daily work and have no time to learn the new system,”* or *“My manager still insists on doing things the old way.”* Each barrier will be addressed with a targeted action:

- If **systems conflicts** exist, IT will migrate or integrate legacy systems so they no longer undermine the new platform. For instance, if some local offices use a different inventory tool, the strategy might be to decommission it or ensure full compatibility with the new system to avoid double work.
- If **time constraints** are an issue, additional staff or temporary assistance might be provided to relieve workload during the transition. Alternatively, certain non-critical tasks could be paused so employees can focus on adopting changes. This shows that leadership is serious about the change – willing to invest resources and adjust workloads, not just pile new tasks on top of old.
- If **managers are resisting**, senior leadership will intervene. As mentioned as an example earlier (the APAC leader scenario), a single branch manager clinging to old practices can create an “us vs. them” dynamic and breed disengagement. To handle this, we will use a mix of persuasion and, if needed, pressure. The resisting managers will be engaged in frank conversations about why the standardization is critical. We will clarify expectations: no region or branch is exempt from the new processes, though local feedback is welcome to

refine them. If persuasion fails, leadership is prepared to reshuffle roles or remove roadblocks in managerial positions – essentially, “*changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision*” (Kotter, 2012). In extreme cases, that could mean replacing a leader who remains a barrier. The coalition will also promote supporters from below: for example, if an operations supervisor in APAC is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the new system, we might elevate them to lead the change locally, bypassing hierarchical blockage. This ties to Kotter’s advice of empowering “*broad-based action*” by ensuring the organizational structure and incentives align with the change (Kotter, 2012).

## Develop Skills and Provide Resources

Empowerment is not just about removing negatives; it is also about equipping people with the positives – skills, tools, and authority – they need to succeed. We will launch a comprehensive training program so that every employee feels capable of operating new digital tools and following standardized workflows. This may involve e-learning modules, in-person workshops, and “train-the-trainer” programs where certain employees become go-to experts. Empowerment here means an employee does not have to wait for IT or managers to fix issues – they themselves become proficient to troubleshoot basic problems or find information. Additionally, we will ensure that all necessary equipment (scanners, label printers, software licenses, etc.) is available where needed; a digital initiative can die quickly if, say, a branch does not have enough devices for staff to use the new system.

A key part of empowerment is also delegating authority. People at various levels will be given decision rights to act in service of the change without having to seek high-level approval for every minor change. For example, a local logistics team might be allowed to adjust their branch layout to better accommodate the new process, or an IT specialist in one region might temporarily scale server capacity to ensure the new platform runs smoothly during peak hours – all without

bureaucratic delays. Such trust in employees encourages them to take ownership. Organizations must evolve their approaches and cultures – including more decentralization – to effect digital transformation (Mvubu & Naude, 2024; Yeow et al., 2018).

## Empowerment through Leadership Style

Our blended leadership approach greatly facilitates empowerment. Servant leadership creates a supportive environment: leaders actively remove obstacles that frustrate employees. For instance, if staff say the new interface is confusing, a servant leader hears this and immediately rallies resources to improve the user interface or provide better training, showing that the leaders are “*at the service*” of employees’ success (Greenleaf, 1977). By inviting team members to articulate their challenges and regional nuances, we validate their experiences and incorporate their insights into solutions. In practice, we might set up cross-regional virtual forums where employees share local pain points and workarounds, fostering mutual respect and problem-solving (Cerff & Winston, 2006). This not only surfaces barriers management might not see, but also empowers employees by giving them a voice in how the change is implemented.

Transformational leadership sustains empowerment by continuously motivating and aligning people with the vision. A transformational leader does not micromanage how teams meet their targets; instead, they inspire teams to overcome obstacles in creative ways. We will publicly recognize and celebrate employees who find innovative methods to implement the change in their area – these are our “regional champions” who demonstrate marrying global standards with local improvements. For example, if a team in Brazil finds a new shortcut in the software that speeds data entry and still complies with standards, leadership will highlight this in communications and perhaps integrate it into global best practices. By rewarding such efforts (even simply through praise or small awards), we reinforce that initiative is desired (Kotter, 2012). Transformational leaders also use success metrics as empowerment tools: sharing clear, transparent data on

progress (like error rates dropping or throughput increasing) *shows* employees that their adherence to new processes yields real benefits. When people see evidence that the change is improving outcomes – and that this is recognized – they feel more empowered to keep pushing forward.

