

## Human Processes Keith Harrison Broninski

**Connect, Capture, Collaborate**

Economic pressures are driving urgent change in the UK public sector, with sufficient force that civil servants are starting to adopt approaches modern even by private sector standards. For example, recent technical innovations include authentication for UK government Web sites via social media accounts such as Facebook (see <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/about/>). There are also deeper, more cultural innovations. In this Column, I will discuss such an innovation – a new approach to change itself.

**Plan A**

The department store chain Marks & Spencer calls its sustainability campaign “Plan A”:

We launched Plan A in January 2007, setting out 100 commitments to achieve in 5 years. We've now extended Plan A to 180 commitments to achieve by 2015, with the ultimate goal of becoming the world's most sustainable major retailer.

Through Plan A we are working with our customers and our suppliers to combat climate change, reduce waste, use sustainable raw materials, trade ethically, and help our customers to lead healthier lifestyles.

We're doing this because it's what you want us to do. It's also the right thing to do. We're calling it Plan A because we believe it's now the only way to do business.

There is no Plan B.

<http://plana.marksandspencer.com/about>

The interesting thing about Plan A is that its basis is commitments. At the start, it was not clear to anyone, including Marks & Spencer management, exactly how and when these commitments would be achieved. In the 7 years since the launch, the company has shared its evolving plans and the resulting progress with the general public, including both successes and failures. The commitments themselves have also been extended. The 2013 Plan A report (<http://planareport.marksandspencer.com/review-of-the-year>) declares that:

So far, we've Achieved 139 with 31 On plan, 5 Behind plan, 4 Not achieved and one Cancelled.

The company's trading has not been great in recent years, especially in fashion, but Plan A has helped make up for it, and not just as a marketing exercise – originally expected to cost £200m, Plan A has in fact saved £320m.

## Connect, Capture, Collaborate

In the public sector, moves such as Plan A offer even greater potential advantages. This is because in many areas of the public sector, innovation cannot be driven from the top down – rather, it relies on engagement from the bottom up. Politicians and other leaders set policy, but often it's not government departments themselves that implement it. Rather, the role of central government in policy implementation may be to draw up guidelines, spread the word across large numbers of associated organizations, provide resources (including funding) for implementation, and measure the results. This is a massively collaborative effort that requires many different organizations to implement a similar innovation, adjusted in each case according to their own specific needs.

It can be hard to generate the necessary momentum for such widely decentralized innovation, and it can take a long time to see results. Social media is helpful – Twitter and feeds, for example, can be used to spread the word – but not enough on its own. In order to speed up the process of change radically, it is also necessary to provide the organizations who need to make change with a clear guide as to how such change can be implemented - in other words, to show **who** does **what** at **which stage**.

Such a demonstration is a critical part of the innovation process, but again not enough on its own. A more complete picture is shown in Figure 1 below, which represents the online support provided for innovation in the UK National Health Service (NHS).



**Figure 1: Innovation in the UK National Health Service - Connect, Capture, Collaborate**

There are 3 closely related forms of online support, which together provide a complete pathway from an innovation idea through to nationwide deployment:

**Innovation Connect** – a reference point via which expertise, advice and referral are available to assess potential innovation ideas and provide support with their initial implementation then subsequent evaluation;

**Innovation Capture** - interactive Implementation Guides developed for the innovators by collaboration experts, that help others replicate the innovation by showing who does what at which stage;

**Innovation Collaborate** – a complete system to plan, do, monitor and showcase transformational change projects and programmes.

More information about support for innovation in the UK NHS is available at [www.nhsgather.net](http://www.nhsgather.net), where you can see example Implementation Guides. It will be clear that the Implementation Guides are of varying levels of detail – in fact, they are all work in progress, and will always be so. The UK NHS is changing in full view of the public, since it recognizes that not only (like Plan A) does this demonstrate commitment but also (unlike Plan A) provides the most powerful route to take-up in a decentralized public sector environment.

## Conclusion

People often feel that the private sector moves faster than the public sector in adopting new ideas. The classic example is Deming's ideas on quality improvement, which led to the BPM movement, but took 30 years to make it into the public sector after being introduced with massive success into Japanese manufacturing following the Second World War

([http://williamghunter.net/articles/doing\\_more\\_with\\_less\\_in\\_the\\_public\\_sector.cfm](http://williamghunter.net/articles/doing_more_with_less_in_the_public_sector.cfm))

. However, it is possible that an exception to this rule may emerge with regard to innovation.

Globalization and outsourcing are leading to the deconstruction of commercial organizations, especially of large companies, into co-operating but more or less autonomous legal entities. This landscape looks very like modern government and not much like the command-and-control corporations of yesteryear. So it is possible that in the next few years the private sector will take a leaf from the book of large governmental "organizations" (if that is the right word) such as the UK National Health Service, and recognize that decentralized innovation requires an enabling approach based on open-ness and support.

In all areas of society, the innovation model of the future may be Connect, Capture, Collaborate.

## Author



Keith has been regarded as an IT and business thought leader since publication of his 2005 book "Human Interactions: The Heart And Soul Of Business Process Management". Building on 20 years of research and insights from varied disciplines, his theory provides a new way to describe and support collaborative human work. Keith speaks regularly in keynotes to business, IT and academic audiences at national conferences, most recently in Poland, India, the Netherlands, the UK, Finland and Portugal.

Keith Harrison-Broninski is CTO of Role Modellers, a Gartner Cool Vendor. The company's product, **HumanEdj**, is cloud software for Virtual Team Planning that provides unique support for large-scale, complex collaboration across multiple organizations.

More information about HumanEdj is available at [www.rolemodellers.com](http://www.rolemodellers.com) and about Keith at <http://keith.harrison-broninski.info>