

Bridging the Adaptation Gap in GRC Systems: How to Maximise Long-Term Value

Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) systems have become essential technologies for organisations to manage risks, meet regulatory requirements, and ensure internal processes run according best control practices. However, many businesses face a common challenge after system implementation. End users often struggle a long period to fully adopt the new system. This significantly impacts the system's effectiveness, leading to underutilisation (not using functionalities) and missed opportunities to realise the value potential the new system was meant to bring. This struggle to use the new system as anticipated is called the adaptation Gap. So, how can organisations limit the consequences of the Adaptation Gap and ensure their GRC system delivers value directly after go-live?

By Linda Nyvelius and Ronald Teuthof



What is the Adaptation Gap?

The adaptation gap refers to the time-period after a GRC-system has been implemented, during which users may experience difficulty adjusting to the new technology. It is the period of time the user eventually find that the new system actually in at least as good as the old system (or way of working).

The Adaptation Gap is often the result of bad system implementation, inadequate support by the supplier, insufficient training for champions and end-users, or unclear communication about the system's benefits.

If users don't see how the new system can improve their work or the value their work provides to their company, they are likely to revert to old methods or use the system minimally.

In some cases users are really not using the new system's functionalities or are even creating a lot of resistance. How bad the situation is, we call the Usage Gap. The Usage Gap deepens the adaptation gap, making it harder for the system to deliver its full potential. It simply takes longer to really see the benefits of the new system and realise the value anticipated.

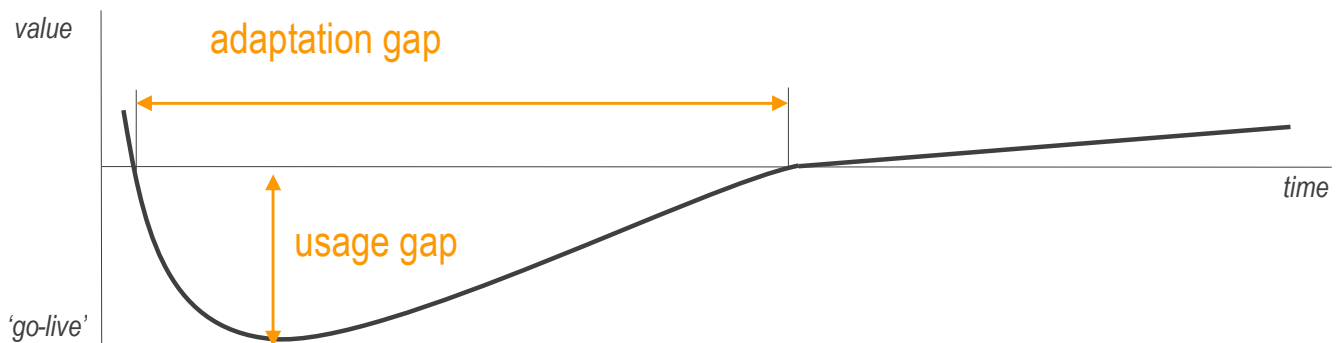


Figure 2. The adaptation and Usage Gap.

Common Causes of the Adaptation Gap

Several factors contribute to the adaptation gap:

- A bad system implementation. During the implementation, the benefits have not been communicated properly, users are not actively involved in the system selection process and they create a sort of dislike to the system caused by a dislike of the process. They are not properly 'defrosted' of their old way-of-working.
- Insufficient user training: Without proper training, users may feel overwhelmed by the new system, leading to uncertainties in the usage of the system and eventually a low engagement.
- Poor change management: Implementing a GRC system often involves changes in processes and responsibilities. If change is not managed well, users may resist adopting the system. Users try to force their old way-of-working into the new system, which creates tons of inefficiencies, data, and reporting issues.

- Lack of leadership involvement: Without clear direction from leadership, the system may not be positioned as a strategic value adding solution, but just another tool to make their work more difficult, leading to weak support.
- Focus on technology over people: Focusing too much on the technology rather than user needs can result in a misalignment between the system and its intended users. You never can implement a GRC-solution as a technical IT-driven exercise.

The Impact of the Adaptation Gap

Failing to close the adaptation gap can have serious consequences for an organisation. A system that is underused or poorly adopted not only wastes the investment made in its implementation, but can also slow down regular business processes and reduce overall efficiency.

In some cases, users may abandon the system entirely, resulting in a loss of confidence in the project and resistance to future initiatives to improve business performance and continuous improvement. In general – a long Adaptation Gap will result in change resistance.

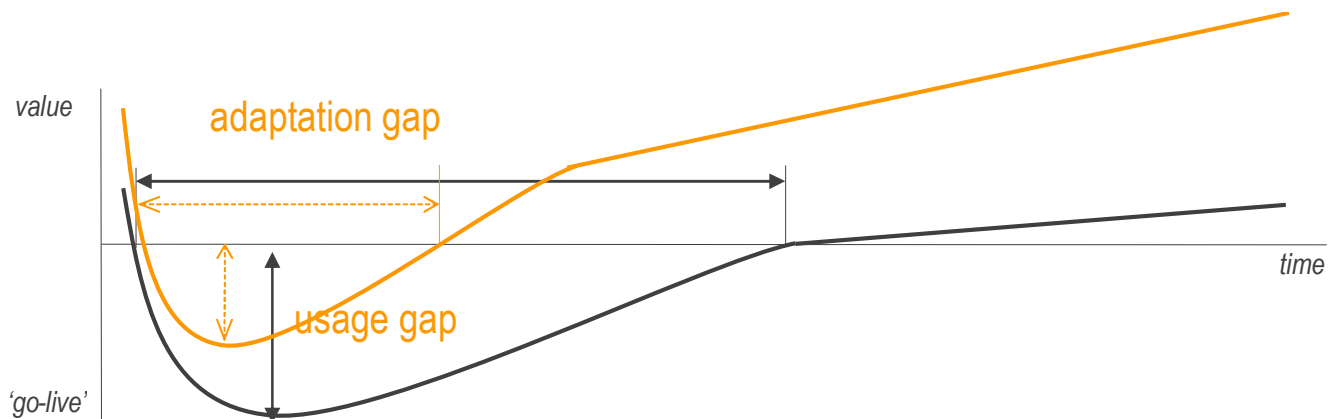


Figure 2. Closing the adaptation gap.

