

The Missing Middle: Why Technology First Efforts Stall

(and What Actually Moves Them Forward)



Constance Harrington

Director of Education & Accreditation
SHIFT

“ Most organizations don't struggle with vision—
they struggle with building the internal structure
to make that vision real. **”**



Technology First Is GROWING But Many Organizations Are Still Stuck



Technology First approaches are **gaining momentum** internationally.






Enabling technology is increasingly **recognized as a way to:**

-  decrease dependence on others
-  increase autonomy
-  support more flexible and self-directed lives



Many organizations have:

-  pilot projects
-  success stories
-  motivated champions



Sustainable progress requires more than access to technology.

It requires education, operational guidance, and consistent implementation practices.



“

*The field has largely moved beyond asking whether enabling technology matters. The challenge now is **implementation maturity.***

”



Defining the Missing Middle:



The gap between intention and execution.



Hidden operational and cultural barriers.



The difference between adoption, integration, sustainability.



The missing middle often reflects a gap between vision and organizational readiness.



Many organizations underestimate the amount of education, operational structure, and cross-team alignment required to sustain implementation.

“

The missing middle is where many Technology First efforts quietly lose momentum. ”

The Illusion of *Progress*



Pilot success does not automatically equal operational readiness.



Individual success stories can create the appearance of broader progress.



Technology often remains dependent on:

-  one champion
-  one team
-  one department



Many efforts remain fragile and difficult to sustain.



Without shared standards and operational expectations, implementation often remains inconsistent and difficult to scale.



“

Pilot success is not the same as sustainable implementation.”

Education is Critical

FOUNDATIONAL & SPECIALIZED EDUCATION



Staff need more than awareness – they need foundational and specialized education, confidence and practical guidance.



Technology First requires a broad set of competencies across planning, assessment, implementation, oversight, leadership, and direct support.



Everyone
Foundational
Education



Specialized Education
for Enabling Technology
Professionals



Specialized Education
for Leaders and
Case Managers



When staff understand what to do, why they are doing it, and how it contributes to a larger vision, implementation becomes more consistent, sustainable and impactful.

“

Organizations that invest in the knowledge, skills, and confidence of their entire workforce create stronger, more sustainable outcomes.

”

Standards & Best Practices are Essential



STANDARDS

Answer the question: *“What does good implementation actually look like?”*

Standards create alignment, establish common expectations, provide a framework for decision-making, and move organizations from individual opinions to shared organizational practices.



BEST PRACTICES

Represent lessons learned from real-world implementation.

They help organizations avoid mistakes, accelerate learning, and apply what works to drive improvement.



SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

When standards and best practices are applied consistently, they lead to:

- Stronger teams
- Better outcomes
- Lasting change



Stronger Teams

Aligned expectations build collaboration, confidence, and capacity.



Better Outcomes

Consistent practices lead to more effective implementation and improved results.



Lasting Change

Consistency creates a foundation for sustained impact over time.



STANDARDS

Set clear expectations and create alignment



BEST PRACTICES

Share what works and drive improvement



SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Consistency, quality and better outcomes



When standards and best practices are applied consistently, they build the foundation for **long-term success**.

Identifying and Measuring Outcomes is Foundational

A thoughtful discovery process helps us define what truly matters, set the right outcomes, and measure progress that drives meaningful impact for individuals and the organization.



DISCOVER

Understand needs, challenges, priorities, and opportunities through meaningful conversations and data.



DEFINE

Collaboratively define individual and organizational outcomes that align to strategy and goals.



MEASURE

Identify indicators and targets that help us track progress and demonstrate value.



OUR OUTCOMES DISCOVERY PROCESS



KNOWING WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- ✓ Clarity on desired outcomes at the individual and organizational level.
- ✓ Aligned efforts and resources focused on what matters most.
- ✓ Measurable progress that demonstrates value and impact.
- ✓ Better decisions, continuous improvement and long-term sustainability.



When we clearly identify and measure outcomes, we drive meaningful impact for individuals, stronger teams and a more successful organization.

Oversight Ensures Accountability. Drives Results.



Effective oversight provides the clarity, accountability and insight needed to make informed decisions, manage risks and ensure we are delivering on what matters most.



Good oversight helps us look ahead, stay on course and continuously improve.



OVERSIGHT IS NOT ABOUT CONTROL.

It's about enabling success, strengthening trust and delivering better outcomes for our community.

STRONG OVERSIGHT LEADS TO:



GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

Clear roles, expectations and follow-through at every level.



BETTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Proactive identification and mitigation of risks.



STRONGER PERFORMANCE

Data-informed decisions lead to better results.



INCREASED PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Transparent, responsible oversight builds trust.



SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Continuous improvement ensures long-term success.



Effective oversight today. → Stronger outcomes tomorrow.

Culture & Buy-In Drive Lasting Impact

Strategy and tools matter, but **strong culture** and **broad buy-in** turn plans into meaningful results.



TRUST



COLLABORATION



SHARED PURPOSE



ACCOUNTABILITY



BELONGING

WHAT DRIVES CULTURE & BUY-IN



OPEN
COMMUNICATION



MEANINGFUL
ENGAGEMENT



STRONG
LEADERSHIP



RECOGNITION &
CELEBRATION



EMPOWERMENT &
OWNERSHIP

THE IMPACT



Stronger engagement
and commitment



Better collaboration
across teams and functions



Greater adaptability
and resilience



Sustainable results
that last



Culture doesn't happen by accident.
It's built by *intentional actions* every day.

Passionate & Dedicated Champions are Key



Strong implementation requires **interdisciplinary ownership** across all levels.



Technology teams are often the **bridge** between strategy and implementation.



Passionate & dedicated champions drive strong teams, **shared ownership** and **better outcomes**.

Q & A

Thank you for your
time and attention!



Constance Harrington

Director of Education & Accreditation
Tech First SHIFT

 **Email:** constance.harrington@techfirstshift.com

 **Website:** <https://techfirstshift.com/>

