

MAKING THE *Change*



HOW TO LEAD A DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION TO SUCCESS

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Executive Summary

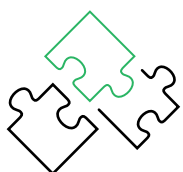
Humans and habits go together like bread and butter. Even when those habits are detrimental, people have a hard time altering their behaviors. This can help explain why 70% of all workplace change initiatives fail. But in today's business environment, evolution is inevitable, so individuals must constantly learn new skills, technology and procedures to be competitive.



One of the biggest obstacles to transformation is the human mind, which is hard-wired to repeat past actions. We're biologically compelled to uphold the status quo even when it's not the best option, a condition known as "repetition compulsion."

To overcome the challenge of personal change, it's helpful to understand decision-making models, such as transtheoretical and ADKAR. Both outline a five-step process individuals must undergo to form new behavioral patterns. To effectively institute changes in the workplace, leaders must first understand the psychological journey workers take to embrace the new.

Additionally, organizations as a whole must be prepared to adapt new processes and procedures. A typical business today has experienced five major changes in the last three years, and nearly 75% expect to increase these kinds of initiatives going forward. Yesterday's methods won't pass muster in a modern landscape, leaving laggard businesses at a disadvantage when trying to compete with advanced competitor systems.



Leaders can **increase** their chances of successfully implementing new programs by understanding the theoretical models of **change management**.

Leaders can increase their chances of successfully implementing new programs by understanding the theoretical models of change management. Each takes a different approach to accomplishing systemwide transformations, and some models are better suited for certain situations. For example, Lewin's model is specifically designed for large-scale initiatives, while Kotter's eight-step model focuses on the people side of change for companies of all sizes. Business leaders can customize their approach by combining elements from both to best fit the needs of their industry, business structure, type of change sought and workforce.

Additional obstacles exist for digital transformations and can make those types of changes even more challenging. Most digital technologies provide only the possibility for efficiency gains, which can leave even the best workers hesitant to accept things will be better than they were before. Furthermore, the age of an organization's workforce can impact digital transformations.

To put organizations on the path to success, a holistic set of tools in this document can help facilitate change management programs.

Establishing new processes and procedures isn't easy. But with the right culture, tools and mindset, organizations across industries can overcome the inherent barriers of change management to increase ROI while keeping employees happy, engaged and productive.

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PART 1

The Human Condition and Why *Change Is Hard*

If change were easy, perhaps more people *would* embrace it. However, research reveals the reason so many people struggle to espouse this simple edict is because doing so opposes established neuropathways that compel us to repeat past behaviors. Upholding the status quo isn't just socially comfortable; it's biologically ingrained in the human mind.¹

A study from the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* explored the science of decision-making to find a neural signature for contemplating hard choices. Experts from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging at University College London devised a test to see if participants would forgo action in favor of a default option when faced with difficult decisions.

The researchers discovered that people did not tend to stick with the status quo for easy choices, but overwhelmingly chose that option in difficult-choice scenarios, leading to suboptimal decisions. Sigmund Freud called this phenomenon “repetition compulsion,” a biological drive to do what we’ve done before.²



The scientists also discovered a pattern when participants went *against* the default decision. Two regions of the brain experienced increased activity *and* connectivity: the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the subthalamic nucleus (STN). While the STN is hypothesized to be important for motivating action, the PFC is well-known to affect self-control and decision-making. A direct relationship between the two regions could not be determined absolutely, but the researchers’ observations led them to conclude the PFC boosts STN activity. In other words, the brain’s “doer” gets a not-so-gentle nudge from its “decider” that it’s time to take action.

The findings suggest that bucking the norm in a *difficult* scenario requires *additional* motivation or confidence. This can help explain why change is so challenging. If people question the benefits of a new initiative or are unsure why the change needs to occur at all, they will likely resort to past behaviors.

Although self-efficacy – an individual’s belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific, desired results – can predict the likelihood of a successful change,³ *motivation* is key to spur the initial action.

It’s important to note that motivation is closely related to reward value, which is strongly influenced by previous experiences. Sure, change can be rewarding, but new behaviors are likely to play second fiddle to existing habits in the absence of an irresistible impetus. For people to adopt a change, they need to know a payoff is in store. Otherwise, they have little reason to dedicate the cognitive function required to master new competencies.



Additionally, since humans can only fully concentrate on one thing at a time, learning new skills, patterns or processes means directing attention away from other goals⁴ – yet another reason why behavior change can seem so hard.

Knowing the human psychology that makes the unknown intimidating can help organizations detour around roadblocks to change-management success. Another critical component to grasp is the internal process people undergo to alter their own behavior.