Transactional elements ensure that empowerment is cemented with accountability and reinforcement. We will adjust performance appraisals and reward systems to align with the change: endorsing the idea that those who embrace the new digital processes and meet related targets will be rewarded (bonuses, promotions, recognition), while those who drag their feet may see negative consequences. For example, hitting a goal of 95% digital documentation compliance might become a criterion for branch supervisors' bonuses. By "*rewarding people for endorsing change*" (Kotter, 2012), we send a clear message that the organization backs those who take action in line with the vision. At the same time, if any formal policies impede empowerment, they will be changed. One typical barrier is when front-line workers lack permission to make decisions needed for quick wins (e.g., needing multiple approvals for process tweaks). We will flatten such approval chains wherever possible during the transition, perhaps via a temporary policy like "During this changeover, any process change that improves standardization and is agreed by the local change champion can be tried on a pilot basis." This encourages experimentation without getting lost in red tape.

By empowering broad action, we anticipate seeing an uptick in local problem-solving and innovation. In fact, combining servant and transformational tactics can keep teams unified across global divides. Establishing forums and recognizing local "champions" will help employees in far regions feel both heard and guided, mitigating the tendency for rogue behavior. The measure of success for Step 5 will be when employees no longer say "I can't do X because management or system won't allow it," but instead are actively finding ways to make things work and removing

obstacles themselves. When barriers fall, the path is clear for the organization to start *achieving wins*, which is the focus of Step 6.

## Step 6: Generating Short-Term Wins

Major transformations often take years, but people will not remain committed without seeing *proof* that the effort is yielding results. Kotter's Step 6 highlights the importance of engineering short-term wins – noticeable improvements within 6 to 18 months – to maintain momentum (Batshalom, 2014). Short-term wins serve multiple purposes: they *provide evidence* that the change is on track, they *reward the supporters* and early adopters, and they *undercut the cynics* who do not believe the effort will succeed (Batshalom, 2014; Appelbaum et al., 2012). In the context of our global logistics project, short-term wins could be improvements like faster internal communication, reduced error rates in shipments, or a successful pilot at one branch that can be celebrated and then expanded. These wins should be unambiguous and directly tied to the change initiative (Kotter, 2012). Research supports that early victories build confidence – “*short-term wins give people a chance to see that the sacrifices are worth it, and that success is possible*” (Batshalom, 2014). Therefore, we will deliberately plan for and publicize short-term achievements in both process and performance.

### Plan of Action – Timeline of Wins

We have developed a phased implementation timeline for the first year, aiming to capture a series of incremental wins. The plan is broken into bi-monthly phases, each with clear deliverables and a targeted win:

- **Months 1–2: Team Alignment & Quick Communication Improvements.** In this initial phase, we formalize the guiding coalition and launch a *pilot of a unified digital communication platform*. For example, we might roll out Microsoft Teams and Planner to a subset of teams to replace scattered emails and spreadsheets. The expected win: within



two months, we anticipate a **20% reduction in internal miscommunication**, measured by shorter email chains and faster response times in the pilot groups. This is a concrete win because it directly addresses a pain point (miscommunication) and demonstrates the value of a standardized tool. It is also highly visible – everyone sees a new platform being used successfully.

We will trumpet this success in newsletters: “Teams pilot cuts miscommunications by 20% in 8 weeks – more rollout to come”.

- **Months 3–4: Skill Building & Early Successes.** In this phase, we focus on training and celebrate the first operational improvements. We conduct targeted workshops on conflict resolution, creative problem-solving, and setting goals – each linking to one of our leadership styles (servant, transformational, transactional). These not only build capabilities but signal that new behaviors are valued. Simultaneously, we aim for a tangible process improvement: e.g., one branch fully adopts the new standardized process and as a result sees a 10% decrease in backlog or turnaround time.

We will highlight this tangible outcome to the rest of the organization, making it clear that following the playbook yields real benefits. The short-term win here: at least one branch demonstrates a significant efficiency gain, proof that the change can deliver operational results.

- **Months 5–6: Broadening Adoption & Reinforcing Accountability.** Now we scale the changes to more teams. We implement cross-department collaborations by pairing a high-performing pilot branch with one that is lagging, facilitating knowledge-sharing forums where employees exchange tips and success stories. This spreads best practices

organically. We also introduce “*transactional*” incentives: small rewards for teams that consistently meet new process metrics, reinforcing accountability with a positive twist. By the end of month six, we expect to see improved collaboration metrics – for example, faster handoffs between branches, measured by reduced dwell time of shipments between, say, depot and logistics teams.

