

Ten tips for achieving digital innovation in the workplace

Experts and trailblazers share their advice on how to lead successful programmes

As employees expect workplace flexibility, agility and an environment that encourages collaboration, demands on all areas of the business are reaching a tipping point. In many ways, we have reached the age of the employee.

IT leaders have the ability to attract and retain the best talent and contribute towards employee happiness, simply by providing the right tools and services.

This means businesses have an opportunity to fuel growth and innovation through streamlining processes and automation, provided it's within a secure framework. Digital has moved way beyond a 'nice-to-have' and is now an absolute 'must-have'.

We caught up with some highly-respected business leaders and other industry experts to find out how CIOs, CTOs, and IT decision-makers have embraced the age of the employee: creating innovation and implementing IT strategies that improve internal collaboration.

Share their journey, explore the challenges they've faced, and find out their advice for overcoming yours; whether it's convincing the board to back you financially, getting buy-in for your next IT investment, or encouraging user-adoption for new tools.

Contributors:

- Rob Holtom, IT Data Director, BT
- Catherine Hamilton, Business Performance Director, Post Office
- Felicity Heathcote-Màrcz, Senior Consultant – Cyborg Ethnography and Intelligent Mobilities, Atkins Global
- Rene Storgaard, CIO, University of Northern Denmark
- Dr. Chris Brauer, Director of Innovation at Goldsmiths, University of London
- Brian Brackenborough, CISO, Channel 4
- Denis Onuoha, CISO, Arqiva
- Jane Pendelbury, CEO, HOSPA
- Jason Black, IT Director, Post Office
- Lara Burns, Chief Digital and Technology Officer, Age UK

Tip #1

Prove it supports the wider business strategy

“Digital is not just about a set of technologies, it’s about a mind-set, agility, speed, and collaboration – all four things are business critical.”

| **Rob Holtom**, IT Data Director, BT

“I think you need to demonstrate how digital supports your corporate strategy, rather than trying to create new objectives or an additional strategy around digital transformation. You need to look at what the business is trying to achieve and the role technologies like cloud can play in enabling this – whether it’s speeding up deployment or enabling access to the latest software tools. Next, you need to bring the company with you when it comes to your digital vision. Think about what the technology means for the people in their role – how it will improve their day-to-day life and speed up workflows. The key is to consider how the digital transformation process will benefit the entire organisation – both internally and externally.

You also need to think about the outcomes of what you want to achieve – for us it was agility and greater collaboration. Becoming more agile must be a priority. In terms of collaboration – enabling your employees to link up in ways they haven’t been able to in the past, especially geographically, is essential to providing a good customer experience.

Internally, the success of the entire project comes down to adoption of your digital innovation. You can’t just make the tools available and hope people will use them – the key here is to invest in technology your employees are familiar with and engage them in the transformation process.”

Rob Holtom, IT Data Director, BT



Tip #2

Engage stakeholders, evaluate the process, focus on technology

“Today every business is experiencing accelerated change. With technology driving business decisions and customer behaviour, we have to transform to remain relevant to customers today and into the future. Innovation is essential and every digital investment we make stems from the needs of the tens of millions of customers we serve.”