Models of Decision-Making

To help understand and overcome the challenge of change, it can be helpful to view adopting new behaviors as a process rather than an event.⁵ Two models of transformation, the transtheoretical model of decision-making and the ADKAR model of individual change, give insight into the cyclical nature of the process.

TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL

Developed by psychologists James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, the transtheoretical model (TTM) outlines five stages individuals undergo when modifying their modus operandi. With the exception of the first phase, most individuals don't progress through the model in a linear fashion. Instead, people tend to cycle in and out of stages until the transformation is permanent.

Stage	Behavior
Precontemplation	Individuals are not consciously aware change is necessary, or they know they need to make adjustments, but have no plans to take action. People in this stage are considered to be resistant, unready or in denial. <i>Example:</i> A front-line manager hears about employees using the company's new app, but doesn't think it will help them.
Contemplation	There is no commitment yet, but individuals have become aware of the need for change and are weighing the pros and cons. Even though they are consciously thinking about it, "profound ambivalence can cause people to remain in this stage for long periods of time."⁶ <i>Example:</i> Maybe the manager has started observing how the software helps other managers streamline expense reports and time-off requests, reducing doubt about its benefits.
Preparation	The pros of making transformation now outweigh the cons in the individual's mind, and he or she has started making an action plan. This is when people start researching options and brainstorming tactics to make the change. <i>Example:</i> Perhaps the manager has started looking into training courses for the new software or asking colleagues how they use it.

Continued on next page

Action	This is the very start of change implementation, which includes coping with challenges associated with the new behavior. Although this is the most visible element in the process, the previous steps are critical to success in this stage, as is vigilance against returning to previous behaviors. Example: The new software is being used, and the benefits are visible: no more tracking down employees for correct info or manually handling time-off requests and expenses.
Maintenance	The change has now become the new norm. Returning to past actions isn't as big of a concern as people are more confident in their ability to continue the new behavior. It can take weeks, months or years to reach this stage, depending on how difficult it was to adopt the new behavior. Example: Now our worker sees how much more productive they are with the new software and would never consider going back to manual processes that were time-consuming and prone to errors.

Inevitably, an organization's employees will be in different phases of the TTM model in regard to new initiatives. Some workers will be deeply entrenched in denial, while others will excitedly prepare for a better tomorrow. Recognizing how an individual's journey affects the entire business is the focus of the ADKAR model.

ADKAR MODEL

The TTM model of decision-making closely follows Prosci's ADKAR model of individual change. Prosci, a leader in change management research and change methodology development, created the model based on a simple but powerful ideal: Successful organizational change depends on the ability to manage change with just one person.⁷ The model approaches transformation from the *ground up*, focusing on the *individuals* behind the change, rather than the change itself.

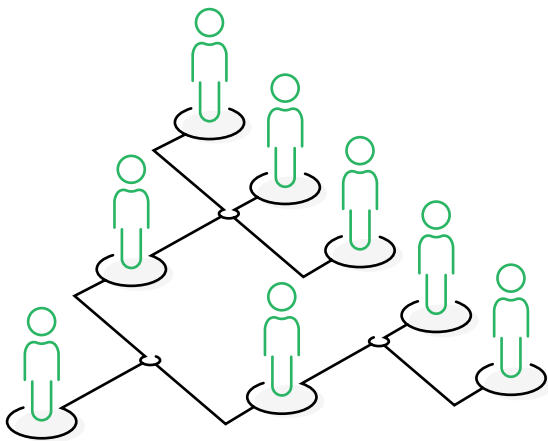
ADKAR is an acronym for the five milestones individuals must achieve to change successfully, and sustain the new behavior:

- » **A**wareness of the need for change
- » **D**esire to participate in and support the change
- » **K**nowledge on how to change
- » **A**bility to implement required skills and behaviors
- » **R**einforcement to sustain the change

While it focuses on individual behaviors, ADKAR is considered an effective approach for managing organizational change. Additionally, each step of ADKAR directly relates to the TMM model's stages as shown below, despite being developed by different entities:

ADKAR model of individual change		TTM model of decision-making
Awareness	----->	Precontemplation
Desire	----->	Contemplation
Knowledge	----->	Preparation
Ability	----->	Action
Reinforcement	----->	Maintenance

As with Prosci's teachings in general, the ADKAR model posits companywide overhauls rely on individual adoption by employees for successful implementation. While that is true, an organization must also develop a comprehensive plan that guides its actions and delegates individual roles to execute the program.



