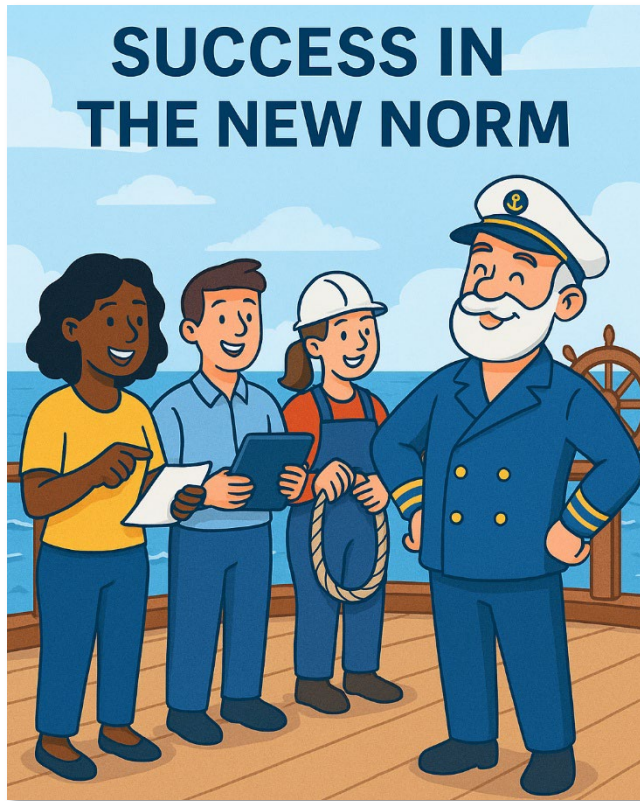


Chapter 9: Sustainment



Let's say your project went live. People got trained. Adoption numbers look good. Things are humming along. Now what?

Sustainment is the difference between a project that makes a short-term splash and one that delivers real, lasting value. It's about making the change stick not just for this month, but for good.

Too often, this part is overlooked. The team disbands, the sponsor shifts focus, and the support structure fades away. But change isn't permanent just because it launched. It becomes permanent when it's reinforced, normalized, and woven into how people work.

Why Sustainment Gets Ignored

Sustainment doesn't come with fanfare. There's no ribbon cutting. It's quiet. Ongoing. Behind the scenes. And that's why it gets dropped.

But if you want real ROI from your project, sustainment is where it lives. Think of it this way: If launch is getting the car on the road, sustainment is what keeps gas in the tank.

Embedding Through Recognition

One organization embedded sustainment by recognizing individuals and teams who modeled the new way of working. Not with flashy awards, just short shoutouts in town halls and team emails. That small practice did two things: It reinforced what good looked like, and it reminded people the change was still a priority.

It also invited continuous feedback used to keep improving the system.

What Sustainment Looks Like

Sustainment isn't just maintenance, it's leadership. It's about creating the conditions that keep new behaviors alive.

That includes:

- Regular adoption checks. Set simple indicators and track them. Are people still using the new tools? How consistently?
- Performance alignment. Does success in the new system show up in how people are evaluated and rewarded?
- Leader visibility. Are sponsors and managers still talking about the change in team meetings?
- Ongoing support. Are resources and help easy to access, even months after go-live?
- Cultural cues. Is the change part of how work gets done or something that still feels “new”?



Pro Tips

Don't assume silence means success. If no one's complaining, that doesn't mean adoption is happening. Keep checking.

Put sustainment on someone's job description. If it belongs to “everyone,” it'll end up with no one.

Make it normal. When the change becomes part of how work gets done—and not a separate thing—that's when it sticks.