| **Catherine Hamilton**, Business Performance Director, Post Office

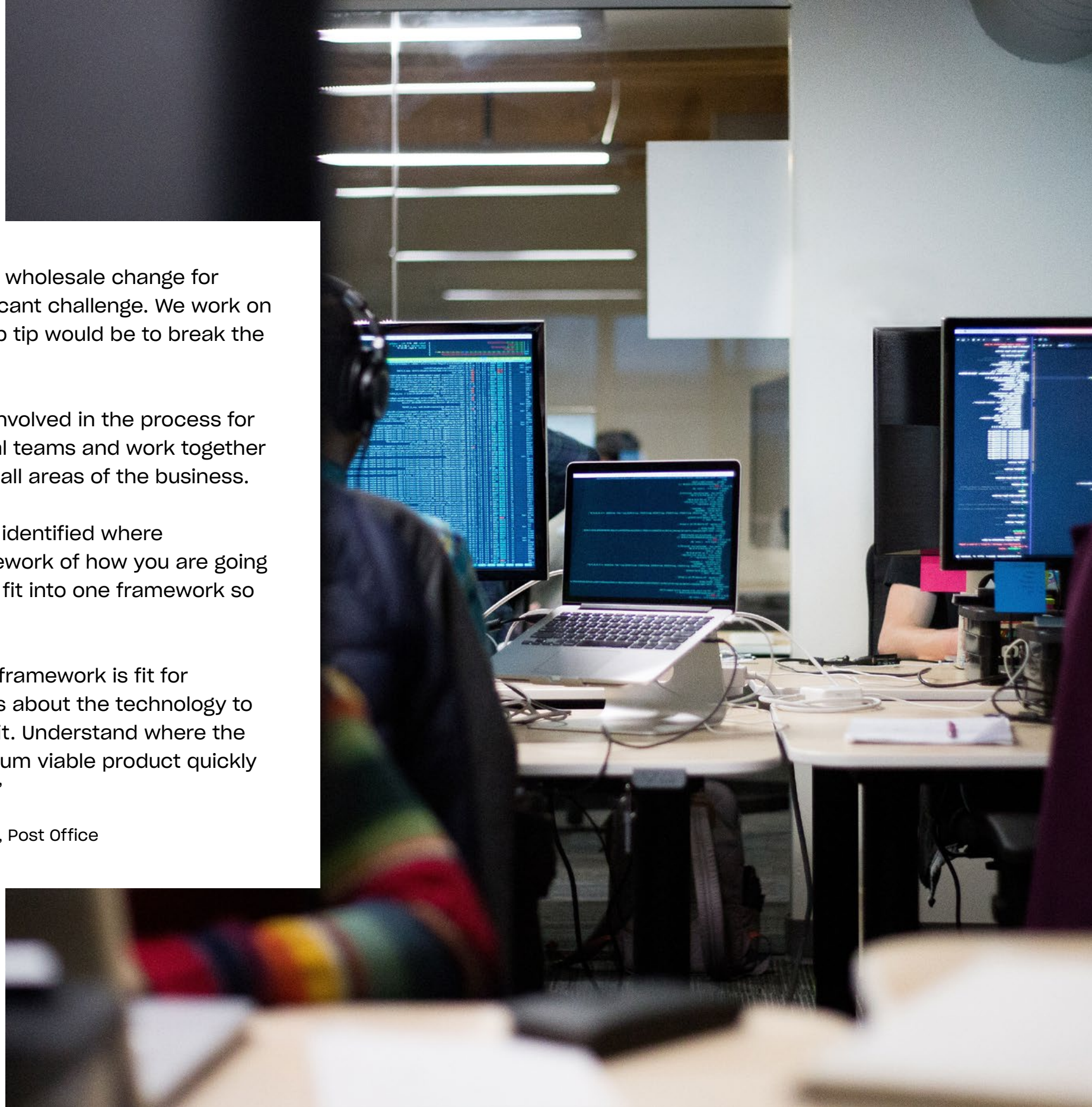
“Transformation can be overwhelming, and wholesale change for large companies like Post Office is a significant challenge. We work on the idea of it being an evolution and my top tip would be to break the strategy down into three steps.

First, engage your people. They must feel involved in the process for it to be successful. Create cross-functional teams and work together with them to identify the challenges felt in all areas of the business.

Then evaluate the process. Once you have identified where improvement can be made, create a framework of how you are going to go about change. Not all businesses will fit into one framework so be adaptable where it makes sense.

And finally, focus on technology. Now your framework is fit for purpose, ensure you make smart decisions about the technology to invest in, and the timeframe for deploying it. Understand where the value is and how you can produce a minimum viable product quickly to start seeing returns as fast as possible.”

Catherine Hamilton, Business Performance Director, Post Office



Tip #3

Make sure it's something your employees want to use

“Unfortunately, we see a lot of investment in high-profile technology that simply isn’t fit for purpose. This technology is often enforced on employees and they find workarounds because they don’t want to use it.”