PART 2

Change Management

Models and Obstacles

Less than 30% of transformational initiatives succeed, but organizations can increase their chances of a positive outcome through a robust change management program.⁸

Change management is the process, tools and techniques used to facilitate the people side of transitions to achieve the desired results. Ultimately, it helps employees embrace and adopt change in their daily work.⁹

Individual psychology plays a vital role in instituting change within an organization. And a well-devised plan of action must account for human behavior when implementing and managing new processes, procedures or technology.

At least 10 change-management models provide a framework to achieve transformation, including the aforementioned ADKAR method.¹⁰ Each falls into one of three general types: organizationwide, bottom-up and employee-focused. While one model might fit better depending on an organization’s business structure, its company culture and the change being sought, a best practice is to use one from each category for a custom-built solution. This white paper covers three of the most widely used, effective models – each from a different category.

Organizationwide	Bottom-Up	Employee-Focused
Lewin’s change management model	ADKAR model	Kotter’s eight-step change model

LEWIN’S CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODEL

As with all organizationwide models of change management, Lewin’s methodology is specifically designed for large-scale transformation. The program is one of the most popular change management models for large businesses, with social scientist Kurt Lewin considered by many to be the practice’s founder.¹¹ It fits the organizationwide category because it’s a macro-level model focusing on execution.

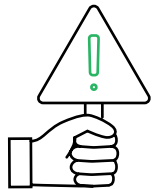
Initially developed by Lewin in the 1940s and later expanded upon by his student Ronald Lippitt, the simple approach contains three steps to help execute and enforce new initiatives.¹² More so than other models in its category, Lewin’s philosophy emphasizes that people are always the fountainhead of change, and focuses on reducing employee resistance.¹³

Critics believe the method oversimplifies the change process, but its foundational significance is unquestioned, as Lewin is considered the founding father of change management.¹⁴

Often called “changing as three steps” (CATS), the unfreeze-change-refreeze paradigm assumes the change is already planned and takes into account people’s hesitancy to willingly dive into the unknown.

1. **Unfreeze:** The preparatory stage emphasizes communication to break away from the status quo by conveying to management and employees why “doing what we’ve always done” is detrimental to the organization. To overcome resistance, Lewin suggests encouraging individuals to critically examine the current state and be open to changes that will produce a better outcome. Training and stress management are crucial to gain acceptance.
2. **Change:** The implementation stage can be lengthy, often involving experimentation and personnel’s feedback to refine new processes or procedures. Dispelling rumors, quelling continued resistance and empowering employees to act through constant communication increases the likelihood of success.
3. **Refreeze:** The reinforcement phase concretes the change through continued support and feedback, as well as rewards for exhibiting the new behavior. Lewin considered this to be the most critical stage in the overall process, as new behaviors are notorious for fleeting.

Organizationwide models are important to understand. However, approaches in this category don’t fully address the people side of change management, which can often be the harder side of the program,¹⁵ as research shows resistant company culture accounts for 75% of failed change initiatives.¹⁶



Resistant company culture accounts
for **75% of failed change initiatives.**

—Center for Creative Leadership

The people-focused methods and bottom-up approaches focus on changing individuals in order to implement lasting organizational change. More detailed than Lewin’s method, Kotter’s eight-step process is one of the most well-known approaches to change management that focuses on the *people* who need to change.

KOTTER'S EIGHT-STEP CHANGE MODEL

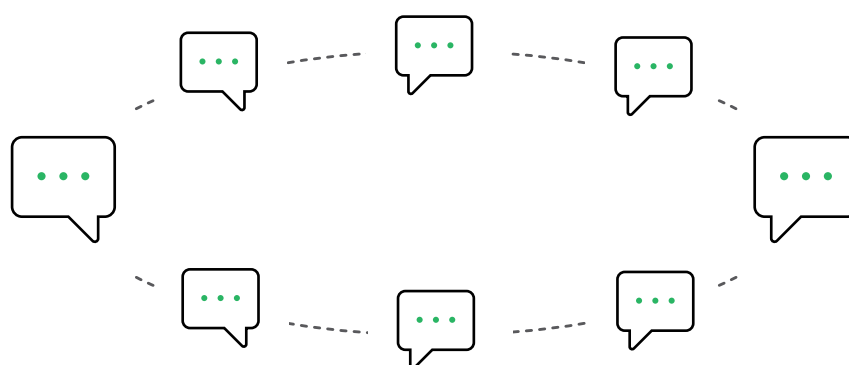
Harvard Business School professor John Kotter outlined his eight-step process in the 1996 international bestseller *Leading Change*. Although Lewin's work is foundational to Kotter's, many considered the latter's book to be the "seminal work in the field of change management,"¹⁷ with consulting firms around the world using Kotter's method to successfully facilitate transformations by focusing on employees.¹⁸ While Lewin concentrates on giving workers knowledge and training to encourage adoption, Kotter is geared more toward creating a *desire* to change.

