



Digital Transformation: Involves the transformation of people too...

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Digital Transformation often requires showing respect for the old times and the old timers. To just write those words without some form of validation is like saying the sky is blue to someone without the benefit of eyesight. So, the purpose of this writing is to provide an analogy that is something that has a reasonableness to occur in the lives of a newlywed couple going through a life transformation, having their own holdouts.

In the minds of most, Digital Transformation is something that *performs a large scale transformation of a business's operations through the adoption of one or more forms of digital technology*. For the purposes of this writing, we will consider it to be the adoption of both a visual assortment planning system (such as the new **VibelIQ** product offering) and a Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) system (such as the industry proven **FlexPLM** product).

The analogous association of this writing's content to these new technologies will come later; but be clear that an analogy has to first start out with a non-associative example to bring home the point of the message to the reader.

So here we go.

The story starts out with a **couple** and let's use the names **Tom** and **Leona** – who were the names of my parents that have both since passed – but of whom I knew as well as a child could, and want to incorporate their names out of respect for their existence and key influence in my life – they birthed and developed me into who I have become – my father, not so much; but my mother greatly.

This **couple going through the transformation** have lived in the home of Tom's parents for the past several years because Tom was just starting out in his career as an engineer, and money was tight; as is often the case with newlyweds. Tom and Leona were provided a bedroom and bath in the small 1500 square foot house, but all other areas of the house were common areas; mostly furnished with his parents' furniture, that included Tom's father's old recliner that had been for years his resting place after his long days working at the factory.

Tom's mother had her sewing area in her nook in the kitchen that provided her with the opportunity to store her **sewing box** that had its own history both inside and out and was the only place she could call

her own. It was next to the window that had a cold draft in the winter, but she didn't mind because it was hers; drafty, but a place where she spent hours hand sewing new garments, pillow casings, mending the family's worn apparel, and just about anything that could be brought to life with a needle and thread.

Tom's father's **old recliner** had seen many hours of snoring after a good meal, discussions of family matters, watching any sporting event on the old television that took him away from his days at the old tire factory he had worked in for more years than he could remember and often wanted to forget, or his pontification of aspirations that never found their way into his life's path. It was never sat in by Tom or his mother, and a recliner that would have never comforted them for even a minute because it was formed to fit the (now) old man's unique physique. It was his throne and something he looked forward to sitting in after dinner or on the weekends when he just wanted to rest his bones until the next week's work at the tire factory.

Tom and Leona had always considered this co-residence with Tom's parents a steppingstone in their development, and it was not long before Tom was given a new position at the large engineering firm where he had risen up in stature and prominence. His previous position had readied him for this new management role, which put him in a much better position financially. Therefore, it was time for him and Leona to take the **leap to a new home**, in a new development outside of the city; to the suburbs.

This new position guaranteed a much higher salary, and the couple were excited to finally move out of that old house, but not excited to leave behind Tom's parents, who had willingly offered their home to the couple and who they had gotten along with well throughout their stay at the family home. Tom's father was able to retire with a union pension from the factory, so they were able to convince them (after long evening talks, Tom's father duly positioned in his recliner) to **take the leap** and move to the new area outside the city.

All were now excited and though Tom's father warned him that the investment in this new home came with financial commitments, his parent's **sold the old homestead** and moved with Tom and Leona to the new 3,000 square foot, two story house with plans to expand the family in the coming years.

Entering a new home, with a much more spacious living room, dining room, and kitchen meant buying all new furnishings. However, the move came with **one condition**; *the old recliner came along for the ride* and would remain the place where Tom's father would spend his retirement, comfortable and now carefree. A place where he could ironically spend hours thinking about the old days, but also developing new ideas about how he would take up golf, to play at the now local golf course.

Leona had plans for the new furniture that didn't align with the old recliner, but the gain of having peace among the family was much better than the agony that would have befallen them had she not agreed with the decision.

