

REINFORCING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE OUTCOMES

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Too often, organizations expend tremendous time and energy to implement a change, only to watch the progress regress following the initiative launch. Failing to sustain gains plague initiatives across industries and regions. However, it is possible to actively reinforce and sustain change to increase value and benefit realization.

Prosci embarked on a targeted research effort to add depth and breadth to the body of knowledge related to reinforcing and sustaining change outcomes. This effort builds on existing research and methodology aimed at reinforcement. The objective of this study is to provide lessons learned and actionable insights for change practitioners around the world.

The report includes six sections focused on reinforcing and sustaining change outcomes. The first section explores **Sustainment Highlights** and includes the biggest contributors and obstacles to sustainment, as well as a fascinating examination of the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of sustainment. **Sustainment Ownership** is the second section and includes data on the actual and preferred owners of sustainment design and execution. Sustainment does not occur by chance, and the third section examines steps and resources for **Planning for Sustainment**. The fourth section of the report explores specific **Sustainment Activities**, including timing, duration, and when to end sustainment efforts. Sustainment is a team effort, and the fifth section provides data on the **Support for Sustainment** from three key groups: senior leaders, project teams and impacted groups. Finally, the concluding section explores **Defining Success**, since defining expected results and outcomes is a critical component of sustainment work.

The resulting benchmarking report includes rich insights and direction for change practitioners working to reinforce change and sustain desired change outcomes. Some of the findings may validate a practitioner's beliefs and experiences, while others may extend and enrich the practice. Collectively, these findings provide a foundation for more successful change and employee engagement.

SUSTAINMENT HIGHLIGHTS



This section provides an overview of effective sustainment, including the greatest success contributors, biggest obstacles, and consequences of failed sustainment. Support from leadership and measuring progress were the top contributors to successful sustainment, while failing to address resistance was the biggest obstacle. Next time, participants recommended beginning sustainment efforts earlier. The section includes a list of over 20 change-specific business metrics used to evaluate effectiveness of sustainment. Success on sustainment directly translated into greater levels of meeting objectives, staying on schedule, and staying on budget.



Findings in this section:

- Greatest contributor to success in sustainment efforts
- Greatest obstacle in sustainment
- What to do differently during sustainment
- Consequences of no or failed sustainment
- Metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of sustainment
- Impact of sustainment on adoption and usage
- Successful sustainment
- Impact of successful sustainment on meeting project success
- Effective sustainment effort

“Plan for and [start] early to provide regular opportunities for staff to engage with the upcoming change.”

GREATEST CONTRIBUTOR TO SUCCESS IN SUSTAINMENT EFFORTS

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Participants identified the greatest contributor to success during sustainment:

1. Support from leadership

- Consistent engagement with sustainment
- Participating in celebration of project wins
- Leading by example with early and visible adoption of change
- Providing required resources for sustainment
- Taking ownership of change itself

2. Measuring progress

3. Communications that encourage feedback

- Business reasons for the change
- Connecting project outcomes to organizational goals
- Consequences of not changing
- Communicating progresses transparently

“

Communications that maintained visibility of what was happening and allowing people to interact with the change in various ways and levels of detail.

“

Open recognition and transparent reporting to all stake holders. By showing the progress against plan it motivated more people to continue in the right direction.

GREATEST OBSTACLE IN SUSTAINMENT

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Participants reported the greatest obstacles they encountered regarding sustainment:

1. Project failed to address resistance
2. Leadership failed to support and engage with change

“

We always had skeptics even though they appeared to support the change on paper.