Closing the Adaptation Gap: A Strategic Approach

To ensure that GRC systems provide long-term value, organisations need a strategic approach to closing the adaptation gap. Here are several key strategies to consider which are graphically shown in the above picture:

1. Tailored Training and Support

A one-size-fits-all training programme is unlikely to meet the diverse needs of all users. Instead, organisations should offer tailored training that addresses the specific requirements of different user groups – from executives to frontline staff. Ongoing support,

including refresher courses and accessible help resources, can also prevent disengagement.

At BR1GHT, we advocate for identifying system champions within the organisation—individuals who understand the system well and can support their colleagues in using it effectively. This peer-to-peer support model can boost adoption rates and create internal advocates for the system. During our implementations we put maximum effort to exchange all our knowledge to the system champions, and in the meantime make them comfortable enough to teach their end-users, and help them to see how you can continuously improve.



2. Incremental Implementation: Small Wins, Big Impact

Instead of aiming for a large-scale, all-at-once implementation, consider a more incremental approach. By focusing on quick wins and manageable phases of improvement, organisations can deliver visible results early on, helping users see the value of the system faster. This plateau-thinking method creates momentum, reduces resistance to change, and allows for user feedback to shape future enhancements.

3. Leadership Engagement and Clear Mandate

A successful GRC system requires strong leadership and a clear mandate from senior executives. When the board and C-suite view the system as a strategic tool for governance and decision-making, it gains the credibility and support needed for long-term success. Leaders must also set clear expectations for how the

system will be used and ensure that it aligns with the organisation's overall vision and goals. Before the start of a GRC-project, we help our clients define and take the right ownership at the right level. This creates a dynamic implementation with full commitment at any level throughout the all project phases from system selection, implementation, after go-live phase and into continuous improvement.

4. Post-Implementation Support: Beyond Go-Live – value maintenance

The real work begins after the system goes live. Many organisations overlook the importance of post-implementation support, leading to disengagement and underutilisation of the system. At BR1GHT, we offer six months of after-care, focusing on maximising system usage and closing the adaptation gap. This includes health checks, ongoing user training, and ensuring that the system remains aligned with business objectives.

5. Continuous Improvement -value Enhancement

A GRC system should not remain static—it must evolve with the organisation. This means continuously improving the system through advanced technologies such as AI, data analytics, and process automation. By integrating these enhancements, organisations can turn their GRC system into a dynamic tool that not only ensures compliance but also drives strategic decision-making and operational efficiency. We help our clients to define their GRC-ambitions before system selection. We draft their ambitions into a vision document and clear development stages. Therefore our clients can directly after go-live initiate the next steps in their GRC-roadmap,

Conclusion: Building a Future-Proof GRC-system

Closing the adaptation gap in GRC-systems is essential to ensuring long-term success. With the right strategies—tailored training, leadership involvement, incremental implementation, and continuous improvement - organisations can maximise the value of their GRC-systems and ensure that they remain relevant as business needs evolve.

At BR1GHT, we specialise in helping organisations bridge this gap by aligning technology with user needs, providing ongoing support, and continuously enhancing systems to deliver more value over time. A GRC system is not just a one-time investment; it's a long-term asset that should grow with your organisation. By focusing on strategic after-care and continuous improvement, we help you ensure that your GRC system remains a powerful tool for governance, risk management, and compliance for years to come.

The Digital GRC playbook

This is the first article of our BR1GHT digital GRC playbook. We have also developed a playbook on Digital Control and Digital Audit. In the Digital playbooks, we produced a series of publications about the following subjects:

- Bridging the Adaptation Gap in GRC Systems: How to Maximise Long-Term Value.
- Towards Continuous Monitoring.
- The technology behind Continuous Monitoring, practical client cases.
- Maturity modelling. Making the step from compliance towards trust.
- Risk Management redefined.
- Realtime compliance towards horizontal and vertical controls integration.
- Voluntary oversight; moving away from external third-party assurance. Taking control ourselves.

- World class Internal Audit. Adding maximum value.
- How to audit and control new emerging technologies driven by the digital transformation.
- Trust Management; focusing on value in a world of digital transparency.
- Building new digital capabilities in the 2'nd and 3'rd line of defence.
- Vendor Risk Management.

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‘Let us help you to capture, enhance & protect your business value with technology’.

Drs Ronald Teuthof RE CISA is born in The Netherlands and worked for 28 years for PwC The Netherlands of which 13 years as a partner responsible for IT and (internal) audit & risk assurance related topics. In 2019 Ronald established BR1GHT with the purpose to add more value to clients, together with clients and with partners using best practice technology. BR1GHT now provides services to over 50 clients in 12 countries and works closely together with large communities of clients and technology experts.

Mr Linda Nyvelius is born in Sweden and worked as a lawyer and economic consultant for 3 years before she became manager and later CEO of the IIA (Institute of Internal Auditors) in Sweden guiding the Internal Audit profession. In that period she also was connected to the ECIIA as senior consultant and Audit Committee member. In parallel with her reallocation to The Netherlands she started at BR1GHT in the role of Director responsible for the Business Area Internal Audit and the Nordic region.

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