



## 2026 TRENDS

# Organizational Change Management (OCM)

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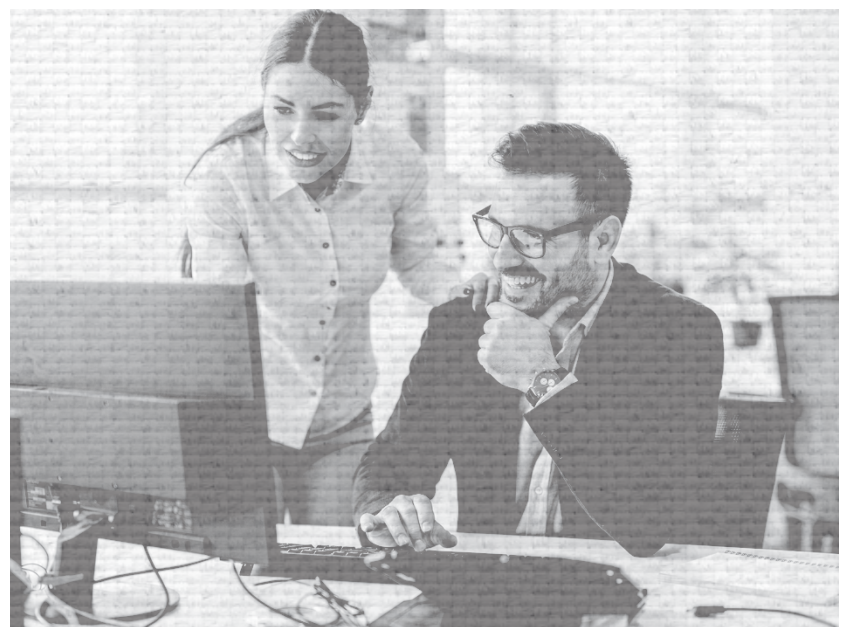
## TREND 6

# Modern Training Tools

As we move into 2026, we are noticing new trends emerging in the [Organizational Change Management \(OCM\)](#) space and within the industries and projects we serve. Some of the most prominent of these trends are an increased emphasis on OCM; ensuring organizations have an overall OCM strategy and are prepared for change to occur at any time; enabling change within individuals at an organization; and making sure [training practices are sustainable](#) for long-term use.

Additionally, businesses are wanting to keep their approach to OCM and training modern – this involves the use of data to make decisions regarding OCM and training, training on Artificial Intelligence (AI), and leveraging [modern training tools](#) to develop content.

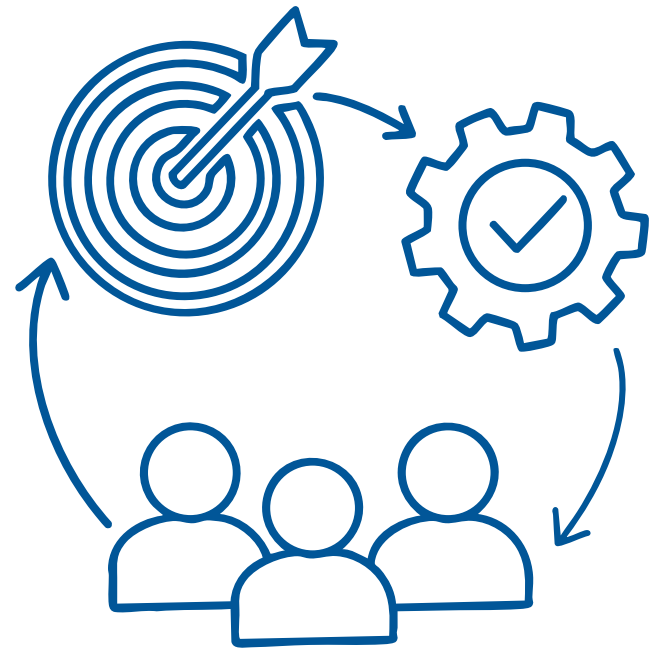
In this report, we dive into six OCM trends for 2026.



## TREND 1

# Enacting an Overall OCM Strategy

Businesses are focusing on creating an overall OCM strategy for their business rather than handling change on a case-by-case basis. [Historically](#), OCM has often been considered something that strictly impacts specific projects or initiatives. While OCM may be considered in those spaces, it's not often considered at a program or organization level. Rather than focusing on specific areas to manage change within, we're seeing that businesses are considering an overall strategy and goals that [align with their vision](#).