Felicity Heathcote-Màrcz, Senior Consultant – Cyborg Ethnography and Intelligent Mobilities, Atkins Global

“When deployed correctly, new systems can have a transformational impact on a business, helping forge a new future. But too often, there is a belief technology itself will drive the change and people in the business aren’t educated properly on how to use it or worse still, not shown at all.

What I often find is that the most valuable part of ethnography is that it is an outsider holding up a mirror to the culture. That in itself can be revolutionary for some organisations. Finding out how things are actually happening, how technology is being used, or the language that individual teams have adopted can help shed light on quick wins and longer term development plans for the business.

You need to know how technology is being used in the organisation right now. Only when you truly grasp what people are doing with the technology you have can you make the right decisions for the future and prevent yourself from believing that because nobody is complaining to you, everything is fine. Providing something that your teams can get behind and giving them a journey they can all embark upon together is key. When you have this and can demonstrate the role technology plays in this vision, you should instil a real need for your people to use it and prevent it being used in the wrong way.”

Felicity Heathcote-Màrcz, Senior Consultant –
Cyborg Ethnography and Intelligent Mobilities, Atkins Global



Tip #4

Weigh up the risks and the benefits of action and inaction

“We realised how difficult the situation was here when customer satisfaction surveys showed that despite increasing the time we spent maintaining our core services, staff and students still weren’t happy.”

| **Rene Storgaard**, CIO, University of Northern Denmark

“The knock-on effect of failing to provide a good standard of core services is reputation. In Denmark, education is free so there’s no financial competition between institutions. As a result, service levels become a differentiating factor and, at the time, we weren’t fairing well.

When we moved to the cloud we saw an immediate reduction in costs. Before the move, we had two people running our datacentre and in order to do this competently, they needed highly specialised skills. It became very costly to continue to provide the development and learning opportunities they needed to keep up with the demands of the job and ironically, the better skilled they became, the greater risk they’d be headhunted.

In the end it became clear that so few people running a failing critical platform was a major operational risk so this made a rapid case for change. If you don’t have such an impetus, it can be easy to be conservative and stick with what you know, but in my opinion, it’s a major risk to remain static.

And whilst security is often quoted as a barrier to cloud-based services, I think the opposite. We’ve moved everything out, and migrated to vendor service which have security levels completely beyond our own means. The security we were capable of in-house is old news to cloud vendors, and their offering is only getting better and better.

So those two facts were key to getting buy-in from the business, and using an external consultant to help us create the strategy was hugely helpful in the sense that it ensured our situation was considered objectively, that internal comms were smoother and that we knew we had expert help on our side.”

Rene Storgaard, CIO, University of Northern Denmark



Tip #5

Create a cultural change

“People can generally be swept along with a social movement – employees either embrace it or leave. The key here is for IT to win the hearts and minds of employees with a cultural change in the organisation.”

| **Dr. Chris Brauer**, Director of Innovation at Goldsmiths, University of London

“The job of the CISO is to research and present the facts. Make sure your business understands the risk and ensure the data owners sign off on them. We face risks in life all the time – it’s about whether we take the time to truly understand what might go wrong and sensibly make decisions about how to mitigate it. If your business will benefit from that product, security shouldn’t be a worry – it’s about objective risk assessment. It’s up to you as a CISO to describe the threat, the impact and put it up to the rest of the organisation to accept it. It can be hard to get people to accept risks, but it’s not nearly as difficult as it used to be!

In my experience, these threats very rarely happen. It doesn’t mean they don’t happen but it’s very rare. Having a good plan in place in case of disaster helps a lot, but the key thing is right at the start: don’t scaremonger, present the facts, and get your stakeholders on board.

A lot of CISOs have resisted change because they see risks that just don’t exist. It’s a confirmation bias: people hear something, and hear it again and before you know it, they’re looking for the problem everywhere. That’s happening a lot in cyber security at the moment, and I don’t know where it will end. My advice to CISOs is to think clearly: which risks are actually pertinent to my business – and how likely is it to really happen?

