

PARTNER STORIES

Kearney Partner Story

Kearney, a leading global management consulting firm, observed a major shift in client expectations. In response, the firm introduced Kearney's NEXT, powered by Conductor™ to deliver new services and technologies to their clients to boost performance and strategic transformation efforts.

Sensei Labs September 20, 2024



KEARNEY

Meeting the challenges of an evolving industry

Kearney is a leading global management consulting firm with offices in more than 40 countries. Founded in 1926, it serves more than three-quarters of the Fortune Global 500 and many of the most influential governmental and nonprofit companies worldwide. Kearney consultants are expert in strategic business transformation and in improving performance across manufacturing, supply chain, customer experience, and other core business processes.

KEARNEY

In recent years the firm observed a major shift in their clients' expectations. The disruptions of the digital age are forcing many client companies into a state of permanent transformation and clients are looking beyond their most immediate problems. Companies now want management consultants to help them build permanent new capacity to adapt to the unprecedented and increasingly unpredictable changes unfolding all around them. To meet this demand, Kearney partnered with Sensei Labs to roll out Conductor, our collaborative work management platform, to support engagements across their global client base and service offerings. As a cloud-based application, Conductor made it easy for Kearney to unlock new business opportunities, win new business at a higher rate, and create and sell a new channel of technology-backed services.

"We joined forces with Sensei Labs to fundamentally redefine what a consulting firm offers to a client. Conductor has really exceeded our wildest expectations."

— Alex Liu, *Managing Director and Chairman, Kearney*



Revolutionary platform

Conductor makes it easy to actively engage all players across large, complex projects. This, in turn, provides leaders continuous visibility into project progress, exponentially strengthens risk detection, and greatly increases certainty of program benefits. The platform presents the most relevant data from across a project portfolio in a unified dashboard view—a single, real-time version of the truth that helps project teams move forward with confidence while collaborating with ease.

By leveraging Conductor's extensive Microsoft Office 365 integrations, including Microsoft Power BI, Kearney can create customized dashboards meaningful to senior client leaders. Embedding Kearney's proven methodologies, tools, and insights into the platform enables the firm to deliver their expertise quickly and cost-effectively to their client teams.

How a value creation platform differs from what you already own

Five categories of software get used to run value creation. They stack on top of one another, and each one stops somewhere different.

CATEGORY	BUILT FOR	WHERE IT STOPS	WHO OWNS IT
Collaborative work management Monday, Asana, Smartsheet	Teams coordinating tasks. Strong on collaboration and adoption.	No strategic alignment, no benefits tracking, no stage gates. The data model is flat, so governance across a program is painful.	The company
Project and portfolio management Planview, Clarity, OnePlan	PMOs managing portfolios and resources. Strong on stage gates and resourcing.	Partial benefits tracking and a thinner execution layer, so teams keep a work management tool alongside it.	The company
Portfolio monitoring and fund reporting Chronograph, Cobalt, Allvue	Finance and investor relations. Collects financials and serves LPs.	Reports the result of value creation. Does not run the work that produces it.	Fund finance
Consulting-firm platforms McKinsey Wave, BCG Key, Bain Accelerator	Consulting engagements with financial targets. Strong on stage gates and executive reporting.	Stops before the execution layer, so a Monday or Asana runs alongside. Built to run one particular way.	The consulting firm
Value creation and portfolio operations platform Conductor	Portfolio companies running their value creation plan, and the fund seeing how it is going.	Spans the whole stack. Alignment and prioritization, stage gates, benefits realization, and real project management, on one data model.	You

Monitoring tools tell you what the company reported this quarter. A value creation platform tells you which initiatives produced it, and which ones are behind.

CONDUCTOR BY SENSEI LABS

Kearney uses Conductor to build permanent new capabilities in their client organizations by:

- Digitizing collaboration, real-time data management, risks & issues, milestones, decisions, and benefits tracking
- Enabling tailored work flows to deliver specific business outcomes
- Tailoring data capture and visualizations to their clients' structure, data model, access, and reporting needs
- Providing end-to-end transparency of accountability
- Managing program delivery information (timelines, workstreams, projects, and tasks) as well as tracking any data-driven KPIs (savings, benefits, budgets, etc.)
- Enabling teams to quickly build status reports, including flash reports, collaboratively using live, in-platform data
- Enabling sophisticated permissions and access at the user and group-level
- Providing a secure and auditable environment for all data and documents
- Being accessible from tablet and smartphone, and browser optimized