According to data collected in 2023, only [12% of organizations](#) report that they have been able to sustain their transformation goals for more than three years. In a world where things are constantly changing and evolving, having an overarching change management strategy allows businesses to adapt to change more easily, especially in cases where change can't always be anticipated.

Creating a comprehensive OCM [strategy and goals](#) that provide guidance on what steps your company should take when a change occurs allows businesses to move through a change while [staying aligned with their vision](#), empower their employees to feel confident with the change, and successfully navigate that change.

When creating this strategy, consider what your long-term goals for the organization are. This approach should have an outlined structure for how the organization would like to go through change with [transparency at the forefront](#). To have [buy-in from employees](#), it's imperative that the goals of a change are clear with benefits outlined for all impacted. As part of this OCM strategy, it may be helpful to have a template for going through change that can be adapted as new changes and processes come up.



## TREND 2

# A Focus on Data-Driven Change

When we think about changes to organizations, businesses typically focus on gathering and using data to identify their change readiness, adoption, and resistance to change throughout the lifecycle of that change. However, without [tracking certain metrics](#) such as adoption rates, employee engagement, and [change resistance](#), it becomes difficult to understand how to best implement new changes within your specific organization.



Every organization functions differently and is [comprised of different people](#) with different personalities, learning styles, skill sets, and hesitations. When we can collect both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand employees, we are then better able to implement change and ensure it's successful with the specific audience in mind.

The [process of collecting data](#) in regard to change should start before change occurs and continue after the change has happened. Before a change occurs, collect data to understand where employee skillsets are currently and how employees are feeling in anticipation of change. Understanding these elements allows businesses to understand what obstacles may be faced before going through a change and what specific learnings need to be had by a group to understand that change.

From this, organizations can successfully mitigate resistance and negativity before it occurs and understand trends in how employees perceive and adopt change. By collecting data throughout a change, we're able to understand how employees' skills and resistance evolve over time in order to make changes to tactics, such as which tools and methods are used in training, in real time to be more effective for the specific user audience.

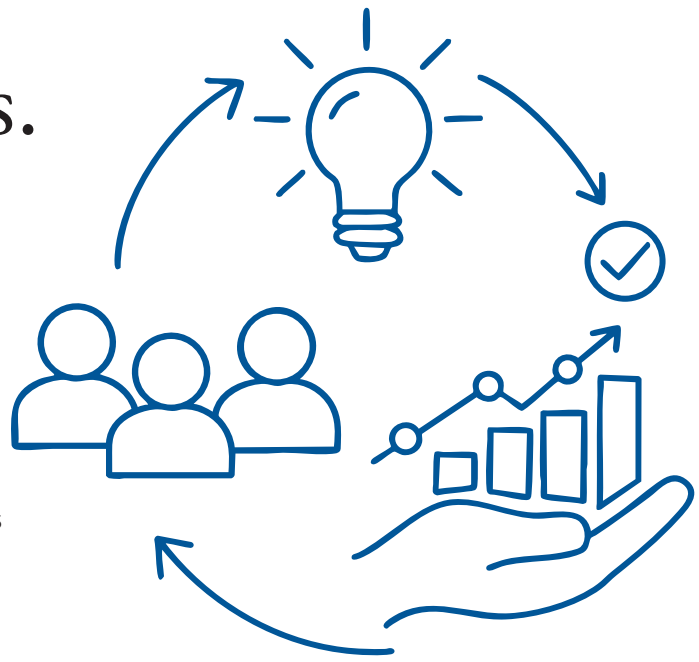
After going through a change, the more information collected during the process, the more confident organizations can be in their approach to change going forward. When we understand what methods of implementing change were most successful, what roadblocks may be faced, and how long it takes for a specific audience to feel confident with the change, we can more accurately tailor our approach in future change situations and more accurately predict how long this process takes for the organization.



### TREND 3

# Change Enablement vs. Change Management

Businesses are shifting to the idea of change enablement rather than just change management. Change enablement involves building a [strategy and culture](#) to ensure that any changes, no matter how big or small, an organization goes through, they can go through smoothly. The process involves building a culture and creating conditions in which change can be embedded into the fabric of a business efficiently.



Companies are constantly going through change and evolution; the question then becomes how do we make change something that becomes second nature to those who are going through it?

Rather than simply checking a box that training has been completed and changes have been communicated to those impacted, how do we ensure that people feel empowered to continue to thrive in their careers even after undergoing a change? How do we ensure that people feel comfortable and confident with the change?

