



TOP-DOWN, BOTTOM-UP, & TWIST SIDEWAYS COMMUNICATION

by Kathy Graham

The CFO role is being highly impacted and transmuted by digital disruptors that are using a different organizational communication structure to support their digital finance transformation successes...and this structure is far from what is common in more traditional firms.

One of the main facets leading to digital finance transformation success is changing the flow of organizational communication—and this statement is straight from Facebook's CHRO at AICPA's June 2019 National Conference. He said that the typical communication pattern in organizations is TOP-DOWN: the boss at the top issues directions to those below. However, in successful digital finance transformations that communication pattern needs to be TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP, all the way to the employee working directly with the consumer/client/purchaser of a company's products or services.

If you want to “Amazon” your digital finance transformation, which means that as a consumer purchasing your product/service clicks online—or as the consumer lifts your company's product off a shelf in a brick-and-mortar location—that purchase is automatically billed to their credit card, the sale immediately flows through and is recorded by all of the company's departments involved in the transaction, inventory is instantaneously updated and orders to suppliers—with costs simultaneously recorded—are placed as necessary at that very moment, **then there is one more change needed to an organization's overall communication structure:**

- Communication flows from TOP-DOWN and BOTTOM-UP, but the flow itself needs to “twist” from a **VERTICAL** TOP-DOWN/BOTTOM-UP FLOW to a **HORIZONTAL** TOP-DOWN/BOTTOM-UP continuing conversation.

At AICPA's October 15-16, 2019 “[Finance Transformation](#)” in NYC, I will be:

- Interviewing a prominent CFO in a Fireside Chat, where we'll be discussing “*How to Lead and Be a Change Advocate to Drive Exponential Growth in Performance.*”
 - **Choosing the right analytics, ones that won't drive you crazy and that will provide you pragmatic business intelligence**, is a key component, which is why I will be interviewing in the next few weeks via **LinkedIn LiveStreaming** another AICPA NYC conference speaker, **Sam Recenello, CEO, Equinox Worldwide**, about **WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT KPI to track and WHAT IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT KPI to track...and why.**
- Twice leading a roundtable limited to 10-12 CFOs in confidential group discussions on “**The DNA of the future CFO: today's CFO vs. tomorrow's CFO—the skills, the scope, the responsibilities, resources/tools/training AND the communication changes** likely to be necessary.”
 - Another AICPA NYC conference speaker—**Wells Fargo NA's Ken Hubbell, SVP, Instructional Design Strategy and Innovation**—will share with me in an upcoming podcast: **IT'S THE YEAR 2020—what's most important for your team to understand about that BOTTOM-UP FLOW from your customer regarding their needs and emotions** (yes, your finance team now needs to understand about customer needs and emotions).

Other AICPA speakers that I will be highlighting in this month before the conference on topics they'll be covering more in-depth at either the [10/15-16/19 NYC](#) and/or [12/9-10/19 Phoenix](#) and/or [6/7-11/20 Las Vegas](#) conferences AND that are related to my NYC topics are:

- **Que Consulting Founder, current CFO United Church of Christ, & former CAO/CFO of 3 IPO major corporations, Nick Katzakis, on how he has experienced the change from “Silo-ed CFO,” to “Strategic CFO,” to “CFO as CEO's Business Partner”** and how best to transform the environment you're in to where the CFO role and team need to be next for corporate growth.
- **Dana Bowie Earles, OCC's First Vice President and Treasurer, on “Finance Transformation Is a Diversity Conversation Opportunity.”**
- **Nicole Long, former Group Finance Director and Global Training Facilitator for Coca-Cola, on “Cross-Functional Partnerships: Matrixing Away Silos,”**—a super important necessity if you want the HORIZONTAL element of communication and your digital transformation to succeed.
- **Vicki Dudley, CFO and Treasurer of TTX Company, the largest North American owner of railcars, on the same topic as Nick Katzakis, but from a different industry perspective...and a few more speaker interviews with me are still in the works.**

CFO communication: it's now TOP-DOWN, BOTTOM-UP, and TWIST sideways—what an evolution, but look how it's made the CFO role grow from silo-ed to the CEO's business partner.