How digital champions can boost your work

Questions and answers from the Inform webinar

10 November 2022

What you asked us

Here is a summary of the Q&A from our webinar on Thursday 10 November 2022.

This webinar was about delivering a digital champions programme. An effective digital champions programme can boost upskilling and business transformation to support some of the challenges facing local authorities today. Introducing a team of champions from each service will drive Microsoft 365 adoption in an engaging and cost-effective way across your organisation.

We were joined by Sam McVaigh, Director of People & Inclusion at Bury Council, who shared their journey through implementing a digital champions programme.

Visit our webinars page to look out for the next session led by experts in technology, change and digital transformation.

You can also follow The Inform Team on LinkedIn

About the speakers

Sam McVaigh, Director of People & Inclusion at Bury Council

With 20 years' experience in local government and citizen-focused work, Sam's roles have helped teams and individuals deliver better at work. Sam has been inspiring people to give their best and drive their own development through senior roles in organisational development and HR, and has witnessed huge changes in how technology and people analytics can support workforce development.

Follow Sam on LinkedIn

Natasha Bradley, Commercial Manager at The Inform Team

Natasha has worked in the IT industry for over 12 years and has a good understanding of technology and how it can be used to overcome business challenges. Before joining Inform, Natasha ran a sales and marketing business for five years, delivering services to a range of Microsoft partners in the UK. Natasha has innovative ideas on how to use technology and is working with several large NHS trusts to introduce new ways of working with Microsoft Teams.

Connect with Natasha on LinkedIn

Geoff Williams, Lead M365 Trainer at The Inform Team

Geoff is a proactive and pragmatic Microsoft 365 and modern workplace consultant who can influence at all levels and has skills that encompass training, business change, communications and technical IT capability. Geoff has worked with organisations worldwide to help inspire employees to take on new ways of working and transform how they collaborate.

Follow Geoff on LinkedIn

The questions

These answers are either as they were given in the session or with some additional information added after more time for reflection.

Question	Answer
I was interested in the fact you are at a growing agile environment, and if you had any issues having the champions commit to being champions? Do you think that the value of a champion is an added buy in?	Yes, we give lots of shout outs to our champions and recognition through our employee review process as well as the badges they receive within their own team has worked and has been an important success factor with the champions we've got. I think that perhaps the barriers to that have been: sheer work demands, which will not be a surprise to anyone. And actually, even when you value something you've got to have that leap of faith upfront. So, we talked a lot about the advantages of this to individuals as well around proving their own

	skills and finding their own work-life balance by giving them the ability to do some things – but some of that's a leap of faith.

If you don't understand it, know it, or see it you don't have the confidence to do it. You have to be a certain type of person to take that leap of faith. So that was a challenge. I think also, some of this was about selling the benefits to some of our more traditional services with perhaps some of our managers that weren't used to working in this way.

I certainly think that value is added to the buy in of the role; some more successful than others. Especially after talking to Natasha and Geoff they provided statistics based on the amount of time we could save personally over the course of a twelve-month period and the cost-effectiveness of offering a little bit of that time back in return to upskilling colleagues. |
| **I am currently recruiting some Oracle fusion champions at the moment, and I've had some support mechanisms in place such as a shared team channel where people can discuss any issues they have, quarterly meetings – but is there any other support mechanisms I haven't mentioned that would help maybe smooth out the issues?** | I think, for me all the things you've spoken about are completely right to have in place. You have to invest time at the beginning showing the value of that stuff and the support mechanisms. People will struggle and they will say *''I need more support''* but as the saying goes you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. I think you've got to feed some of the things you've already got in there – so how are you as an organisation using those chats?

Making sure that you are creating the agenda in the background to support those Teams sessions. You won't have to do it forever, but if people see the value, they'll buy into it themself. But actually, there is leg work needed upfront by you and working with the more vocal active champions to feed some of those things. Once you feed them hopefully, they'll become more self-sustaining. You can't just create the infrastructure and expect it to be filled with people talking and interacting you need to put the work in up front. |

How do you structure things for the champions, or is it all quite open?	Absolutely it is a structured process. We tend to front-load it with what will make the most difference in someone's day to day work across the M365 suite with things like Teams and One Drive but then move on to the lesser-known functions that can have a real impact! Each of the webinars we have are stored onto teams into the Champions channel. So even if they cannot make the training or they want to recap it is there for them to utilise. You can find out more about how Inform structure a digital champions programme on our website.
How much resource did you have to invest into the program and what benefits did your Digital Champion gain? **You mentioned earlier badges, was this something that your Champions were able to gain?**	We have been really clear with Champions upfront around their time investment to do this. Again, explaining that giving a few hours a month would benefit cost-wise if we were using the technology to our advantage. They'll benefit most as they would have the experience of making the most of M365. Yes, they were part of it. Through going through their learning journey, they were able to earn a range of badges. We were concerned at the start it could promote unhealthy competition, contemplating if it would annoy people if they're not able to learn as well. Personally, I think it is good thing and has been important part of the program. They are different to Microsoft learning badges, and are custom to the learning checks we do on the different topics we cover.
What long-term strategies are you looking at?	There can be issues within organisations when you have too many Champions or too many change agents. I think it's important to not restrict people's ability to

	become involved, and without telling existing Champions they have to do it all we want our network of agents of change and Champions work together. This is part of a bigger program of organisational, people and culture change across our organisation. I am keen to think about how we work with the Digital champions we've got as part of that overarching program. Overall, we will be focusing on collaboration between all of our teams.

Have a question that's not answered here or want to talk about your own project? Contact Natasha and she can help.