A win might be phrased as “Collaboration between Branch A and B improves 15%, speeding deliveries.” Achieving this mid-point win shows the change is not confined to isolated pilots; it is spreading and making broader impact.

- Months 7–9: Institutionalizing New Leadership Behaviors.** In this period, we solidify cultural aspects. We start monthly leadership roundtables where managers share how they are using servant, transformational, and transactional leadership in their teams. We document these as internal case studies (e.g., a story of a branch manager who mentored staff to adapt to the new system, reflecting servant leadership). We also launch a recognition program for “blended leadership” – spotlighting those who excel in the new style, such as a supervisor who inspired a creative solution (transformational) or another who improved team morale by supporting staff (servant). The short-term win by month nine is more qualitative: we aim to see an increase in positive employee feedback on leadership in pulse surveys.

If our survey in month nine shows, for instance, a significant uptick in employees agreeing “my leader effectively supports the changes,” that is a win. It indicates the new leadership approach is taking root and being noticed. Additionally, our recognition events themselves are a form of win – they publicly affirm that the company values and rewards the new behaviors, countering any skepticism.

- Months 10–12: Scaling & Sustaining the Framework.** In the final quarter of the first year, we package what we have learned. We compile a “Playbook” of successful workflows, communication protocols, and tips gleaned from earlier phases. This Playbook becomes mandatory for new hires and a reference for all staff, essentially codifying the change into company knowledge. We also showcase organization-wide impact: by now, we anticipate higher-level metrics like customer satisfaction improving (e.g. a 15% boost in customer satisfaction score) or a reduction in overall logistics cost by X%. We will explicitly tie these outcomes to the changes implemented – for example, “Our on-time performance rate improved from 97% to 98.5% after standardizing the dispatch process and adopting real-time tracking”.

The capstone short-term win at month twelve is achieving measurable business benefits (customer, financial, or quality metrics) attributable to the transformation. Celebrating one-year achievements organization-wide will reinforce belief in the vision. It says: in one year, look what we accomplished – imagine what more we can do! This helps combat any remaining naysayers and provides momentum into the next year.

Throughout these phases, we will use transformational leadership to keep reminding everyone of the big picture behind these wins (“each win is bringing us closer to our vision”). Servant leadership will ensure we thank and highlight the *people* who made the wins possible, attributing success to team efforts and addressing any fatigue or concerns as we go. Transactional elements are visible in how we set clear targets for each phase and reward those who meet them, which keeps the team focused on execution. By celebrating incremental victories “early and often” (Smit, 2024), we also create a culture of success – people enjoy being part of a winning team and thus become even more engaged.

Kotter notes that accumulating short-term wins builds credibility to tackle larger change challenges. In our case, perhaps more difficult tasks lie ahead (like integrating with external partner systems or re-organizing branches). The wins in year one will give us the reputational capital and confidence to pursue those tougher, longer-term changes in Step 7. In summary, Step 6's deliverable is a string of victories that demonstrate the change is not just activity – it is *producing results*. As each milestone is met and celebrated, the collective mindset shifts from “we hope this works” to “we know this works – let’s keep going.”

## **Step 7: Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change**

After the initial year of wins, it might be tempting to declare victory. However, Kotter warns that declaring victory too soon is a classic mistake that can unravel progress (Bai, 2023). In Step 7, the focus is on using the momentum from short-term wins to drive *even deeper and broader changes*, ensuring the transformation's gains are not only preserved but expanded. This stage is about acceleration – tackling remaining processes that need improvement, embarking on secondary projects enabled by initial success, and avoiding any slide back into complacency. Kotter describes it as “consolidating gains and producing more change,” meaning the organization should continuously build on what is working and press ahead until the vision is fully realized. In practical terms, for our logistics effort, this might involve rolling out the digital platform to every single operation (if any pilots remained), integrating the system with suppliers and customers (extending beyond internal operations), and addressing any parts of the business that were not covered in the first wave (such as procurement, reverse logistics, home health, or 4PL). It is also a time to reinforce the new approaches in management practices – ensuring leadership development, hiring, and other systems start to reflect the new way.