By utilizing [sustainable training](#) and change management best practices, we ensure that changes and training stick and that employees are bought in to the change. Examples of these best practices may include a just in-time training approach, enabling a change network, and providing opportunities for employees to share their thoughts and concerns with those who can help.

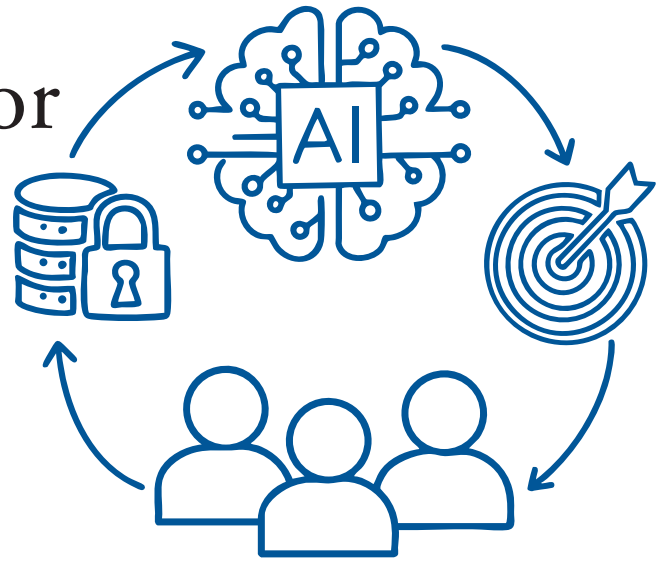
[Bringing your employees along](#) on a change and making sure they understand the reasoning behind it can help them feel more at ease and buy into the change, enabling them through it. Change often feels like something that is out of our control, but if we're bought in to the reasoning and the "why" behind the change, we're more likely to adapt to it and bring others along with us.

Changes are going to happen despite how people may feel about them; ensuring that employees understand and internalize the intended benefits of the change allow for long-term adoption and viewing changes with a positive attitude to take hold.



## TREND 4

# Change Management for Data and AI Initiatives



As the world is adapting to new AI technologies in day-to-day lives, businesses are also considering how to adapt these technologies to improve their companies. We're seeing that OCM strategies are being applied to data architecture, [data governance](#), and AI initiatives in a way that balances user adoption, rapid and continuous adoption, and thoughtful governance.

Understandably, the rollout of AI has widely [caused concern](#) amongst employees. AI is new to many and largely evolving, leaving uncertainty about how usage of AI will impact jobs and companies overall. At the same time, people are also curious about AI. While some people are curious enough to teach themselves and consider how they [can adopt AI](#) on their own, others are intimidated and don't know where to start.

According to the Grossman Group, [83% of leaders](#) expect AI to play a major role in change going forward, and 1/4 suspect that this will be the hardest change to implement. Adopting a change management strategy when it comes to AI helps mitigate some of these concerns.

Your change management strategy can cover both how your specific organization plans on implementing and using AI, as well as setting governance and data protection strategies, but also a plan on how to get everyone involved in the change. Not everyone is going to have the same level of desire to be educated on how to use AI and the best practices, but as an organization, it's important to decide what baseline knowledge and usage you would like to establish for your employees.

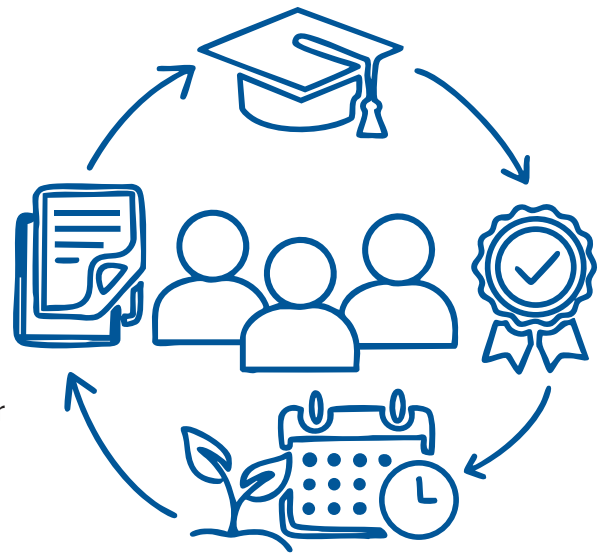
It's also important to consider what messaging and communication you would like to bring to your employees on how AI will be implemented and how it may impact their work. When things are left ambiguous, it's easy for anxiety to take over. Clearly communicating expectations, governance rules, and training can ensure that an entire organization is prepared to embrace the changes that will come with widespread use of AI.