Kotter updated his process in 2014's *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* after extensive research revealed his original approach was losing relevance, as it didn't account for the more rapid pace in which the business world operates.¹⁹

The philosophy states that organizational hierarchies and traditional managerial processes *cannot* drive lasting change within an organization due to an inherent risk aversion and inability to facilitate rapid change – a key differentiator of his method.

Kotter proposes a "dual operating system,"²⁰ in which an agile strategy network of change agents works to complement the traditional hierarchy, operating in concert to expedite change. The network's volunteers work within the hierarchy, but come from all areas of the organization. However, fundamental to the process is sponsorship from the highest level of leadership.

The network and the hierarchy must be inseparable partners, communicating openly and frequently, so the dual operating system doesn't turn into two large silos. Quite the opposite, the strategy network should liberate information from existing silos and hierarchal layers to encourage creativity, spur innovation and accelerate change in a flexible, adaptable environment.



The updated strategy, outlined below, expands on Kotter’s original eight-step process and has been used in multiple industries to execute successful change initiatives:

- 1. **Create a sense of urgency around a single big opportunity.**
 - » Creating a sense of urgency is imperative to rally the workforce, gain its cooperation and get the ball rolling toward the best opportunity on the horizon. Urgency starts at the top of the hierarchy and must be conveyed and reinforced by executives to sustain momentum. The *reason* for the urgency is the motivation workers will need to abandon the status quo and start contemplating and preparing for change.

EXAMPLE

The COO and the CIO learned manual HR processes are taking away from HR’s ability to be a strategic partner, and have heard of a self-service tool that allows employees to control their own personal information and update data, so they addressed it on an all-employee call, stating that the current costly system had to change in order to keep the department small and nimble – two requirements of the business structure.



- 2. **Build and maintain a guiding coalition.**
 - » The guiding coalition (GC) comprises the core of a strategy network and is made up of volunteers from each department and hierarchal level. The group must have enough power in the hierarchy to lead the change; however, all members of the GC are equal within the network to avoid communication slowdowns. If enough urgency has been created in step one, applications to be on the GC may greatly outnumber the available roles.

EXAMPLE

The COO puts out a call for volunteers to help the company address the problem of time-consuming manual processes that bog down HR and don’t allow employees access to their personal information.



3. **Formulate a strategic vision and develop change initiatives designed to capitalize on the big opportunity.**

- » A well-formed vision focuses on taking advantage of the big opportunity at hand by being strategically smart and appealing to emotion. It must also be feasible and easy to communicate, serving as the strategic compass for the dual operating system. The workforce can more easily resonate with pragmatic goals when words like “passion” and “revered” are used to frame the vision statement.
- » The next crucial action is creating change initiatives to achieve the vision.
- » Finally, the network will need to share the vision and initiatives with the organization’s executive committee to keep both parts of the dual operating system aligned. Keep in mind, at least one member of the GC should be a top executive, which will help both the network and the committee find common ground should concerns arise.

EXAMPLE

The GC works to develop a change management plan that complements the overall project plan, which provides structural guidance on how to physically install the new software and get it running. The vision outlines the new standard operating procedures and why they are necessary.



4. **Communicate the vision and the strategy to create buy-in and attract a growing volunteer army.**

- » Providing extensive communications about how the upcoming change will improve business and benefit employees will rouse the volunteer army needed to motivate the rest of the workforce. Communications must be sincere and memorable or they will be met with cynicism by skeptical employees war-worn from any previous failed initiatives. Creative communications also have great potential to attract workers who believe in the message and commit to it, creating the much-needed motivation in the ranks to successfully implement the initiatives.

EXAMPLE

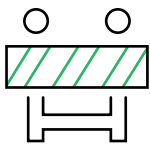
The GC develops a communication plan that conveys why the change is needed and highlights what’s in it for the individual employees. Front-line workers don’t care about saving the HR department time, but they will be excited that the new software gives them anytime, anywhere access to view pay stubs, enroll in benefits and easily request time off.





5. **Accelerate movement toward the vision and the opportunity by ensuring that the network removes barriers.**

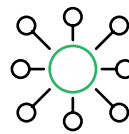
- » The network can help workers overcome obstacles by acting as a bridge between them and the hierarchy. If an employee struggles with manual processes, but doesn't have the knowledge or authority to transform to a digital landscape, the network can enlist the GC to design a solution it can present to leadership. When the network and hierarchy work together as the dual system calls for, the hierarchy will empathize with the workers' issues and champion the transformation. Design and implementation occur in the network and are instituted within the hierarchy.
- » Change leaders should identify and remove any obstacles which could thwart employees' support of the change. Four categories of obstacles include:



formal structures
that make it difficult
for employees to act



a lack of
needed skills



personnel or
information
systems



supervisors who
discourage actions
toward implementing
the new vision

EXAMPLE

The GC helps remove obstacles by providing training on the new software, listening to concerns and addressing supervisors who may not appreciate or encourage use of the new software. If a manager refuses to review time-off requests on the self-service tool, GC members from the leadership team should quickly alleviate this barrier by communicating the need for change with the manager.



