

# Removing the Friction from Business Change and Transformation

## The importance of maintaining estate knowledge

Freeform Dynamics, 2026

If the word "transformation" sends shivers down your spine, you're not alone. Whether it comes up in a board meeting or strategic planning session, it's typically in relation to some kind of major change initiative. While these mega-projects are great to realign the business with evolving demands and new opportunities, and can be rewarding to be a part of, they're also usually pretty disruptive. They pull people away from their day jobs, seemingly go on forever, and create a lot of pressure along the way.

Maybe your experience is different, in which case you can put this document aside and get on with your day. But if the pain and upheaval of big transformation projects is something you can relate to then read on. We're going to explore a different way to think about business change - one with more of a focus on business agility.

### **Startup reality check - does this sound familiar?**

So the initiative is approved, and the key people assemble to get things kicked off. Some old hands are noticeably sitting there with strained smiles, wary of what they've been sucked into this time. However, as the team works through the rationale for the proposed "transformation", crystallising the benefits for both the business and the people within it, understanding and appreciation start to build. The programme director obviously knows what they are doing, and after a few inspirational words and promises from the exec sponsor, everyone buys in.

Then the discussion turns to initial actions and people shift in their seats. The mood changes as it begins to dawn on them how much up-front groundwork they are in for. Discovery, dependency mapping, documentation, policy definition, governance framework definition, and so much more needs to be addressed before anyone can even think of creating or delivering anything. The team leaves the meeting ever so slightly flatter, with the sponsor pondering how long this will take and how much it will cost. It'll be quite some time before those benefits are realised. Agile this is not.

## Why does it all feel so wrong?

In our discussions with business and IT leaders, it's clear that many feel frustrated by the way change happens in their organisations. Major transformation programmes suck up budget, resources and management bandwidth for months at a time, and yet when the next initiative comes along, much of the groundwork has to be repeated because the knowledge gathered last time has gone stale, is not suitable for reuse in a different context, and/or has simply been discarded.

And this isn't just a problem for the big programmes. Even seemingly straightforward change initiatives can run into the same problem. As a simple example, someone might spot that a new version of a particular desktop application could streamline a critical workflow and allow a number of teams to work together more effectively. But it's then pointed out that before the new software can be pushed out safely and efficiently, you have to determine who is using the application, where it's installed but lying dormant, and whether the new version will play nicely with the range of environments it needs to work in.

**The real cost of episodic change isn't just the programmes themselves – it's all the other initiatives that never get off the ground because the preparation overhead is out of all proportion to the change being proposed.**

Add the requirements for user comms, training and support into the mix, and the up-front preparation work could easily dwarf the actual deployment phase. What initially looked like a quick win turns into a significant undertaking, so the idea gets shelved or rolled into the next big programme where the discovery work can serve multiple needs.

Understandable, but there are strategic consequences when this becomes the norm.

## Episodic change translates to business rigidity

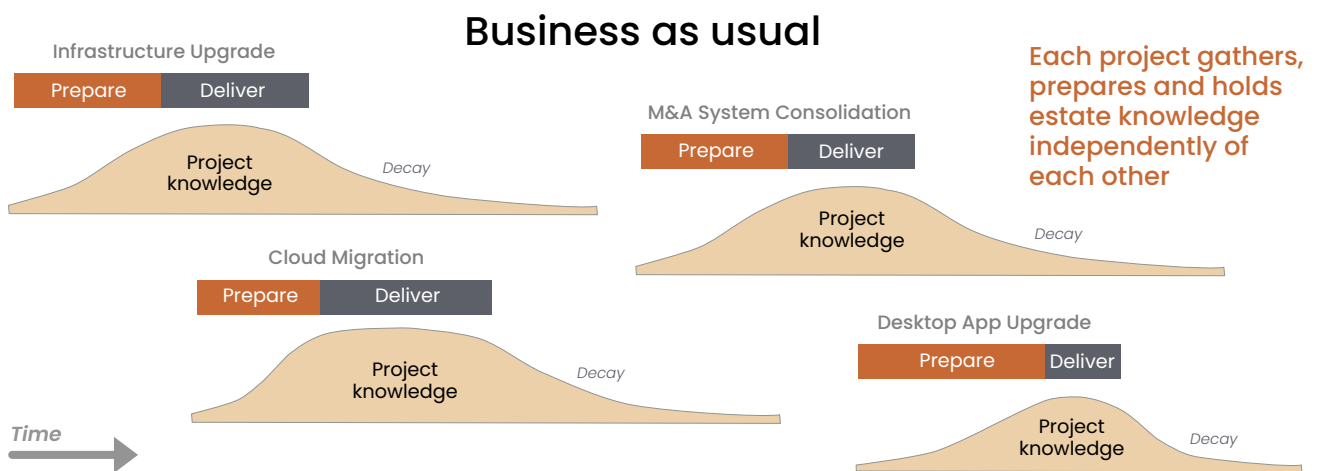
The net effect of the behaviour we've outlined is that change tends to happen episodically, in the form of big initiatives separated by long gaps in which the organisation's ability to act on new opportunities or respond to new pressures is severely limited. You only need to compare last month's news headlines with today's to appreciate why that's a problem. Whether it's the impact of geopolitical events on markets and supply chains, or the way technology advances alter the way companies operate and compete, the world doesn't wait for your next big programme.