## Leverage Credibility from Wins

The short-term wins achieved give us credibility and hard data to justify further change. For example, if we improved performance times by 5% at one branch, we could now go to another branch or a different operational area (like depots) and confidently say, “We want to apply the same changes here because it worked.” Employees are also more likely to cooperate the second time around; seeing successful change reduces fear of the unknown. We will compile the lessons learned from year one’s wins and explicitly apply them to the next set of initiatives. Suppose a win was that cross-training staff reduced bottlenecks; we might now implement cross-training in *all* branches. Or if one product line’s logistics were digitized successfully, we tackle the next product lines. Essentially, we won some beachheads – now we march inland.

## Broaden the Scope

Consolidating gains means widening the impact. By year two, our aim is to have all branches using the standardized processes and technology. Any remaining holdouts or exceptions will be systematically addressed. For instance, if initially we allowed a few branches to stay partially on old systems due to local regulatory issues, in Step 7 we invest to bring them up to standard. We will also look at adjacent processes that connect to logistics. One might be customer service – now that logistics data is digitized, we can empower customer service reps with real-time shipment info to improve customer experience. This becomes a new change project (improving customer service response using the logistics platform data), building on our digital infrastructure gain. Another area could be procurement and suppliers: we may launch an initiative to have suppliers interface with our system for milestone capture, extending standardization into the supply chain. These are “more change” that the initial change enabled. The guiding coalition – possibly expanded with new champions from the first phase – will oversee multiple streams of change now, not just the original project. We need to avoid overload, but also not let the organization rest on its laurels.

## Continuous Improvement Teams

To sustain acceleration, we will formalize continuous improvement mechanisms. For example, set up a *Process Improvement Task Force* that constantly looks for ways to refine the new workflows, leveraging employee suggestions. By encouraging an ethos of “What’s next? What can we make even better?” we guard against settling. At this stage, some people might feel “we’ve done enough” – we will counter that gently by showing that competitors or industry benchmarks are still ahead in certain areas, or by revisiting the vision and pointing out aspects not yet achieved. Kotter suggests using the credibility from early wins to “change systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit the vision” and to hire/promote people who can implement the next wave. Concretely, we might update standard operating procedures (SOPs) across the company to reflect new processes (retiring old SOPs entirely). We might adjust the org chart if needed – for instance, creating a new “Digital Logistics Department” responsible for ongoing system enhancement, thereby institutionalizing the effort. If we identify skill gaps that still exist (maybe we lack data analysts to handle all the new digital data), we will recruit or train people in these areas during this phase, strengthening the organization’s capacity for change.

## Preventing Backsliding

A risk after initial success is that people might revert to old habits – especially if pressure is perceived to lessen. We will actively prevent this by monitoring key metrics and quickly addressing any decline. For instance, if we see compliance with the new process slipping in a branch (perhaps a logistics coordinator there started allowing old forms again), the coalition will intervene with coaching or, if necessary, stricter action. The continued presence of short-term goals even in this phase is important: we will set new short-term targets that keep pushing forward. Maybe in year two, a target is to cut total logistics costs by another percentage or to achieve a certain customer satisfaction index worldwide. By having these ongoing targets, people see that the change effort is not over and they must continue to improve.

## Leadership and Culture Reinforcement

As we consolidate gains, we also consolidate the cultural changes. Leaders will continue to model the desired behaviors consistently. In fact, by now we expect many mid-level and front-line leaders have been developed through the change. We will promote those who championed the transformation into larger roles – this both rewards them and places believers in key positions, which helps drive the next changes. Conversely, any leaders who remained skeptical or passive may be layered out or assigned elsewhere, to ensure leadership ranks are filled with change advocates. This aligns with Kotter’s advice to “*reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents*” as momentum builds.

For example, if our coalition sees an opportunity to introduce machine learning for demand forecasting (a new project building on our data infrastructure), we might launch that as a new strategic project in year two, led by some rising stars from year one. We keep the organization on its toes – *change is becoming the norm*, in a positive way, not through burnout but through a sense of accomplishment and forward momentum.

Communication continues to be important here: we will communicate successes from the extended changes and also frankly communicate that “we are not done yet.” It should be clear to everyone that these additional changes are part of the same vision, not a brand new initiative. We can frame year two’s efforts as “Phase 2” of the transformation, giving it a name and identity that ties back to the original vision (for instance, “Global Logistics Transformation – Phase 2: Extending to Partners” or “... – Phase 2: Optimizing and Innovating”). By framing it as part of one journey, we help employees see continuity and purpose.