As part of this it’s important to identify your priorities – they’re not the same in retail, as for government, for example. Unless you understand who and what might do your business harm, you can’t protect it. If you understand exactly who might break into your systems and why, you can clearly identify whether or not a technology represents an avenue of attack or an opportunity for your business. For a retailer, the benefit of the cloud on its own far, far outweighs the risk.”

Dr. Chris Brauer, Director of Innovation at Goldsmiths, University of London

Tip #6

Ensure it's secure

“People are wanting to do things quickly, and you can process things faster in the cloud. But, at the same time you need to be able to revoke that data at a moment's notice, be able to control it, and demonstrate to your management that you have the ability to do that.”

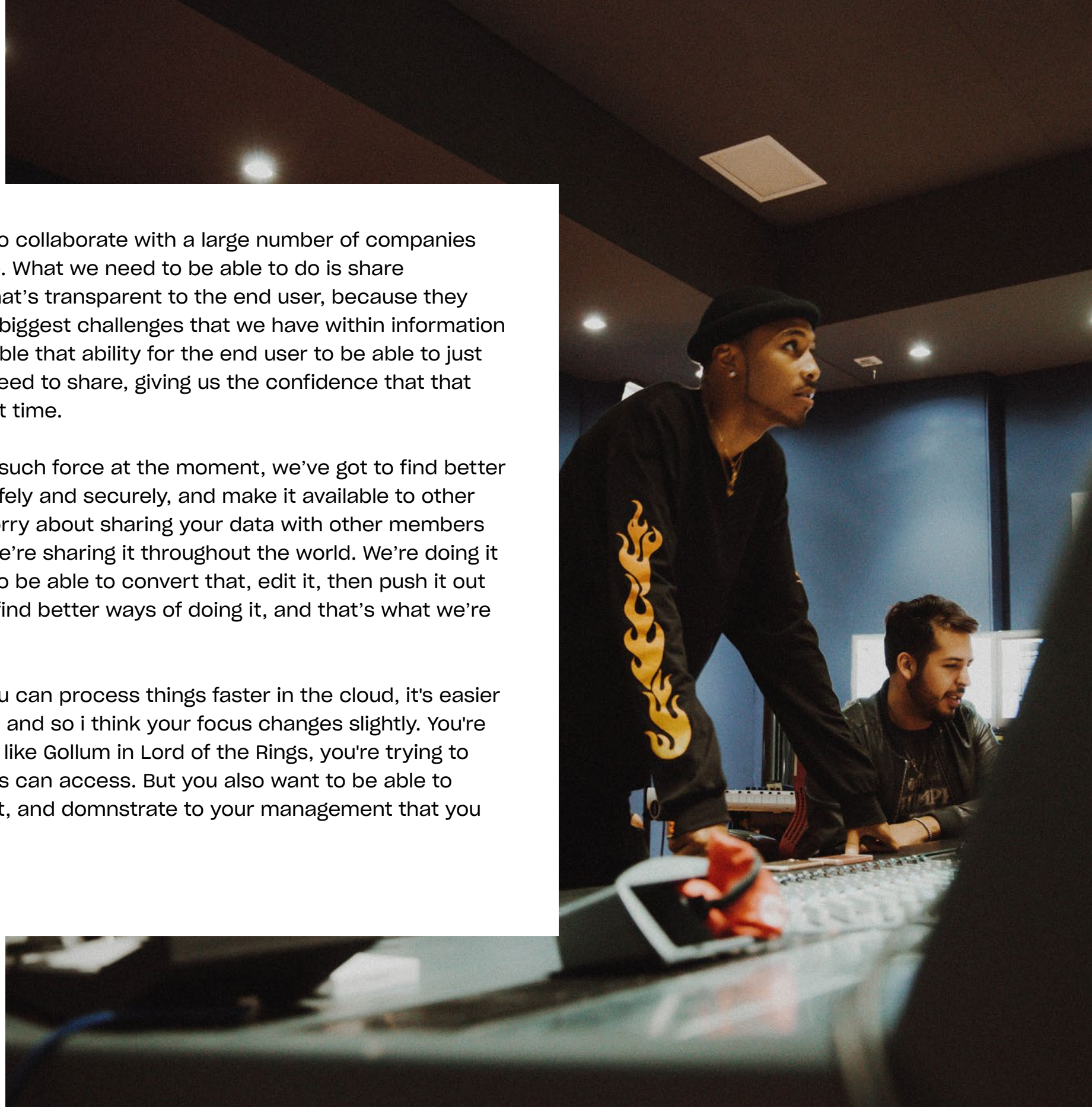
| **Brian Brackenborough**, CISO, Channel 4