Tom's mother was able to find **a new place for her sewing box**; to do her sewing and also looked forward to being able to buy fabrics that would be just perfect for the young ones that she expected would soon be welcomed as new members of the growing family. Her needs were few, **so she took her sewing box and put it into the new cabinet**, along with the materials she brought from the old house. She found the room in the back of the house that gave her a much better view of the back yard; not like the side of the next door neighbors house as she had back in her old home; and there was no draft from the double

pane, argon gas filled window. *She wasn't sure what argon gas was, but it didn't matter because she was now home in this new dwelling.*

Though it was clear that Tom's father would never sit in it (for now), Leona purchased a **new recliner** that had a heated back and provided a three position recline, perfect for seating the old man if he would ever choose to use it. It was purchased using the new credit card that the couple had been able to obtain with the new salary position.

Leona also bought a **new sewing machine** for Tom's mother that had all the bells and whistles and had placed it on the **new sewing table** in his mother's room. Though his mother very much appreciated the offer, knowing it was something that Leona believed would be a relief to her in all the things she had said she planned to create, *it was not anything she would adopt for use.*

Tom's mother enjoyed the feel of the fabric and she felt a sense of creativity as the needle worked its way through the fabrics, joining them together as an art form. These **new tools were good for the new generations**, but *she had her ways and, as with Tom's father and his recliner, she was having none of it.*

Suffice it to say that there was the new and some of the old in this new four bedroom home and **each person took up their own version of the transformation** with the hope that all would be well for years to come.

Tom's father had occasion to take the opportunity to "**try out**" the new recliner and "**didn't dislike it**". *This only happened when no one was watching*, but over time he actually sat in the new recliner during select evenings, when there was a good movie on that he watched with the family. It took a couple of months, but there came the day when he announced to Leona that they could "*put his old, trusty recliner out on the curb*".

Tom's mother had a **similar transformation** from doing all her sewing by hand to taking the opportunity to selectively sew portions of the new garments using the new sewing machine. It started out when she had to do a zipper, which would have required the use of her old thimble. Never much liked that darn thing, and the new sewing machine seemed to "*zip right through that effort*". Time passed and she began to use it for the longer seams and found that it did a great job of keeping the fabrics in line. So, **she too set aside her old sewing box**; keeping it for memorial reasons only.

NOTE: *Points made are that Tom's parents didn't transition or transform their use of "the old" immediately. They took time to see how the **new recliner** and the **new sewing machine** wouldn't replace the memories of the old recliner; nor would it replace the feeling of the art of creating new garments. Instead, it would enable a higher level of ease of use, enable them to have more staying power for the future, and (as for Tom's mother) **get things done more quickly and consistently.***

The same holds true for a brand or retailer's adoption of a **new assortment planning system** such as VibelQ or a **PLM system** such as FlexPLM. Both will have their **early adopters**, and both have their **holdouts**. It is through a full understanding by those making decisions that the holdouts have their reasons, and through a rational form of empathy and continued encouragement to use the new tools that there **will be a transition** and (in the end) **a transformation** to result in the system's full adoption.

The above analogy is not unlike the **merchandiser** that enjoys using physical materials, pictures, and color swatches to form their merch board, or the **product manager** that likes the freedom of using Excel because they know how to perform magic with its isolated features to produce the perfect line plan or forecast report.

A brand or retailer that adopts a new form of visual assortment planning system like VibeIQ creates **massive opportunity** to digitally visualize their merchandising assortment without the proximity limitations of the physical walls, laden with physical prints, material swatches, and cutouts from magazines.

Digital integration of the well thought out and digitally recorded assortment line plans that are bi-directionally integrated from VibeIQ to the extremely powerful FlexPLM system, create *digital fluidity* that enables designers and technical developers work seamlessly together with product managers as the line advances to fully developed technical specifications, in collaboration with material and factory sourcing.

I have supported the transformation of a broad range of companies from their old way of doing things that limit them in their ability to deliver products to market and find that just like Leona, Tom and his parents, there are **ways to transition and transform those throughout the enterprise**. It has always been done by fully understanding the current (**ASIS**) state, knowing who the holdouts were, and helping them transition to the future (**TOBE**) state through empathy that success has been achieved.

This approach has never failed and (it is suggested) that by taking into account those with the old recliners and sewing boxes, you too will be successful in transitioning the holdouts to the new form of recliner and digital sewing machine.

Find out how your company can initiate and/or complete its digital transformation by contacting **Digital Solution Group, LLC**. Using *digital fluidity* to enable **Mind to Market** transformation.