

SEE IT · NAME IT · CLOSE IT

The Human Gap. Why approved value fails to arrive.

The Human Gap determines how much of your business case becomes business reality. This paper sets out what the research says, where the value is lost, and the questions every chief executive should be asking of their own transformation.

Lisa Woodall · Founder, The Human Gap

IF YOU READ ONE PAGE

The case, in four lines.

01 The value is approved. It is not all arriving.

Business cases close green while the savings never quite land, the old way of working carries on beside the new one, and nobody can point to where the value went.

02 The cause is human, and it repeats.

The same few patterns show up across programme after programme, because they belong to the organisation rather than to any one project.

03 The research has been saying so for fifty years.

From the Club of Rome in 1979 to the AI programmes of today, the finding holds: change moves faster than the people asked to live it.

04 That makes it a question for the chief executive.

What repeats across the portfolio can only be changed from the top, and it can be seen long before it reaches the numbers.

WHAT THIS PAPER COVERS

- ✓ The two versions of every transformation
- ✓ What the research says
- ✓ Where the value lands on the numbers you own
- ✓ Why the gap goes unnamed
- ✓ Five questions to ask of your own transformation

WRITTEN FOR

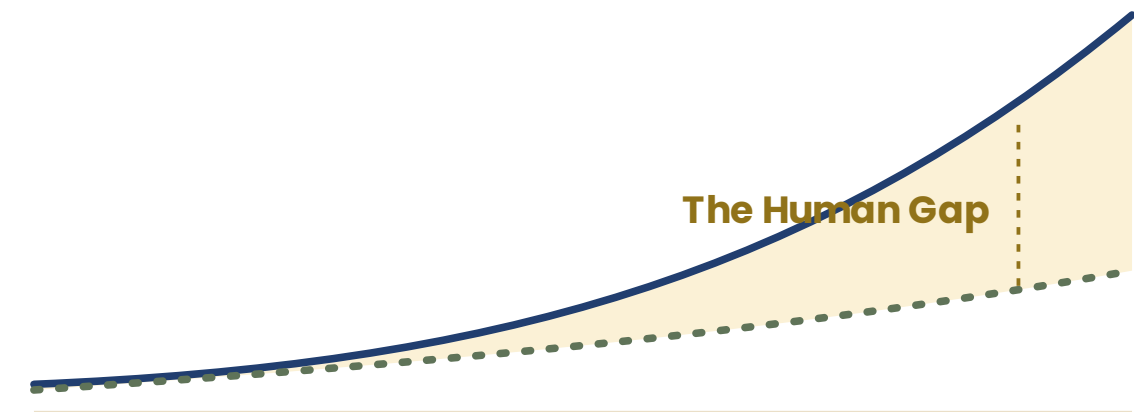
Boards and executive teams, chief executives, CIOs and technology leaders, transformation and change directors, portfolio and PMO leads, people and HR leaders.

WHERE THE VALUE IS LOST

There are two versions of every transformation.

The one you planned and the one people actually experience. The difference between them is The Human Gap, the recurring human patterns that decide whether your expected value arrives, arrives late, or never arrives at all.

— The planned transformation The lived experience



YOU HAVE ALMOST CERTAINLY SEEN IT

The programme closes green and the business case is celebrated. A year on, the old way of working still runs quietly beside the new one, the savings never quite land in the profit and loss, and no one can say exactly where the value went.

That is not a delivery failure. It is The Human Gap showing up as unrealised business value.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Described for fifty years. Now it has a price.

43%

of employees were willing to support planned enterprise change in 2022, down from 74% in 2016, while the planned changes each employee faced rose from two to ten.

GARTNER, 2022

95%

of the generative AI pilots studied showed no measurable impact on profit and loss. The authors point to how the tools fit the work, not to the models.

MIT NANDA, THE GENAI DIVIDE, 2025

70%

of the effort in successful AI programmes goes on people and processes, against 20% on technology and data and 10% on algorithms.

BCG, THE 10, 20, 70 PRINCIPLE

1979

The Club of Rome

No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap. Botkin, Elmandjra and Malitza name the distance between the change people create and their capacity to grasp it, and warn that it will widen.

1999

Pfeffer and Sutton

The Knowing-Doing Gap. The same distance, moved inside the firm. Organisations know what to do, and do not do it.

Today

The cost era

Failure rates, fatigue scores, stalled pilots. Every figure counts what the gap costs. Very few read the condition producing it while the programme is still running.

AI does not create the gap. It widens it, faster than governance can see. The more certain the technology becomes, the more the human side decides whether the value ever arrives.

IN VALUE TERMS, THIS IS A BENEFITS REALISATION RISK

This is not a soft issue. It lands on four numbers you already own.

Revenue growth

At risk: ambition that never converts, so the upside in the case fails to arrive.

Operating margin

At risk: the old cost and complexity stay on the books, and you are double running.

Asset efficiency

At risk: investment committed by inertia, locked in rather than returned.

Execution confidence

At risk: the reported position drifts from the real one, so every other driver is managed on a story.

ONE PROGRAMME IS AN ANECDOTE. THE WHOLE PORTFOLIO IS A CONDITION.

In one programme, slipped benefits get explained by that programme's circumstances, and the explanation is usually plausible. When the same three or four patterns appear in most of them, with different people, sponsors and suppliers, the pattern is not the programme's. **It belongs to the organisation, and only the top of the organisation can act on it.**

WHY IT GETS SKIPPED

It is not that nobody knows.
It is that nobody can name it.

Most teams can feel the gap long before anyone will say it, because naming it makes it real, and real things need an owner.

WHAT GETS TRACKED

Programmes track the plan, the milestones, the systems and the spend. They do not track what people are actually living through, so the first signs of a gap get filed as soft, anecdotal or noise.

They resurface later as slippage and cost, the most expensive place to find them.

The patterns are not random. They follow five human dimensions, read through The Five Human Lenses of Transformation™.



Reflect



Reimagine



Reframe



Rewire



Reconnect

CLOSING THE GAP STARTS AT THE TOP

Five questions to ask of your own transformation.

01

Where does it feel different three levels down?

Not whether it is on track, but whether the work is actually done differently where the value is meant to land.

02

Which version am I being shown?

If only the planned transformation is reported, the one that decides the outcome is invisible at the top.

03

Is the benefits case still being tested?

A quietly renegotiated baseline is the earliest financial sign that the gap is open.

04

What story keeps repeating?

When the same explanation turns up in programme after programme, it belongs to the organisation, and it needs an owner at the top.

05

What one condition could we change?

Bring one frontline voice into a design decision, and change one structural choice because of it.

The conversation moves from who is resisting to which pattern is in play. **That is when the gap starts to narrow, because the room is finally working the actual mechanism instead of talking around it.**

THE OUTCOME

What changes when you close The Human Gap.

The investment is already committed. These are the things that move when The Human Gap is closed.

Faster adoption

People move to the new way sooner, so the change starts paying earlier.

Faster benefits realisation

Benefits arrive closer to the case, and closer to the date the case promised.

Higher ROI

More of the committed spend converts into value you can point to and defend.

Better leadership decisions

A reported position you can trust, so every decision taken after it is a safer one.

Lower resistance

Less friction to push through, and less time and cost spent pushing.

Sustainable behavioural change

The new way holds after the programme closes, so you aren't relaunching it later.

It starts with a conversation. Tell us where your programme is today at **thehumangap.co.uk**

Next in this series · How the gap is read, named and measured across a whole portfolio.