6. Celebrate visible, significant short-term wins.

- » Seeing is believing, so wins should be obvious and directly tied to the vision. Generate multiple communications explaining how the change has already started benefiting employees and the organization as a whole. This will help maintain the strategy network’s credibility and fuel additional momentum for the vision. The proof is in the pudding.

EXAMPLE

More than 50% of the workforce is using the new software, so it’s time to shout it from the rooftops. If Annie in accounting was able to re-finance her home in record time because she had access to her income-verification data over the weekend, that can encourage other employees to log on and see what all the fuss is about. Fear of missing out is real. Use it to pique the interest of late adopters.



7. Don’t let up. Keep learning from experience.

- » Celebrating short-term wins is a far cry from declaring total victory. The urgency created in step one will provide the wave of energy needed to ride the change initiative all the way to the shore of success. If the sense of urgency wasn’t strong to begin with, motivation will wane after a few battles have been won, and organizations will be at risk of relapsing to the old way of doing things. Pumping the breaks at this stage can lead to resistance within the hierarchy.

EXAMPLE

Continue sending communications about the new software to keep it top of mind and encourage usage. Relapse is a real concern in this stage, so don’t declare victory too soon.



8. Institutionalize strategic changes in the culture.

- » A change initiative transforms to a standard operating procedure when it becomes part of the day-to-day activities. To do this, organizations must connect the change to its culture and produce visible results which will lead to a brighter future.

EXAMPLE

Use newsletters, emails and intranet landing pages to show how the new software is key to the company's continued success. If mobile trainings for field workers increased due to the new software, that is deeply connected to a culture of safety, and should be communicated as such.



Creating a dual operating system to implement and manage change often requires established organizations to divorce the legacy business model. While this method is a crucial aspect of an overall change management game plan, macro-level and bottom-up approaches should be considered to complement Kotter's method, creating a unique program specific to the organization.

Bringing the Models Together

All of the steps and stages of the models and methodologies discussed correlate to one another. Although each has nuances particular to its approach, the table below shows how, for instance, creating urgency in Kotter's first step directly relates to the awareness stage of ADKAR.

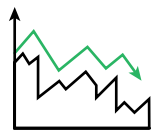
TTM	ADKAR	Lewin	Kotter
Precontemplation	Awareness	1. Unfreeze	1. Create urgency
Contemplation	Desire		2. Form guiding coalition
			3. Create vision
Preparation	Knowledge	2. Change	4. Communicate
Action	Ability		5. Remove barriers
			6. Celebrate short-term wins
Maintenance	Reinforcement	3. Freeze	7. Don't let up
			8. Institutionalize change

Given this information, individuals in charge of change management can customize their organization's approach to best fit the needs of their industry, business structure, the type of change sought and workforce.

No matter what system or combination of systems is selected, no change management process can survive in a risk-averse environment with executives who are allergic to experimentation. This is especially true when shifting to a digital landscape, where trial and error reign supreme.²¹

Digital Transformation Considerations

Perhaps some of the hardest organizational changes come in the form of digital transformations, the incorporation of technology into the organization's overall performance strategy.²² Despite manual processes being time-consuming and prone to errors, research shows 70% of all digital transformation initiatives don't reach their goals.²³



70% of all digital transformation initiatives **don't reach their goals.**

—McKinsey & Company

Organizations realize going digital is imperative in today's market, with more than 89% planning to institute a digital-first strategy,²⁴ but why are technological changes especially difficult to implement?

A recent *Harvard Business Review* article states it's because most digital technologies provide only the *possibility* for efficiency gains, coupled with the reality that most change initiatives lack two important factors: organizational practices that aren't flawed or can be changed, and a workforce with the right mindset.²⁵

Information Age editor Nick Ismail echoed this observation on a recent episode of the *HR Break Room* podcast.²⁶

“

A **resistant culture** is one (barrier), and this is typical of an established organization in more traditional industries that have large legacy frameworks,” Ismail said. “Another barrier surrounds **limited sharing** and **collaboration**, which fits into the whole idea of culture.

”

Digital analyst and futurist Brian Solis agrees with culture being a main source of the problem.