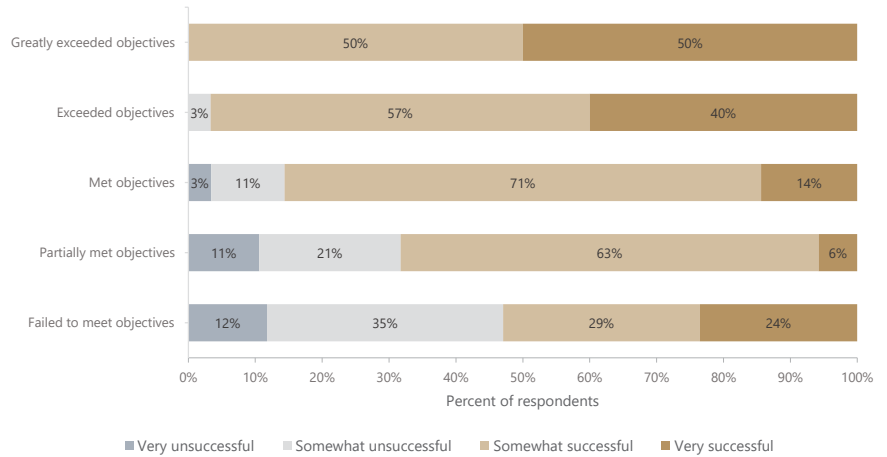
3. Project had no resources left
4. Sustainment effort was ignored
5. Change managers could not keep internal momentum

IMPACT OF SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINMENT ON MEETING PROJECT OBJECTIVES

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Respondents who reported success with sustainment were much more likely to meet and exceed project objectives than respondents who had unsuccessful sustainment efforts were.

Figure 3 – Impact of successful sustainment on meeting project objectives



SUSTAINMENT OWNERSHIP



This section explores those who are responsible for planning and executing on a sustainment effort and those who should be responsible for planning and execution. The ideal owners for planning the sustainment effort should be the change manager and project sponsor but the actual owners tend to be the change team and the project team.



Findings in this section:

- Responsibility for planning sustainment
- Ideal owner for planning the sustainment strategy
- Responsibility for execution of sustainment activities
- Ideal owner for execution of sustainment strategy

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINMENT

This section explores the percentage of projects in participants' organizations that included plans to sustain the change broken out by various organizational demographics such as region, industry and number of employees. Twenty-five percent of participants reported that over half of the projects in their organization planned for sustaining the change. Assessments, metrics and business influences were used to evaluate resource needs for sustainment.



Findings in this section:

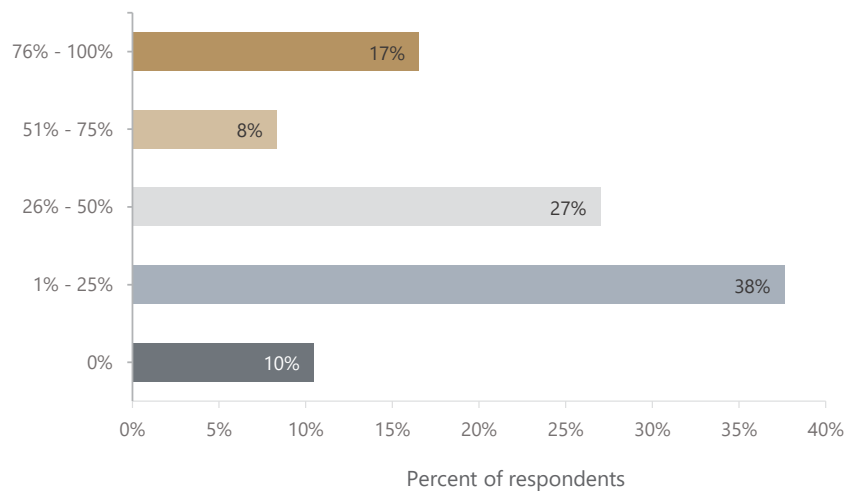
- Prevalence of planning for sustainment
- Planning for sustaining desired sustainment outcomes – by industry, revenue/budget, organization size, maturity level and organizational saturation
- Steps taken to evaluate resource needs for sustainment

PREVALENCE OF PLANNING FOR SUSTAINMENT

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Participants reported on the percentage of projects in their organizations that included planning for sustainment. Nearly two-thirds of participants reported planning for sustainment on half of their projects. Less than one in five (17%) reported that sustainment was planned on more than 75% of their projects.

Figure 6 – Planning for sustainment



STEPS TAKEN TO EVALUATE RESOURCE NEEDS FOR SUSTAINMENT

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Participants identified the steps they took to evaluate resources needed for sustainment of a change project.