“C4 being the company that it is, we have to collaborate with a large number of companies throughout the world, and they vary in size. What we need to be able to do is share information safely and securely in a way that’s transparent to the end user, because they just want to be able to do their job. So the biggest challenges that we have within information security at C4, is finding solutions that enable that ability for the end user to be able to just come in, share the information that they need to share, giving us the confidence that that data is going to the right people at the right time.

As we start to see the cloud growing, with such force at the moment, we’ve got to find better ways in which we can manage our data safely and securely, and make it available to other companies. In the past you only had to worry about sharing your data with other members of staff within the same company – now we’re sharing it throughout the world. We’re doing it as interviews are coming in and we need to be able to convert that, edit it, then push it out on television channels – and we’ve got to find better ways of doing it, and that’s what we’re constantly looking for.

People are wanting to do things quickly. You can process things faster in the cloud, it's easier to update things when they're in the cloud, and so i think your focus changes slightly. You're not actually trying to hold on to everything like Gollum in Lord of the Rings, you're trying to ensure everybody you want to have access can access. But you also want to be able to revoke it at a moment's notice, to control it, and demonstrate to your management that you have the ability to do that.”

Brian Brackenborough, CISO, Channel 4



Tip #7

Build trust

“Trust is the new currency in business. There is a new aggressiveness in the market that means winning new business and keeping customers happy relies upon your integrity.”

| **Denis Onuoha**, CISO, Arqiva

“Security is a top priority for everyone, not just me. We have a group that focuses purely on our internal security program and its delivery. We have a cyber security department that offers technical security consultancy and pre-sales support to our customers. Then we have what we call the Red Team, who spend their days trying to hack into our network ensuring we are as secure as possible. And finally, we have security awareness specialists focusing their energies on keeping us ahead of the latest threats.

The industry evolves rapidly so finding the necessary talent to fill gaps in the team is becoming increasingly difficult. But, that is only half of the problem. The other side to overcoming this challenge is to educate your business as much as you can. It is your responsibility as CISO to communicate and to instil security at your organisation.

The prevalence of mobile and cloud technologies means that there has been a proliferation of tools and people will use what they want to use. This presents a significant challenge for security teams. It means that the border of the network extends exponentially as each department has its own industry standard tools and they all want to work together. But, it is getting easier and businesses are understanding this challenge more and more. My advice would be to give people access to cloud services and secure the device. With controls like encryption, One-Time Passwords, and remote-wipe, you can rest safe that your information and networks are safe.

Trust works both ways, between you and your customers. This extends throughout the supply chain so make sure you work with your suppliers to ensure that the highest possible level of service and security can be met. Conduct regular checks on your processes and technologies. Get the basics right and it should be much easier to implement the more advanced security and compliance and build trust.”

Denis Onuoha, CISO, Arqiva

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Tip #8

Think digital, embrace digital

“There are massive advantages to be realised from using new technologies to scale projects, particularly in the charity sector. It can help streamline workflows, improve collaboration, and most importantly save valuable time and resources that can be better spent helping people face-to-face.”

| **Lara Burns**, Chief Digital and Technology Officer, Age UK



“The original process involved a lot of manual work for our internal teams. It took a lot of time to update systems, fill out forms and undergo background checks. We were really limited with our reach and the scalability of the project.