"Throughout all of my research around digital transformation, one thing stands in the way to progress: culture," Solis wrote. "Executives underestimate the importance of culture in an era of digital Darwinism. Most cultures are risk averse at a time when taking risks is the most direct path to innovation."²⁷

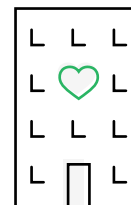
With culture being among its primary responsibilities, HR holds tremendous influence and sway on how the rest of an organization operates. Therefore, it can drive the use of technology among all departments.



For example, by requiring new hires to complete the onboarding process through an online self-service tool, HR gets employees comfortable with that tool on day one – or even *before* then, under a preboarding process. That familiarity breeds not contempt, but convenience, as members of the workforce utilize the same tool to complete additional HR tasks, which can include logging time, requesting vacation days, submitting expenses and taking training courses.

Despite the obvious benefits of streamlined processes, HR and business in general continue to struggle with digital adoption. Ismail offers a reason why.

"In some cases, digital transformation efforts are stifled by these traditionally technologically stagnating departments. The modernization of business functions like HR is needed to support the success of an overall digital transformation strategy within organizations, as it often lies at the heart of businesses," he said.



Business and technology leaders need to understand that integrating digital solutions into current HR processes actually *supports* HR's role as a people-first department.

And putting people first is a hallmark of the change management models previously covered. According to *Forbes*, organizations need to "recognize that digital transformation speaks to universal human challenges. For most people, changes within their company can feel like chaos is being introduced into their once predictable workplace."²⁸

Additionally, some employee cohorts may have even *further* aversions to digital transformation, adding another layer of difficulty to an already less-than-ideal situation.

While it might not be surprising that older generations resist technological innovations more so than millennials or Gen Zers, highly intelligent and engaged workers have a tendency to resist digital disruptions as well.

WHEN THE BEST ARE THE WORST

It's often exceptionally bright, engaged workers who resist new technology the most.²⁹ At face value, this may seem counterintuitive. But productive, successful people are more likely to be invested in the current way of doing things than someone struggling to keep up with legacy systems or manual processes. Uncharted territory can put these normally confident colleagues in an uncomfortable situation where they are unsure if they will be successful with the new system.



It's often **exceptionally bright, engaged workers** who resist new technology the most.

—*Management.Issues*

Possibly more so than other employees, this group needs *personally* compelling reasons to change. Otherwise, they are going to keep doing what they've always done.

GENERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Motivating older employees to adopt new technology can be more challenging than getting younger workers to switch. With 92% of millennials owning smartphones, it's easy to see why they are considered to be more digitally savvy than baby boomers and Gen Xers, whose usage is 67% and 85% respectively.³⁰

At least one reason for the lower numbers stems from a lack of faith in their abilities. A Pew Research Center study found most adults born before 1969 aren't very confident using electronic devices, as more than 60% said they need help with new ones. However, older adults have started embracing technology at a faster pace and tend to be highly engaged once they become comfortable using it, especially older baby boomers.³¹ Peer learning can boost senior employees' confidence in going digital and create a group of change champions among those who still constitute a quarter of the U.S. workforce.³²

Regardless of why certain individuals or groups of employees are hesitant to adopt new technology, falling back on the "if you build it, they will come" playbook can bench your best players and senior superstars. Instead, organizations need to throw the first pitch by forgoing traditional "command-and-control" hierarchies to empower their workforce and rethink antiquated processes and management practices.

Again, it goes back to motivating workers to take action. Creating that motivation stems from developing a thorough change management plan complete with the tools individuals need to succeed.

PART 3

How to Achieve

Change Management Success

With the right mindset and tools, organizations can achieve change management success. Knowing change hinges on the individual gives great insight into how to overcome challenges associated with transformations. Because change management is more than just communication or training, it's most effective when used as a "holistic set of tools aimed at supporting individuals through change."³³



Tools for the People Side of Change Management

Prosci offers a set of five tools in its methodology to drive employee adoption and usage:

