# Open data: agent of change

The most successful open data initiatives share similar characteristics. Understanding successful approaches can help unlock the value of open data.

**In this module we’ll explore the following:**

Open data as an agent of change

Leadership and engagement Supply and demand

Culture change for new markets

# Engaging in open data initiatives - in 2 minutes

ODI International Development Manager Liz Carolan shares five characteristics of successful open data

initiatives.

**Open data: agent of change.**

Implementing an open data initiative often involves cultural and institutional change.

Opening data goes far beyond putting data on a website under an open licence. Applying the technology is the easy part – bringing about cultural change can be much harder.

# Leadership and engagement

Active leadership and engagement helps foster successful open data initiatives and bring about positive change.

## Active leadership

As an open data programme is launched, it is common for those driving it to meet some resistance from within their organisations.

Active support from senior figures can help to encourage institutional buy-in.

## Active engagement

Engagement with civil society, business and government are key aspects of any open data initiative.

Successful initiatives tend to start with an open dialogue between open data publishers and consumers.

This dialogue is important for both parties to understand the demand for data and opportunities to draw out its benefits.

## Finding space to innovate

Strong leadership and active engagement with key stakeholders is key to any successful initiative.

Active leadership delivers a 'push' from the organisation, active dialogue creates a 'pull' from data users.

Open data leadership and dialogue unlock innovation opportunities by connecting problems with potential solutions.

# Supply and demand

When examining an open data initiative, consider the following:

## Your approach

Many open data publishers have taken the approach of building a portal, publishing the data they have, and hoping it is what consumers want or need.

As open data literacy grows, people are starting to think first about the needs of data consumers and shape their initiatives accordingly.

A staged approach helps to ensure that an organisation can walk before it tries to run, and achieves change in small, noticeable steps, rather than setting ambitious goals that are hard to meet.

**Who wants your data?**

There is little point in publishing open data if there is no one prepared or motivated to create new value from

it.

It is often best to focus on demand that currently exists.

Use existing consumer dialogues, opinion surveys or ‘vox pops’ to see where the demand is, and follow it.

Think about problems that already exist and how your data relates to them. Offer your data as a tool to help build solutions.

**Who will use and support your data?**

A successful open data initiative has an engaged community who actively use the data, with access to resources that support them.

A strong community of open data reusers has a sense of ownership over the data. This ownership should cover both the data and the outputs generated from it.

It is important for publishers and consumers to fully understand each others’ perspectives.

A good example of a strong open data community is the Open Street Map project.

[Take me to the Open Street Map project](https://www.openstreetmap.org/)

# Culture change for new markets

Applying technology is the easy part. Implementing culture change can be much harder. **Identifying new markets**

The traditional market for open data, where governments publish data for others to consume, has changed.

Governments, businesses and society are all now both suppliers and consumers of open data.

## Culture change

Adopting open data will often require a change in the way an institution operates.

People driving initiatives need to spend time developing a shared vision, overcoming barriers and building coalitions for change.

Consumers should be empowered to engage with open data as a core part of their data infrastructure.

## Planning for change

Ways to handle and plan for culture change are becoming clearer.

Governments, organisations and individuals should have free access to key education, tools and guides that help plan for the future.

Pilots and practical initiatives play important roles in understanding the impact of open data and the change process. There are tools and guides to help you assess and plan for change, such as the ODI's Open Data

Pathway.

[Take me to ODI Open Data Pathway](http://pathway.theodi.org/)

**Are you ready for culture change?**

There are four key characteristics of successful open data initiatives. Can you recall them?

# Leadership and engagement

**What are two critical relationship factors needed for a successful open data initiative?**

Emotional intelligence and patience

Strong leadership and active engagement

Friendliness and empathy

**That’s right!**

Strong leadership and active engagement with key stakeholders is critical to a successful initiative.

**Are you sure?**

Strong leadership and active engagement with key stakeholders is critical to a successful initiative.

# Supply and demand

**What contemporary approach should you take when planning for an open data initiative?**

Publish data and hope people use it

Think about my needs

Take the perspective of the consumer

**That’s right!**

With maturity in the open data community, many are now taking the perspective of the consumer and clarifying the benefits they could get from the data.

**Are you sure?**

With maturity in the open data community, many are now taking the perspective of the consumer and clarifying the benefits they could get from the data.

# Culture change for new markets

**People who drive open data initiatives need to spend most time...**

overcoming barriers, building coalitions and driving forward change talking to other data publishers getting to know their own datasets

**That’s right!**

Open data often requires change in the way an institution operates. People driving initiatives need to spend time overcoming barriers, building coalitions and driving forward change.

**Are you sure?**

Open data often requires change in the way an institution operates. People driving initiatives need to spend time overcoming barriers, building coalitions and driving forward change.

# Planning for change

**Governments, organisations and individuals should have free access to...**

big data everyone's open data key education, tools and guides

**That’s right!**

Governments, organisations and individuals should have free access to key education, tools and guides that help plan for the future.

**Are you sure?**

Governments, organisations and individuals should have free access to key education, tools and guides that help plan for the future.

**Open data: agent of change.**

Implementing an open data initiative often involves cultural and institutional change.

Engaging with civil society, businesses and governments is an important part of the process.

As the open data community matures, many initiatives are taking user needs into account early on in planning their activities.

Open data requires us to think differently about the way the market for data functions.

In the next module, we'll look at simplifying open data licences.

Next module

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**Module 3 – video**

So my name is Liz Carolan and I’m the International Development Manager. So implementing an Open Data initiative is ultimately about carrying on a piece of cultural and institutional change and within that there’s probably five main things that you would want to think about when setting up an initiative to ensure that it’s successful. The first thing that we’ve seen in many successful initiatives is a strong leadership mandate. You want to make sure that as the team implementing the initiative encounters resistance to change there’s a strong mandate from the top of the organisation to help them push through and overcome those challenges. The second thing is the demand for the data. There’s very little point in you investing time energy and capital in the publication of data if there aren’t people out there who are willing and able to use that to create the value and services products, ideas, from that data which kind of takes us to the third point which is about engagement. How are you going to build it from the very beginning? Engagement with potential users of data with the outside world be that in civil society in the private sector perhaps in academia successful initiatives have structured ways for getting feedback and engaging with users. The next thing you want to think about is the cultural change aspects. It’s tempting to focus in on the technical aspects of implementing an Open Data initiative but ultimately those are the kind of challenges which have been solved and are being solved by the community and it’s the cultural change where you’re really going to encounter some of the challenges and where the key to success lies. Which brings us to the last characteristic of successful initiatives which is that they think from the very beginning how they’re going to stage their initiative. We’ve seen quite a lot of processes where people have concentrated on publishing some data and then publishing more data, focussed on quantity whereas as our thinking is evolving. What we’re seeing now increasingly is that a focus on impact and on specific either sectors, or datasets building engagement around those from the beginning is a much stronger way to make sure that an initiative is successful. So ultimately Open Data requires us to think differently about the market for data. Traditionally we would have thought of certain institutions such as government as suppliers of data and others as users of data. Whereas now what we see is government, civil society and the private sector all simultaneously being both suppliers and consumers of data.