## Blended Leadership in Step 7

During consolidation, transformational leadership keeps the urgency up – leaders must still be selling the vision and inspiring people to reach new heights, reminding them of the greater purpose.

Servant leadership ensures that as we push for more change, we remain attentive to employee well-being; after a year of hard work, fatigue can set in, so servant leaders might introduce, for instance, additional time-off or celebrations to rejuvenate the team, or make sure to solicit feedback if people feel overwhelmed. It is crucial we do not break the organization by running too hard without care. Servant leadership also means celebrating the people behind the wins, which fosters loyalty for the next round. Transactional leadership will keep everyone accountable: new goals for phase 2 will be set, and systems (performance reviews, KPIs) will be updated to reflect the new level of expectations. We continue linking rewards to desired outcomes so that complacency is not incentivized.

By the end of Step 7, we aim to have most of the tangible changes completed or well underway, and the organization in a resilient state where it does not easily backslide. The logistics operations should be substantially improved from where we began – multiple cycles of change implemented – and the culture should be noticeably more change-friendly. At this juncture, we transition into the final step, which is about ensuring the changes stick permanently by anchoring them in the culture.

## **Step 8: Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture**

Long-term success of the transformation hinges on embedding the new approaches into the organization's culture. This eighth step means the behaviors and results associated with the transformation become "the way we do things around here" (Kotter, 2012). Culture is often described as the invisible norms and values that drive behavior (Schein, 1996). If after a couple of years, employees naturally default to using digital tools, collaborate across borders, and leaders consistently practice the blended leadership style, then the change has taken root. However, culture is slow to change and can easily revert if not vigilantly reinforced. Kotter emphasizes that cultural change comes last, not first; it is solidified only after people see success and connect it to new ways of working. At this stage, we make sure everyone in the organization makes that



connection: the improved performance is a result of the new behaviors and systems, and to lose those behaviors would jeopardize the gains. Anchoring involves formalizing the change in hiring, promotion, onboarding, and even folklore (stories that are told in the company).

## Reinforce Shared Values

Earlier, in Step 2 and throughout, we identified values like collaboration, accountability, innovation, etc., to support the change. Now we double down on those. We incorporate these values into the company's core values statement or create a new cultural manifesto post-transformation. For example, "Innovation and Adaptability" was not a formal company value before, so it will become one now, with a description referencing our journey (e.g., "We continually improve and adapt, as shown in our successful global logistics transformation"). We also ensure systems and processes align with these values. Take performance evaluations: we will include criteria related to the change, such as "uses data-driven decision making," "collaborates across departments," or "supports continuous improvement," which tie to our cultural values of transparency, collaboration, innovation. Reward and recognition programs will be adjusted to honor those who exemplify the new culture. By embedding values in formal systems, we send a lasting signal that the organization truly prioritizes these behaviors (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013).

## Sustain Leadership Commitment

The top leadership must consistently demonstrate commitment to the new approaches long after the initial project is over. This means future decisions should reflect the new mindset. For instance, when expanding into a new market, leaders will use the same collaborative approach and digital-first strategy rather than slipping back to old siloed methods. Kotter notes that culture change often requires leadership change – if there are leaders who cannot internalize the new culture, they may need to depart (Kotter, 2012). Conversely, leaders who were instrumental in the change should be positioned as culture carriers. We will make such decisions in succession

planning and promotions. Importantly, as new people join the company, the leaders will teach them not just the tasks but the culture: telling the story of how and why we transformed, and what values drove our success. Storytelling is a powerful tool here. We will curate a set of “change stories” – for example, how a team overcame a crisis by adhering to the new processes or how servant leadership by a manager led to a breakthrough. These stories will be part of new hire orientation, so even those who were not here during the change can feel its impact and learn “this is how we operate.” One story might be about the APAC leader issue: it could be shared (anonymously or hypothetically) as a lesson of how not aligning with global standards hurt the company, until a change was made and now we value unity with local input. Such narratives caution against reverting to old patterns.

## Embed in Training and Onboarding

We will update all training curricula to reflect new practices. Every standard operating procedure documentation will be updated to the new process (aka the Playbook we made is the norm). New employee onboarding will include training on the digital systems and explanation of why they are important. Cultural assimilation training will emphasize our core values in action. For instance, a new manager training program will include modules on servant, transformational, and transactional leadership, citing how our company uses all three to lead change. This is directly taking the blended leadership philosophy into the future – it becomes part of our leadership competency model. In essence, we aim to institutionalize the leadership style that guided this change. By doing so, we prepare the organization to handle future changes similarly well, making change agility a part of our identity.