- » **Communication plan:** Effective communication targets different audiences with messages specific to their role and responsibilities. A structured communication plan ensures the right messages are delivered at the right time, through the right channels, from the right sender to the right people. This tool helps build awareness and desire, the first two stages in ADKAR. See the next section for a sample plan.
- » **Sponsor road map:** Research shows effective sponsorship is the No. 1 factor of project success. The sponsorship road map details the leadership structure of the initiative, eliminating the mystery that surrounds sponsoring change. A complete road map outlines what the sponsor needs to do with each layer in the hierarchy, such as the guiding coalition or project team, peers and senior managers, or front-line employees. The plan also lists activities by the project's phases.
- » **Coaching plan:** The coaching plan is for direct supervisors to use with their employees and outlines manager activities surrounding the change. It sets the stage by first explaining how the organization will train and prepare supervisors for their role. Next, it details the coaching schedule and tactics for engaging employees and working toward change adoption.
- » **Training plan:** Not to be confused with one-on-one coaching from a direct supervisor or manager, training provides the cut-and-dry basics of the new process, procedure or technology. Through coaching, the manager should identify skills and capabilities needed for success and recommend appropriate training. It's also vital for sponsors and coaches to receive training about their roles and responsibilities to successfully lead the change management charge. All members of the organization need awareness and desire before starting training in order for them to be active participants.
- » **Resistance management plan:** Preventing or mitigating employee resistance is a key element of change management success. This proactive approach identifies potential resisters and develops a plan to overcome objections. For example, if one department is notorious for going rogue, brainstorm excuses the employees may have and create answers that can be used when they start throwing them at you like a toddler does spaghetti.

Every change needs the five tools to be effectively implemented, even though the scope and nature of the change will dictate the effort needed for each. Technology upgrades will differ from realignment or mergers, but once the plans are developed, they must be integrated into the project plan activities so they work in unison. This ensures the structural and people sides of the change are cohesive.³⁴

Communication Plan

The following communication plan sample can help organizations visualize what the tool looks like once developed. The example is for a hypothetical digital transformation to new HR and payroll software with an employee self-service tool the company wants its workforce to adopt.

Audience	Responsibility
<i>Executive leadership team (ELT)</i>	CIO and COO
Audience Background and Potential Reactions CIO and COO already told the rest of the ELT about the new HCM software. CEO is on board and will be the sponsor, but there may be some mixed perspectives on how new processes will affect employees and HR.	Communication Objectives » Accept and champion the decision. » Understand details specific to their position (e.g., processes and timing). » Plan communications for their teams.
Communication Channels » Monthly meetings » Memos » Individual emails from CEO	Timing or Frequency As soon as decision is final, weekly communication will commence.
Audience	Responsibility
<i>Senior leadership (senior vice presidents and vice presidents)</i>	ELT
Audience Background and Potential Reactions Ideally, the SVPs and VPs will know the new HCM is being considered, so they won't be completely surprised.	Communication Objectives » Understand the reasoning and support the decision. » Communicate plans to supervisors and managers.
Communication Channels » In-person meetings with direct report on ELT » Memos » Individual emails from CEO	Timing or Frequency As soon as decision is made, weekly communication will commence.

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Audience	Responsibility
<i>HR</i>	ELT and senior leadership
Audience Background and Potential Reactions HR director helped with decision-making. Some members of the team are concerned their jobs will be eliminated. Others understand they will be able to transition the department to be a strategic business partner.	Communication Objectives » Accept the decision. » Understand how the software will transform HR to a more strategic role. » Help promote the software through newsletters and meetings.
Communication Channels » In-person meetings with direct report on ELT and senior leadership » Memos » Individual emails from CEO and direct report on senior leadership team	Timing or Frequency » Announce decision at meeting » Twice-weekly memos » Weekly emails
Audience	Responsibility
<i>Supervisors and managers</i>	ELT, senior leadership and HR
Audience Background and Potential Reactions Supervisors and managers are not aware of the new HCM software purchase and may worry the self-service tool will have a negative impact on workers and productivity.	Communication Objectives » Understand how employees and the business will benefit. » Lead by example through usage.
Communication Channels » In-person meetings with direct report and HR rep » Individual emails from CEO and direct report on senior leadership team » Newsletter	Timing or Frequency » Announce decision at meeting » Weekly emails and newsletter
Audience	Responsibility
<i>Corporate employees</i>	Supervisors and managers
Audience Background and Potential Reactions Employees are tech-savvy and accustomed to having control over their information.	Communication Objectives » Understand why the software will add transparency and give them control over their information. » Start using the software to update info, manage schedules and take training.
Communication Channels » Department meetings » Individual emails from CEO and manager/supervisor » Newsletter	Timing or Frequency » Announce decision at meeting » Weekly emails and newsletter

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Audience	Responsibility
<i>Field workers</i>	Supervisors and managers
Audience Background and Potential Reactions Field workers have complained about a lack of connectivity, an inability to access information remotely and the cumbersome timekeeping process. Most should be excited to have new software.	Communication Objectives » Understand why the software will add transparency and give them control over their information. » Use the system to clock in, clock out and submit expenses.
Communication Channels » Personal emails from supervisors/managers » Individual emails from CEO and manager/supervisor » Newsletter	Timing or Frequency » Announce decision at meeting » Weekly emails and newsletter

Roles and Responsibilities

Change management is a competency as well as a process. What the competency entails depends on the person's relationship to the change.³⁵ From C-suite executives to front-line managers, each role and its duties should be clearly defined so those individuals can help employees adopt change.