A network for success

A successful partnership includes not only the main players but a whole network of interconnected stakeholders. The Kearney – Sensei Labs partnership exceeds expectations of value generation by optimizing the role of each stakeholder:

- Kearney's NEXT Team
- Internal network of experts
- Kearney client project teams
- Kearney clients
- The Sensei Labs team

The Sensei Labs team

The team at Sensei Labs is dedicated to **supporting the entire network** of stakeholders by building capacity, knowledge, and best practice for Conductor and related technologies. We maintain a knowledge base of past experiences, best practices, training planning, and change management practices. Working in collaboration with Kearney's teams, Sensei Labs helps think through how the platform can fit into their larger objectives and create the most value for Kearney and their clients.

Kearney's NEXT Team

The goal of Kearney's NEXT is to blend Kearney's industry and operations expertise and sophisticated change management capabilities with state-of-the art technologies. Kearney's NEXT collaborate with Sensei Labs to champion platform adoption across the firm and interfaces directly with the Kearney senior leadership team and board in delivering the vision for the platform internally.

The team is a global group of experienced management consultants with deep understanding of the challenges faced by both Kearney project teams and their clients. NEXT is led by Jonathan Anscombe, a London-based Kearney partner with 30 years of experience.

The team has formed a network of subject matter experts across Kearney, including practice leaders who are knowledgeable in platform technology and can act as advocates with project teams and clients. These subject matter experts provide direct feedback to the NEXT team on client requirements for Conductor including usage, configurations, and new capabilities.

As solutions are deployed in client organizations, a constant stream of insights helps drive empathetic design and agile development to further Conductor's capabilities. This approach has fueled remarkable progress in a very short period.

The Sensei Labs team

The Sensei Labs Customer Success team partners with NEXT to build relationships across Kearney. By working with this network, Sensei Labs is able to develop the platform with cross-functionality in mind and share best practices across the various practice specializations.

Increasing speed of implementation

Mergers and Integrations (M&I) tend to be on much shorter timelines than other types of engagements. From the moment the consulting RFP is issued to the time work begins can be as little as a few weeks. We worked closely with Kearney to build simplified setup and processes for their M&I practice to meet the high demand for new client instances and increase the speed of implementation.

As a part of the setup process, templates, configuration guides, and training decks were developed that combined best practices from across the team.

We were able to reduce the turnaround time to set up the platform for these teams from weeks to a matter of days by building these best practices directly into the workstreams, giving Kearney the flexibility and speed to quickly launch new projects for their clients.

Leveraging the strong connections built across Kearney's teams, we were then able to transfer similar efficiencies to other Kearney teams, increasing the speed of delivery for all.

Kearney client project teams

Kearney client project teams work alongside their clients to shape strategy and to execute business improvement and business transformation initiatives.

An Instance Lead is assigned to each client project team when Conductor is being deployed to a client. Their role is to coordinate with project team leaders and members to translate PMO tasks into the new platform-enabled workflow.

Each Instance Lead has a deep understanding of Conductor's technology and its potential:

thinking through the hierarchy, structure and use cases, the client's specific needs, change management, training plans, the requisite financial structure, and overall keys to successful platform adoption. These insights are blended with the client project team's deep understanding of project objectives, project management, and client preferences. The Instance Lead uses this knowledge to optimally configure the platform to meet the project team and client's desired outcomes. Instance Leads also collate continuous feedback on user experience and new feature requests to feed back to the NEXT and Sensei Labs teams.

The Sensei Labs team

Sensei Labs' support enables the Kearney client project teams to collaborate more effectively with their clients and drive collaboration within their client teams, enabling them to deliver a more sustainable solution than would otherwise have been possible. The client project teams are able to run their engagements on Conductor, building greater accountability and transparency directly into the process.

Unlocking new business opportunities

Transformation initiatives often need a dedicated project management office (PMO) to orchestrate across the various workstreams. Kearney's client project teams are experts at building the capabilities, frameworks, and best practices to ensure that their clients' new PMO is set up for success.

Conductor's collaborative work management capabilities enable Kearney to digitize their processes and collaborate with their clients alongside the work being performed in the platform. Using Conductor's built in accountability and transparency, Kearney clients can visualize and track project data and progress in real-time and use Conductor's project reviews to easily demonstrate project success.