We created online self-service forms for volunteers to sign up and used algorithms to match them automatically with older people they shared interests with. We can now automate email prompts and reminders, stripping out previously manual processes. We use a Voice over IP (VoIP) system making it as easy as possible for our volunteers to place online calls.

Our biggest challenge is securing buy-in from stakeholders for these transformation projects. We get quizzed about our move to digital since our target audience is predominantly not online or not technologically savvy. But, if we don't invest now, we will be unprepared for future generations.

It's about proving that what you are doing will make a difference both up and down the chain. We do that by bringing colleagues along with us. We use lean methodologies to help identify where we can achieve quick wins inside the organisation, and engage teams directly in the project, working with them to identify where technology could help improve their work. When people feel included, and change is happening to make their work life better, they are remarkably receptive.”

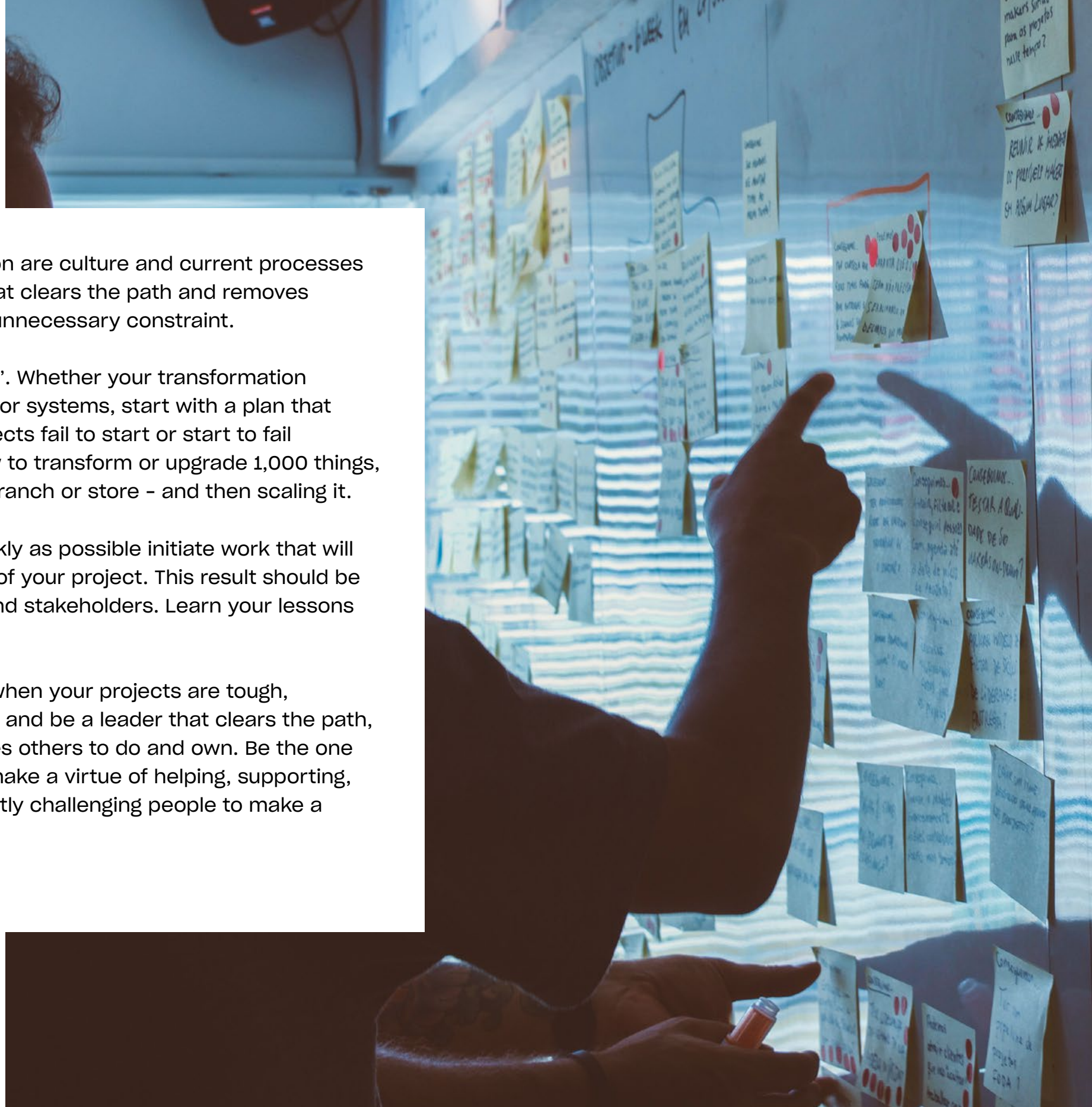
Lara Burns, Chief Digital and Technology Officer, Age UK

