

The Four Fragmentation Fighters:

How to win against
disconnected systems
in your business





The Fragmentation Situation

Companies have adopted a large range of technology over the last 5-10 years. In fact, [Gartner](#) projected software spending to increase 12% in 2023 to \$755 billion, coming off a 10% projected rise in 2022 and 15% rise in 2021. The hyper-fragmentation of data and information inside organizations is driving a productivity crisis. Jumping between applications, struggling to work with other teams, feeling the grind of inefficiency - all symptoms of exploding hyper-fragmentation. And we call this fragmentation agitation: **the feeling of productivity lost to continued hyper-fragmentation**. Projects delayed and running over budget? Information being duplicated or inaccurate? Struggling to adapt to rapid changes and make quick, confident decisions? Communications issues? All effects at the core fragmentation agitation.

What is there to do?

Focusing on four key areas - **visibility, connection, automation, and collaboration** - you can push back and halt the continued advances of hyper-fragmentation.

Here's how you can stop fragmentation lag from continuing to plague your people and reverse the tides.

Prioritize Visibility

Too often, your work can become a black box where people don't have visibility into key data and information. With increasing fragmentation, it is unclear who has access to which systems, how key processes are run and managed, and how teams can best do their work. Trying to untangle this starts with increasing the visibility of your data and work. And the most critical work certainly cuts across teams and organizations, requires data from multiple systems, and needs a ton of coordination and cohesion to be done well. To build an accurate view into how you work and your key projects, put visibility at the core of your strategy to minimize fragmentation.

A major key to this is building and committing to a single source of truth for critical project information. That way, there is a trusted place for all information, and there is confidence that everyone can confidently know they have the most accurate data.

The first step is an internal review of what systems you have, who uses them, and what key project data lives within them. Now you can understand who is seeing what data and where the cracks are. If there are duplicate systems or extreme siloes, find a way to unite their information or slim down your processes to eliminate overlaps.

Then, choose a system to host all of the key project data. This shouldn't cause even more fragmentation, though. The right system serves as a connector and unifier of your data across your organization, instead of creating new data that will live in its own silo.

Done well, everybody can now see accurate information, but also have customized views. People across the business will see the right information - both in it being reliable, as well as only the information they find most valuable.

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Projects are more complex because of challenges in obtaining and analyzing multiple data sources, limited time and resources.

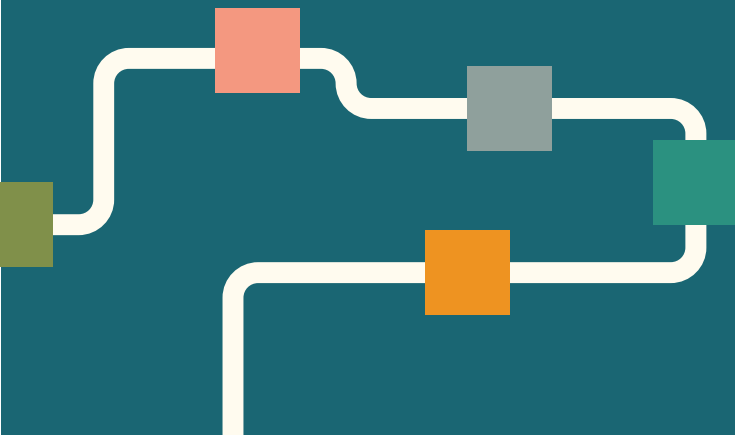
Brian Hinshaw

Principal Business Manager, AT&T

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Once data sources are brought together, data can be sliced and diced in new ways. ... As we are looking at data in new ways, the team begins formulating new questions which lead to new requirements for how to look at the data.

*Adam Keever
Advanced Quality/Warranty Engineer,
Magna*



Build Connections

The fragmentation of systems doesn't mean that data and process aren't valuable. Each new software adopted over time intends to solve a problem, and chances are that they do! The problem is that fragmentation, by definition, is borne out of new software that lives on an island, siloed from your existing work. Building connections between your existing data and business systems is the next step you need to follow in order to overcome fragmentation.

You can't begin to build connections between data sources without first taking an inventory of your processes. Start by auditing your project processes from intake to project work to completion to review. Where does data need to be exchanged between systems? Identify places where progress is held up or friction occurs because data is separated from the next step. Really dig in and analyze what it would take to connect reliant data and processes to one another. Building connections may be easier than you realize once points of disruption are identified.