Visibility is improved and trends in project data become more evident as the amount of data increases with each new workstream added to the platform. Clients looking to take advantage of these additional insights award more and more workstreams to Kearney's teams, increasing the number of contracts they win and generating additional revenue.

Kearney clients

The role of end user is overlooked in most change initiatives. They're seen as merely benefitting from the end value created by the change. Collaborating jointly on Conductor instead encourages active participation of client organization and consultant team alike. Kearney's client project teams are able to work alongside their clients on a single common platform, enabling them to work in partnership with their clients to achieve and exceed targeted results.

The client team also helps to enforce a standard of rigor around the processes that the Kearney team is establishing, to accelerate adoption and standardize best practices. In this way, once Kearney has built up the capacity and expertise within the client organization, Conductor is more readily transferred to the client who can continue to benefit from the technology in future initiatives.

Because their role is so important, clients receive coaching from both Kearney and Sensei Labs.

The Sensei Labs team

We use our knowledge of the platform to guide our partners and their clients through the implementation of the platform that will best suit their needs. Together with our partners at Kearney, we create strategies that look beyond the immediate feature requests to anticipate future issues and create solutions around that will deliver long term benefits.

Tailoring solutions to meet today's challenges

One of Kearney's clients was undergoing a digital transformation which required them to closely monitor the costs and savings data related to their transformation. They needed a way to present their data visually and easily segment it to present the most relevant data to each audience segment.

As we talked through their situation, we formulated a plan to best suit their unique needs. We leveraged our best-in-class Microsoft Office 365 integration to enable the team to build and embed a robust Microsoft Power BI dashboard directly into Conductor.

With this new integration, our partners were able to quickly create executive level dashboards tailored to the needs of their various stakeholders. Instead of having to generate separate reports and custom visuals for each user group, Kearney can now quickly and easily use these dynamic data visualizations to deliver the information to everyone at once — a valuable time savings for the entire initiative.

"Imagine a world where you can instantly access every piece of expertise, knowledge and intellectual property inside your company. Imagine a business environment where you have absolute clarity and transparency of what people are working on. That's the reality we're working toward in partnership with Sensei Labs." **Jonathan Anscombe** *partner with Kearney and leader of Kearney's NEXT*

Conclusion

By building a network of internal and external partners, Kearney has created a strong ecosystem. Supported by Sensei Labs, Kearney has leveraged Conductor to unlock new business opportunities, increase the win rate for new business, and opened up a new sales channel for technology-backed services.

Frequently asked questions

What is Kearney's NEXT team?

An internal Kearney team that pairs the firm's industry and change-management expertise with technology platforms, powered by Conductor. Led by London-based partner Jonathan Anscombe, NEXT champions platform adoption across the firm, works with a network of practice-leader subject matter experts, and feeds client requirements back into how the platform is used on engagements.

Why did a strategy consulting firm adopt a collaborative work management platform?

Because clients stopped asking for one-off fixes and started asking for permanent capacity to adapt. Kearney observed that digital disruption was pushing clients into a state of continuous transformation, and that they wanted consultants to help build lasting capability. Rolling out Conductor across engagements let Kearney deliver that, win new business at a higher rate, and sell a new channel of technology-backed services.

How does a consulting firm leave a client with lasting capability rather than a report?

Kearney embeds its methodologies, tools, and insights into the platform, then tailors workflows, data capture, and dashboards, including Microsoft Power BI views, to each client's structure and reporting needs. The client keeps a working system with real-time data, risk and milestone tracking, benefits tracking, and auditable accountability after the consultants leave.

What does a successful consulting-firm technology partnership look like in practice?

A network, not a handoff. The Kearney partnership involves the NEXT team, an internal network of practice experts, Kearney project teams, Kearney's clients, and the Sensei Labs team, which maintains a knowledge base of best practices, training plans, and change-management approaches and helps each engagement think through where the platform fits.

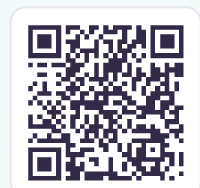
What changes when every participant in a large program works from one platform?

Continuous visibility for leaders, stronger risk detection, and greater certainty that program benefits will land. Kearney's experience is that actively engaging every participant on a shared platform, with one real-time version of the truth across the portfolio, changes how a large program behaves compared with periodic status reporting.

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