» Executive Sponsor

- CEOs and other C-suite members must be active champions and *visible participants* in the change initiative. This requires the sponsor to understand what effective sponsorship means, such as comprehending the change thoroughly so they can communicate and promote it. Sponsors must also help build a coalition of sponsorship, which is done by working with the guiding coalition from the outset.

» Manager/Supervisor

- Employees prefer to receive messages about change from their immediate supervisors and managers. This underscores why the role is so crucial to change implementation and also explains why middle managers are cited as the main resisters to change.³⁶ Organizations must teach managers and supervisors *how* to be an effective coach and make sure the coaches have the information they need to relay important information to their employees about how it will impact *them*, not just the organization.

» HR

- HR has multiple roles in change management, but the type of transition affects what those are. Regardless of the change, HR professionals can use their knowledge of behavior to help

employees understand and adopt the needed change. Relationship management, consultation, leadership and critical evaluation skills play an important role in all change facilitations.³⁷

Change Management Planning and Checklist

The following checklist was developed using a combination of methodologies to outline the events and basic activities that should occur to successfully implement change initiatives. It's important to note, some activities occur in tandem and the list is not always implemented chronologically, depending on the scope of change and other organizational factors.

Get started

Before launching a change management program, organizations should:

- ☐ Create a sense of urgency by identifying and communicating potential obstacles and undesirable future states
- ☐ Curate a guiding coalition of volunteers to spearhead and champion the change
- ☐ Develop the change vision so an overarching project strategy, which encompasses the change management plan, can be created
- ☐ Identify the desired results and outcomes of the people side of the project
- ☐ Select the method(s) for managing the people side of change, based on the nature of the project
- ☐ Ensure the change management plan complements the overall project plan

Get going

When it's time to implement the change management program, organizations should:

- ☐ Develop a holistic set of tools to support the change
 - » **Communication plan**
 - ☐ Identify audiences
 - ☐ Identify the ideal sender of each communication
 - ☐ Select the most effective channels, timing and frequency
 - ☐ Establish two-way communication methods
 - ☐ Send the messages according to schedule
 - » **Sponsorship road map**
 - ☐ Ensure the primary sponsor understands the position's roles and responsibilities
 - ☐ Provide any necessary training to bring the sponsor up to speed with the change

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- ☐ Deliver key messages for senior leadership
- ☐ List activities required during each phase of the project, including what to do with each layer in the hierarchy

» **Coaching plan**

- ☐ Alert managers and supervisors they will be coaching their direct reports
- ☐ Outline how the organization will prepare them for this role
- ☐ Develop tactics coaches will use to engage employees
- ☐ Detail the coaching schedule

» **Training plan**

- ☐ Assess current skill levels to identify skills gaps
- ☐ Create training programs to address specific lapses
- ☐ Schedule training as needed

» **Resistance management plan**

- ☐ Proactively identify where resistance could occur
- ☐ Develop measures to mitigate or prevent resistance
- ☐ Create an action plan to deal with resistance

- ☐ Use the tools to communicate the change vision to elicit buy-in and remove barriers to adoption
- ☐ Celebrate short-term wins through multiple communication methods and channels

Get results

To reinforce that the change taking place is the new norm and ingrain it in the culture, organizations should:

- ☐ Create a system to track adoption and usage rates
- ☐ Gather feedback from those impacted
- ☐ Diagnose usage gaps and continued resistance
- ☐ Set goals to continue building momentum
- ☐ Keep the team motivated and ideas fresh with ongoing learning, such as speakers or webinars
- ☐ Share success stories of the change



Make sure all items on the checklist are completed! Skipping steps or failing to completely develop the holistic set of tools decreases the likelihood of change management success.

Conclusion

If Greek philosopher Heraclitus was right that “change is the only constant,” organizations and individuals alike would be wise to start embracing the new. Although human tendency is to reject the unfamiliar, adopting new behaviors can lead to more success and happiness than sticking with a suboptimal status quo.

Understanding how psychology plays a role in the decision-making process helps business leaders anticipate and overcome resistance by developing a change management plan that addresses these issues. As digital transformations continue to increase, leaders will need to detach from risk-averse legacy systems so they can empower employees to test which processes and procedures work best.

Establishing new digital processes and procedures has been shown to reduce labor costs and data entry errors, but organizations may spend days or weeks tweaking those new ways of doing things. The key is to keep employees motivated through effective communication that conveys what’s in it for them.

Implementing new initiatives is not without challenge. But following the change management method that best fits a particular situation, using the tools previously discussed and ensuring all items on the provided checklist have been addressed, will greatly increase the odds of success.

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