

Joseph Smith - August 25, 2021

INTERVIEW - KATHLEEN KRESKY

Know your Why and Go All-In



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Read Part 1 of our interview with Kathleen Kresky on Gore Mutual's transformation.

The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Joe: *Insurance has the components of a commodity product. Purchasing insurance is essentially a promise to pay a claim at some point in the future, which is provided by all carriers. Still, opportunities exist to create a unique value proposition or a differentiated offering. How is Gore Mutual carving out a differentiated offering in the insurance space?*

Kathleen: As a mutual company, we are driven by our purpose: we offer insurance that does good. We reinvest our profits and resources to make a positive impact in our communities.

The way we approach the claims process reflects it. Our customer focus groups have revealed that the people who have gone through a claims process with us said that the experience encouraged them to remain our customers. That says something about the values we hold.



Joe: *All organizations undergoing transformation face challenges. Tell us about the common challenges and the solutions companies should implement to resolve them.*

Kathleen: The biggest challenge is getting distracted. **Distractions are a recipe for failure in a transformation.** One solution to this lies in setting the most aggressive timelines possible. If the timeline is too long, it won't be possible to pause other initiatives until the launch happens and the distractions will take hold. It's critical to set a timeline where the stakeholders can visualize the target state becoming a reality. That way, they won't be tempted to spin up other initiatives in the interim.

The second solution is to **be disciplined**. This is why the first step in our transformation journey was to set up a Transformation Office and has kept us laser focused.

Number three is to **establish dynamic resource allocation**. Focus the talent and investment in the areas that are needed the most. Be deliberate in selecting the top talent to dedicate their time to what's most important. There's no time for business as usual.

Number four is – **go all in**. To implement true transformation, you must let go of old methodologies. They won't fit anymore. By incrementally transforming an organization, you constrain the design, waste resources fitting that incremental improvement into the old world and limit the results.

Save the continuous improvement until after the launch. As soon as the target state is launched, examine what works in production, listen to customer feedback, and hear from employees about the features they like and dislike. Then, develop a pipeline of continuous improvement. And continually test and monitor it to ensure that the newly transformed environment remains relevant.

Joe: *What do you see as the main function of the Transformation Office and its role in change management?*

Kathleen: It is to orchestrate the moving parts and make sure they fit together so all stakeholders can remain focused on the priorities. The Transformation Office has the luxury of thinking only about the transformation. Other functions need to juggle day-to-day operations that keep the business running as usual. While I said it's a luxury, it's also essential. No matter what happens during the routine activities, the organization needs a team of people dedicated to delivering successful and meaningful change, and nothing else.

Joe: *What's your advice to executives in the insurance industry, based on current trends?*

Kathleen: **Our benchmarks are no longer set by the insurance industry players. They're set by every organization that delivers personalized, accessible and enjoyable interactions.** People don't look at the insurance industry and say, "Oh yeah, I get it. This is how insurance operates." They view insurance as a convoluted process. They think, "Wait a minute – I can order a pizza and

see on my phone where it is and when it's going to arrive at my door. How come I can't buy insurance and access it immediately like buying an eBook?"

Joe: Do you have any advice for executives in any industry who are about to embark on organizational transformation?

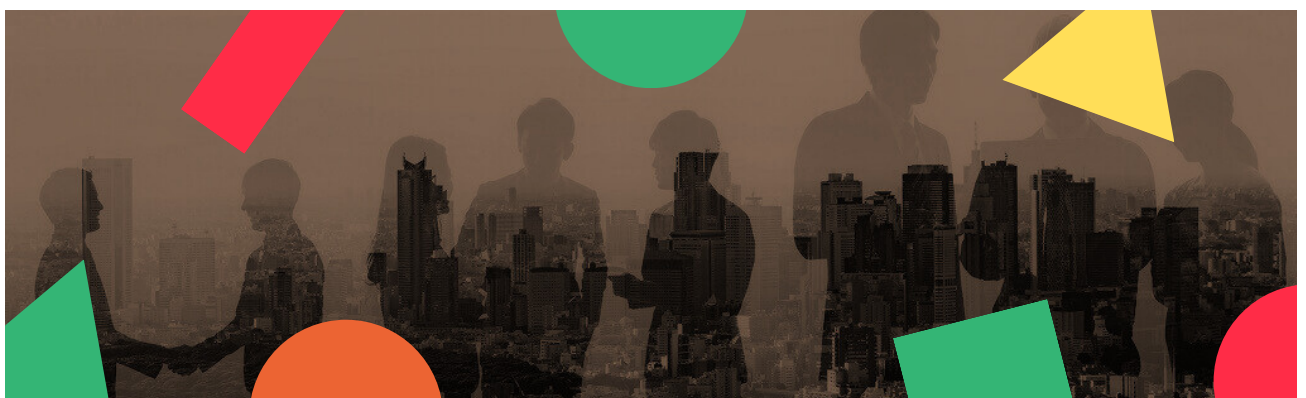
Kathleen: The first thing I would say to them is to know your why. If your why is not compelling enough, you will not have the drive to see it through. There's no version of transformation that doesn't come with challenges. If it were easy, it wouldn't be transformation. So, if the why isn't there, there won't be anything to ground the organization through the problems. Every obstacle that is overcome will amplify the alignment and commitment as people feel the adrenaline rush of solving problems and achieving success.

Joe: How has Gore Mutual kicked off its strategic transformation?

Kathleen: Gore Mutual's first step in its strategic transformation was the launch of a national contact centre in July with the goal of providing Ontario customers faster and more efficient service.

The centre is underpinned by industry-leading technology that is enabling brokers to offer their customers superior service in the area of Ontario personal lines automobile and Individually Rated Commercial Auto (IRCA) insurance. Read the press release to learn more [here](#).

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This is the first of a two-part interview series. To read Part 2, click [here](#).