Tip #9

Be brave, be bold, it is the right path

“Firstly, start with what I call ‘the art of one’. Whether your transformation involves high volumes of people, locations or systems, start with a plan that delivers the first one really well.”

| **Jason Black**, IT Director, Post Office



“Often the biggest barriers to transformation are culture and current processes and systems. You have to be the leader that clears the path and removes obstacles and lets the teamwork without unnecessary constraint.

Firstly, start with what I call ‘the art of one’. Whether your transformation involves high volumes of people, locations or systems, start with a plan that delivers the first one really well. Many projects fail to start or start to fail because it takes too long to figure out how to transform or upgrade 1,000 things, when instead focus on transforming one branch or store – and then scaling it.

Secondly, fail fast and learn faster. As quickly as possible initiate work that will deliver the earliest end result for any part of your project. This result should be obviously visible to any suppliers, teams and stakeholders. Learn your lessons from it quickly and then repeat.

And lastly, be a servant leader. Especially when your projects are tough, exceptional, or non-standard. Get involved and be a leader that clears the path, does the hard yards for people, encourages others to do and own. Be the one that sorts and optimises processes, and make a virtue of helping, supporting, and teaching, learning, and most importantly challenging people to make a difference every day.”

Jason Black, IT Director, Post Office

Tip #10

Ensure it's scalable

“Following the success of Dropbox Business we’re also now looking to place our entire membership database on the cloud, a huge leap for a company that wasn’t using the cloud two years ago.”

| Jane Pendelbury, CEO, HOSPA

“Because we’ve been able to transform our business model bit by bit, at our own pace and at a reasonable cost, we’ve actually moved from on-premise computing and into the cloud almost without realising! And certainly without the huge financial outlay and change in culture we were facing with some of the other solutions.

Today the HOSPA team are using a centralised database of documents which can be updated in real time, by assigned contributors to that document, regardless of their location – and we don’t plan to stop there. Following the success of Dropbox Business we’re also now looking to place our entire membership database on the cloud, a huge leap for a company that wasn’t using the cloud two years ago.

We’d certainly recommend a move towards this sort of system to all our members. In truth, when you look at the retail industry, most companies in the sector have been quick to adopt new technology solutions which allow for easier collaboration and communication. I feel this has been a bit of a missed opportunity by the hospitality industry.”

Jane Pendelbury, CEO, HOSPA



Dropbox Business is a collaboration platform that allows companies to meet the demands of the digital age, where speed and efficiency are everything.

Custom built for enterprise, where scalability and individualised support are key, Dropbox Business scales to meet the demand for performance and reliability.

It starts by providing employees in any department with a collaboration tool that is familiar and easy to use, enabling rapid adoption and minimal training.

Our best-in-class integrations, allow you to work seamlessly with the workflow and productivity applications your employees are already using. And critically, it comes standard with robust security features built for enterprise, to keep your company's data safe.

Dropbox Business exceeds industry standards and future-proofs your business – it gives IT leaders what they need to transform the way people work.

But don't just take our word for it; you can read the story of how Dropbox is being used to help [speed up the construction industry](#), or see the role we're playing in the [War Child](#) story. You can also check out how we're bringing the global teams at [Lonely Planet](#) together and keeping them in sync.

Learn more about Dropbox Business.
[Talk to our team.](#)