## TREND 5

# Sustainable Training

We're seeing clients also renew their focus on ensuring their training solutions stick and are [sustainable for the long term](#). Often training is treated as the one and only step to implementing a change. This system of thinking may "check the box" that employees have been trained on changes in process or system, but it doesn't focus on long-term user adoption and confidence.



Creating a comprehensive training strategy is essential to [making change sustainable](#) and a long-term solution. Training is often considered in the short term, but not as a long-term and continuous activity. We know that adult learners don't always learn well by going through a training one time and [rely on repetition](#), especially if there is a big change in how they have historically done their jobs.

When you create a comprehensive and sustainable training strategy, you can promote long-term, effective adoption of the change. This is done by utilizing impactful training documentation, change networks, [centers of excellence](#), and more to help training stay with employees long term. This strategy should be adaptable, flexible, and scalable to adapt to new challenges and changes.

Additionally, sustainable training looks at the impact of training long after the official training has been completed. Sustainable training practices should analyze whether employees have developed the new and necessary skills associated with the change and if they have continued to use the training they were provided with. Solutions such as surveys given 6-12 months after training or reinforcement training can ensure that employees remember their training and that the lessons stick. A sustainable training approach is crucial to ensuring that your organization continues to develop your employees and is aligned with future company goals.



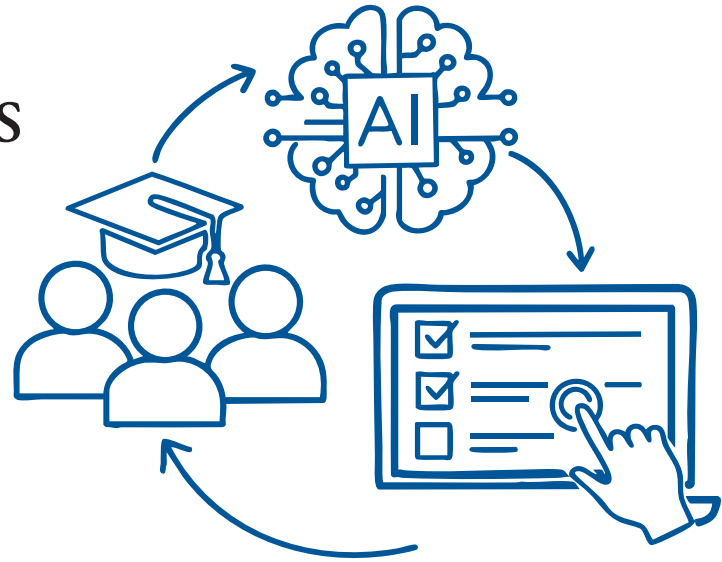
## TREND 6

# Modern Training Tools

As new and exciting training technologies continue to be created, clients are moving away from more classic training tools and to newer and innovative technologies. While standard practices may rely on instructor-led training often using slide decks, new technologies have pressured businesses into using more modern methods.

There's also been an increased emphasis on making training interactive and impactful for users to ensure the lessons stick. Newer tools such as Scribe or [SAP Enable Now](#) create training content that is more interactive, ensuring that users are truly understanding the content rather than just checking the box that says it was completed. Tools such as these, and many more, create training that prompts users to complete specific actions or tests to demonstrate understanding.

Additionally, these new tools allow for [greater independence in training](#). We're seeing that businesses are moving away from strictly using the approach of live, instructor-led sessions for training and moving toward a hybrid approach with both instructor-led and self-study trainings. With this approach, it's imperative that organizations keep their self-study trainings modern and interactive – potentially leveraging AI to quickly create training content in various formats to adapt to the specific audience – so that users stay engaged and the content is absorbed.



# Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, it's clear that the shifts taking place across industries are reshaping how organizations approach change. The growing recognition of OCM as a strategic priority, the need to strengthen individual readiness, and the push for training methods that endure over time all signal that organizations are preparing for a future where change is constant.

At the same time, the adoption of data-driven decision-making, AI-related training, and modern development tools shows a commitment to staying current in an evolving landscape. Together, these trends highlight a broader movement toward more intentional, adaptive, and future-focused change management practices.

Learn more about our [OCM Services](#).

## ABOUT CLARKSTON CONSULTING

Businesses across the life sciences, consumer products, and retail industries partner with Clarkston Consulting to enhance strategic decision-making, improve operational efficiencies, implement new technologies, and promote business growth and market diversification. Leveraging deep functional and industry expertise, our people discover, design, and deliver solutions that fit your business, your goals, and your future. At Clarkston, your purpose is our purpose.

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