Along with the explosion of new software, integrations between platforms have also boomed. While rigid systems have kept many workflows in the dark, a dedicated focus on connecting crucial data in a singular, easily accessible location is one of the most important steps you can take to keep fragmentation from derailing your business. Vet the capabilities of software in your tech stack with a focus on data integrations and dashboards. While it may feel counterintuitive to say the solution for tech sprawl involves adopting more software, a collaborative work manager should equip you with the ability to connect important data in a single, customizable dashboard. This also removes any need to 'rip and replace' your current systems. Instead, it allows you to better leverage your existing workflows.

Adopt Automation

The goal of any work management software is simple: make things easier. Over time though, making things easier inadvertently created a system that requires more effort to get in and out of platforms and more attention to detail while entering data points in multiple places. The single most effective way to reduce delays and make teams more productive is to automate tedious processes in your project workflows.

It seems simple, but research from Foundry found that **less than 40% of businesses automate project workflows**. Buying new technology without a proper framework has forced organizations to spend hours mired in manual processes: entering the same data points in multiple places and coordinating the work of other teams via email. Adopting automation and building data connections go hand in hand, and the processes to achieve it are very similar.

Overcoming fragmentation by building automation into your processes begins with auditing your existing systems. Similar to data connectivity, the goal is to simplify workflows and reduce friction. Start by looking for steps in your processes where handoffs occur between stakeholders. This may be as simple as an approval action that grants a project team the go-ahead to begin work. In your fragmented framework, an approval is granted so an email is sent to a project executive. She then marks that in a contract management system and sends an email to the project team lead. The project lead then acknowledges receipt and begins communication with their own team on workflows for the project.

In this single example, there are 3 points where missing a simple communication could halt progress for days and leave no external record that any action had been taken. Instead, an automated system would capture that initial approval in an accessible place and trigger waterfall actions and communications to all necessary stakeholders.

Automation is one more factor which is assisted by a properly employed work management platform. Examine your tech stack for its capability to send communications or automate actions based on previous actions. Establishing automated workflows takes a great deal of consideration and it is incumbent on technology leaders to understand how teams operate before setting forth the plan. Adopting automation is also an incredibly iterative process, so start by stacking easy wins like scheduling and task management. The adoption of customizable collaborative software is helpful in accelerating the steps from manual to fully automated.





Facilitate Collaboration

Nobody works alone anymore. Getting work done well requires collaboration and coordination - across teams, across systems, and across organizations. That's especially true for the work that is most important for organizations. As we've discussed before, that work is cross-functional, dynamic work that requires your teams and systems to be on the same page all the time. Highly complex work that impacts everyone at your organization, like managing supply chains, massive real estate portfolios, and complicated building projects, is where collaboration is most important to success.

Better collaboration means being able to deliver projects on time, reducing duplicate work, eliminating costly project overruns and delays, and less frustration internally. It also leads to more flexibility and more effectively being able to react to change.

This comes from better communication, which can be driven by standardizing things like data collection - a lot of the same challenges that lead to lack of visibility as well. But finding ways to better work together moves beyond simple communication. Effective collaboration on a large-scale means uniting your key workflows and data to create seamless cross-team and cross-organization work.

Henley-Valvoline, for example, has expanded their real estate portfolio 3 times in 5 years. To do that, they can collaborate across multiple processes that need to be tightly coordinated, such as construction progress, site selection, and portfolio management. Collaboration means they can make sure all of these processes happen in concert, with matching information and coordinated hand-offs.

Conclusion

You can't sit back and let fragmentation continue to grow. Doing nothing means that fragmented systems continue to expand cracks around your organization - and soon enough, those cracks will make work impossible to get done.

By prioritizing visibility, connection, automation, and collaboration, you can stop this trend and bring about cohesiveness, simplicity, and more effective work. As a result, you'll be more flexible in the face of change, deliver projects on time and on budget, and reduce friction in managing your most complex work. And ultimately, it means you can work more effectively.

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People can actually develop more complex projects when they aren't spending time chasing down answers.

*Angel Rivera
Business Manager, AT&T*