

## Is tech running you? Five ways to retake control

Modern training technologies make the prospect of days-long training courses an obsolete practice

Bob Cannan, CEO, Eagle Productivity Solutions | 2014

“Man is the creator of change in this world. As such he should be above systems and structures, and not subordinate to them.”

- Steve Jobs

In Stanley Kubrick’s classic, 2001: A Space Odyssey, the defining moment came when the artificial intelligence known as HAL refused the spacecraft commander’s orders, saying, “I’m afraid I can’t do that, Dave.” It was then that Dave knew he’d been outgunned—at least temporarily—by his computer.

Ever feel like Dave?

Throughout history, humans have been tool-using animals. From sharpened sticks to artificial intelligence, our tools have adapted to the demands of our work. Today, our work is more complex than ever, and our tools have progressed the same way. CRM, CLM, MLR, analytics, multi-channel marketing, compliance, logistics, business applications and other software systems are robust and interconnected. They have to be, for our people to do their jobs effectively.

Say you’re a small startup pharma that’s launching a CRM system. You manage to get it off the ground with marginal success, but then the new releases start rolling—a never-ending schedule of upgrades, bug fixes, new functionality. Your high performers figure it out but their less tech-savvy colleagues aren’t as adaptable, and adoption starts to slip. Your two-person IT team is too busy answering help-desk calls to provide any real relief, and senior management just wants a quick and manageable solution.

“I can’t do that, Dave.” The system has taken control...a bad end to a big investment.

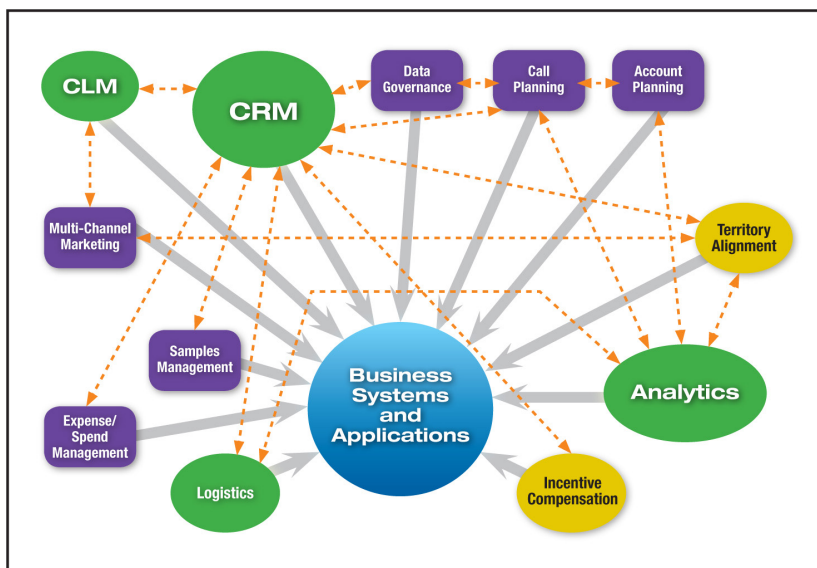


Fig. 1  
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### Here's another story:

A large company introduces its salesforce to a new CLM system. They go the traditional route, pulling teams from the field for multiple days for a huge deployment. The cost due to lost business? Hundreds of hours of field time and potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars. And when the software is upgraded, they'll do it all over again.

What's the common denominator? Failure to realize that change is constant. The only way to maintain control? Stay on top of the changes. But everyone is too busy for that.

## Who serves who?

Tech tools are here to stay, and so is their complexity. But you don't have to be subordinate to them. Here are four tips to ensure your people push the technology, not the other way around.

- **Make the tools work for you.** Training harnesses the tools that let your people do more. It keeps them in sync with the technology so they always get the most out of the tools you've given them. If they don't, the system takes control of the users, and your tech investment goes bust.
- **Do tweaks, not overhauls.** By definition, your initial deployment will be big and disruptive; you're introducing a tool that changes the way people work. After that, training should not interfere with operations. A training vendor that offers Training as a Service (TaaS)—my company is one—will anticipate new system iterations and structure training in small bites to mirror those upgrades. (Bonus tip: Don't save them up and do another mammoth training. Unless you've got time and money to burn.)

- **Cut non-training costs.** Typically, one-third of the training budget is wasted on non-training expenses such as travel costs, repeated RFPs, and resource ramp-up. A TaaS training partner can eliminate those expenses so your training dollars are actually spent on training.
- **Don't retreat.** Taking your people out of the field for training leaves an opening your competition is only too happy to fill. A good training partner will offer virtual delivery options that reduce time away from the field. Thanks to the miracle of inexpensive technology, it doesn't take a \$20,000 media room to bring the classroom to where your people are. Stop sending more people to training and start sending more training to people.

## Adding up the savings

More and more pharma companies are seeing the benefits of this approach firsthand. For one company that needed to train a salesforce of 400, it allowed them to reclaim hundreds of hours of sales time for their field force. By restoring one sales day per month per rep (4,800 days), they realized the equivalent of 23 additional sales reps. That's a return on investment they couldn't afford to do without!



Unlike space travel, it's not rocket science. But it does require rethinking...about the inevitability of change and the role of training in managing it cost-effectively.



[www.eagleproductivity.com](http://www.eagleproductivity.com)  
[info@eagleproductivity.com](mailto:info@eagleproductivity.com)