## Cultural Champions and Peer Norms

We earlier identified cultural champions – employees who naturally embody the new values. In the anchoring phase, we give them an ongoing role. Perhaps we establish a “culture committee” or

have them lead by example in continuous improvement teams. Their job is to call out lapses and applaud alignments with the culture in everyday work. Peer pressure and support are powerful in sustaining culture. If a new employee joins a team and sees that all her peers religiously document things in the new system (and even playfully tease someone who does not: “if it’s not in the system, it didn’t happen!”), she will quickly adopt that norm. Our job is to ensure those peer norms take hold. One way is to encourage mentoring – pair up people who were deeply involved in the change with those who were not, to pass on habits and mindset. This was already part of trust-building (peer mentoring) and now it serves cultural transmission.

## Monitor and Adjust

Anchoring does not mean static. We will monitor cultural indicators through surveys, interviews, and observations. Tools like periodic “culture pulse checks” via employee surveys will gauge how well the values are perceived and practiced. For example, we might ask employees, “Do you feel that collaboration is rewarded in our company?” If we find gaps – say some teams still hoard information – we will address them through coaching or management attention. The idea is culture becomes an ongoing management focus, not a one-time event. Leadership will incorporate culture discussions in quarterly reviews (e.g., a VP might report not just on KPIs but also on how their division is living the values). Culture is reinforced by what leaders pay attention to and control on a regular basis (Schein, 1996). Our leaders will consistently pay attention to the aspects of culture most relevant to the change: data-driven decision making, cooperation, customer-centric thinking, etc. If any regression is detected, they will intervene.

## Results of Anchoring

Over time, the new approaches – digital processes, collaborative problem-solving, blended leadership – should become second nature. One litmus test of success is if an external hire joins and after a while remarks, “I notice everyone here really works together and embraces new ideas,

it's different from my last company.” Or when facing a new challenge, the organization instinctively applies the same 8-step approach or a similar change playbook, because it is part of how we tackle problems. We want the transformation to have a lasting legacy: improved performance and a culture of adaptability. Indeed, studies have shown that organizations that anchor changes in culture tend to sustain performance improvements longer. Our transformation aimed not just to digitize logistics, but to make the company more nimble and resilient – anchoring achieves that by solidifying an adaptive culture.

Finally, anchoring in culture often involves celebration of the journey. We will mark the formal conclusion of the change program with a company-wide celebration, commemorating key contributors and reflecting on how far we have come. This is not to mark an “end” of change, but to ritualize the success into company lore. We will perhaps create a video documentary of the transformation or a timeline mural in the headquarters as a constant reminder. This story becomes part of the organization’s identity. As the saying goes, “culture eats strategy for breakfast,” meaning without cultural change, strategic change will not last. By carefully nurturing the culture throughout and after the change, we ensure that all the strategic and technological gains of our logistics digitization will endure and continue to pay dividends.

## Conclusion

Leading a global logistics digitization through Kotter’s 8 Steps illustrates how structured change management, combined with savvy leadership, can turn an ambitious vision into reality. At each step – from galvanizing urgency with a servant’s empathy and a transformer’s zeal, to consolidating wins with relentless discipline – we applied a blended leadership style to guide the organization. The scholarly insights and real-world practices cited reinforce that successful change is not just about new technology or processes, but about people and leadership (Mvubu & Naude, 2024). Kotter’s model, while developed in the 1990s, continues to prove relevant in contemporary settings,

offering a flexible yet enduring roadmap for large-scale transformation (Carreño, 2024). By establishing a compelling need for change, building a powerful coalition, crafting and communicating a clear vision, removing obstacles, achieving quick wins, and embedding the change into culture, we have orchestrated a transformation that is both technically and socially sustainable.

Jumping into the future, one will look back and write: One year into the effort, short-term wins have boosted confidence and performance metrics. Two years in, deeper changes have spread and the new ways of working have taken root. Ultimately, the change effort has become self-reinforcing: improved outcomes (faster deliveries, higher customer satisfaction, better retention) validate the new approaches, which in turn encourages everyone to uphold and advance them. The organization emerges not only with digitized logistics operations, but with a stronger, change-ready culture. This case demonstrates strategic leadership in action – by blending servant humility, transformational inspiration, and transactional clarity, leaders can navigate their teams through complex change and anchor new approaches for long-term success.

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