18F Education
Discovery research

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1/ Background

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Employees all over government are being asked to use technology to solve complex problems. Much of what this large-scale transition requires is a more agile and adaptable way of working together.

What we did

- 18 interviews with educators, innovators, executives, students, and stakeholders.

- Our findings primarily reflect the perspectives of educators and innovators rather than that of students.

- All findings should be further validated to reduce the possibility of bias.

2/ Challenges in transformation

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Employees lack knowledge of best practices or only have a shallow understanding of them.

People newly assigned to product manager roles are reluctant to assume decision-making authority.

Lack of leadership support can block digital transformation.

Innovators must overcome cultural resistance to change.

Organizational structure and operations can cause roadblocks for projects attempting new methods.

Laws and interpretations thereof block implementation of new methods.

Much of training and educational resources available to government employees contains bad or outdated information.

3/ Education and digital transformation

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Education is a critical component of digital transformation.

Key areas where education can support

Product teams

Education should support real-world projects.

PRODUCT TEAMS NEED:

Education can define the product ownership role and empower product owners to make decisions.

PRODUCT TEAMS NEED:

Good education provides deep understanding of the agile mindset, not just the practices.

Good education teaches people to advocate for their work and process to leadership, counsel, and other groups.

Key areas where education can support

Leadership

Good education helps leadership build and empower teams.

Good education helps leadership understand and mitigate risk.

Good education helps leadership determine value and prioritize.

But can education also support

other groups?

Content and format of education

Figure out when people ready and motivated to learn.

Assess what an agency needs based on where it is in the process of transformation.

Do coursework on real projects, not examples.

Make it fit people's schedules, availability, and workload.

Decide whether the education be synchronous or asynchronous.

Create an engaged community of practice.

Offer success stories from experts.

Clearly demonstrate support from leadership.

4/ Next steps

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How might we conduct more focused research to validate the need for specific topic areas?

How might we explore digitalgov.gov as a way for people to self identify their educational needs?

How might we define the role of free content versus paid content?

How might we help product teams by providing training to 'adjacent audiences?'

How might we set up educational programs that also provide us with constant feedback on our ideas?

Discussion

- How might we conduct more focused research to validate the need for specific topic areas?

- How might we explore digitalgov.gov as a way for people to self identify their educational needs?

- How might we define the role of free content versus paid content?

- How might we help product teams by providing training to 'adjacent audiences?'

- How might we set up educational programs that also provide us with constant feedback on our ideas?

Thanks!

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Research Hub: https://github.com/18F/18f-education-discovery

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