In reality, most business leaders are well aware of the need for greater agility. The question is how to achieve it.

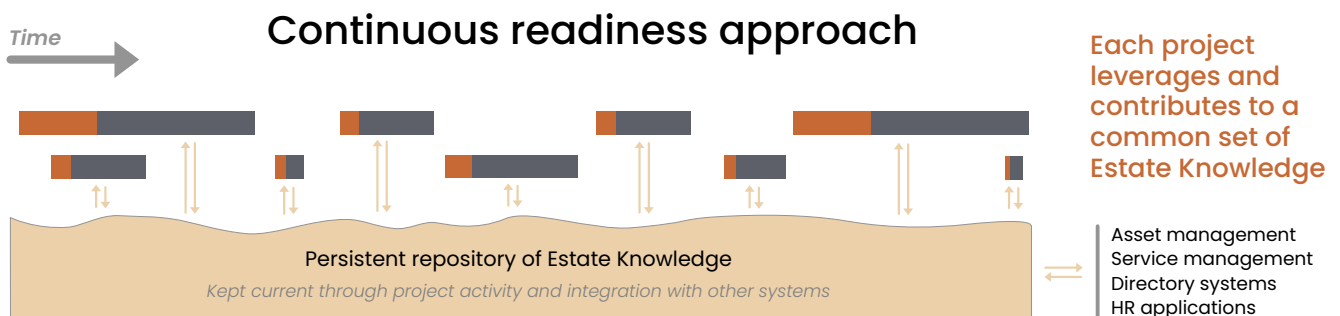
# One possible (and proven) idea

Sadly, there's no magic bullet for achieving full organisational agility, and we don't have space to discuss the topic in full here. What we can say, though, is that tackling the challenges we've been discussing will drastically improve your chances of success. The key is to enhance your readiness for change from a knowledge perspective. Let's begin by diagnosing the underlying problem more precisely.

Much of the preparation for any change initiative comes down to building a clear, current and trusted picture of your environment - the hardware, software, users, licences, configurations and services in place, along with the relationships and dependencies between them. But as the figure below illustrates, this "estate knowledge" tends to be gathered independently for each project, then siloed or abandoned once delivery wraps up. The net effect is that you rarely have a firm starting point when the next initiative comes along.



When you look at it like this, the answer, at least in theory, is quite straightforward - create and maintain a persistent, trusted knowledge base that every initiative can draw on and contribute to. The estate view stays current through a combination of project activity and live integration with your operational systems. Any new initiative, whatever its scale or scope, then has a solid base to start from.



But is this really practical in the real world? Let's explore what's necessary to pull it off.

## Putting it into practice

A few things need to come together to make this work. Here's what we've learned from those that have achieved success, at least in some parts of their organisation.

Firstly, someone has to own it – a small, permanent "rapid transformation" team that maintains the estate view, curates processes and templates, and helps whoever is driving change at any given time. Not a bureaucracy, just a few people who know how things connect and can get others moving quickly. The aim is to compress the preparation phase so teams can move from idea to action without months of groundwork. Get it right, and change starts to flow more naturally – a continuous stream of initiatives delivering value, rather than the stop-start pattern of periodic mega-programmes. Over time, this is what creates genuine business agility.

**Think of what's needed as continuous transformation enablement – sitting alongside your existing operational systems, not replacing any of them.**

At a systems and data level, information fragmentation is the biggest obstacle. The data you need for any initiative is likely spread across service management, endpoint management, procurement, identity and more – all with different structures and levels of currency, quality and completeness. You need platforms and tools that can consolidate this into a coherent, continuously maintained set of estate knowledge that's always ready for whatever comes next.

Lastly, there's communication. When change touches hundreds or thousands of users, you can't improvise. Notifications, feedback and scheduling need to be based on proven mechanisms, not reinvented each time.

The good news is that technology solutions exist today to help with all of this, so you shouldn't have to build key capabilities from first principles.

## Final thought

The last tip we'll leave you with, especially if you work in a large organisation, is to look across the business for groups or divisions that are notably more agile than the norm. Ask them about the way they approach change, and the kinds of best practices and tools they rely on, taking particular note of how they talk and the mindset this reveals. You'll likely find that while they take project and programme level discipline seriously, they also have a higher level goal – to institutionalise a mindset of constant change readiness, which in turn enables the delivery of business value on a continuous and flexible basis. That's what genuine business agility should look like.

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