1. Assessments and metrics
2. Input from business influencers
3. Unstructured approach

SUSTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

This section explores when sustainment activities started, how long those activities lasted and the impact of those factors on project success. Participants reported measuring against success, continuing communication and continuing to train as the top sustainment activities. Projects that started their sustainment efforts earlier were more likely to meet or exceed expectations and so were projects that had longer sustainment efforts.



Findings in this section:

- When sustainment activities started
- Impact of sustainment initiation on meeting project success
- Duration of sustainment effort
- Impact of duration of sustainment effort on project success and duration
- Identifying when sustainment activities were no longer needed

“When the resistance was beginning to diminish, and the change started to seem more like business as usual.”

SUSTAINMENT ACTIVITIES EMPLOYED

FINDINGS EXCERPT

Participants reported the sustainment activities they employed during change projects:

1. Measuring against success
2. Continuing communication
3. Continuing to train
4. Creating support materials
5. Celebrating, rewarding and recognizing

“

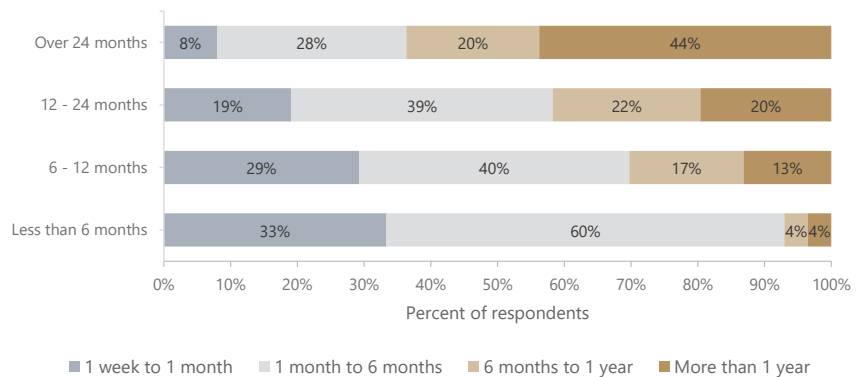
We always had skeptics even though they appeared to support the change on paper.

DURATION OF SUSTAINMENT AND PROJECT DURATION

FINDINGS EXCERPT

There was a positive correlation between project duration and sustainment duration.

Figure 20 – Correlation between sustainment effort and project duration



IDENTIFYING WHEN
SUSTAINMENT
ACTIVITIES WERE NO
LONGER NEEDED

FINDINGS EXCERPT

1. Change became part of “business as usual”

“

When the resistance was beginning to diminish, and the change started to seem more like business as usual.

2. Project results achieved

3. Employees could easily work in the new state

- Low error rates
- Infrequent questions
- “New” questions (questions not asked frequently)
- Questions that addressed very specific use rates
- When the previous process, method or tool became too cumbersome or difficult to use in comparison to the current one
- Overall employee satisfaction

4. Employees no longer tried to revert to a previous state

SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINMENT

This section explores support for sustainment by three groups: the leadership team, the project team, and impacted groups, and the effects that support from those groups had on the project. Across the analysis, initiatives were more successful, on time and on budget when there was support for sustainment within the organization.



Findings in this section:

- Leadership support for the sustainment effort
- Impact of leadership support for sustainment on project success
- Correlating impact of leadership support for sustainment by maturity level and organization saturation
- Project team support for the sustainment effort
- Impact of project team support for sustainment on project success
- Correlating impact of project team support for sustainment by maturity level and organization saturation
- Impacted groups support for the sustainment effort
- Impact of impacted groups support for sustainment on project success
- Correlating impact of impacted groups support for sustainment by maturity level and organization saturation

DEFINING SUCCESS

The final section on defining what success looks like was included in the sustainment study because of the impact that clarity of direction up front has on sustaining results. The section explores how good organizations are at defining success, how often they do it and why they don't. Only 18% of participants reported that their organizations were effective at defining what success looked like on a project and 72% of participants reported that they only sometimes or rarely define what success looks like on a project.

Findings in this section:

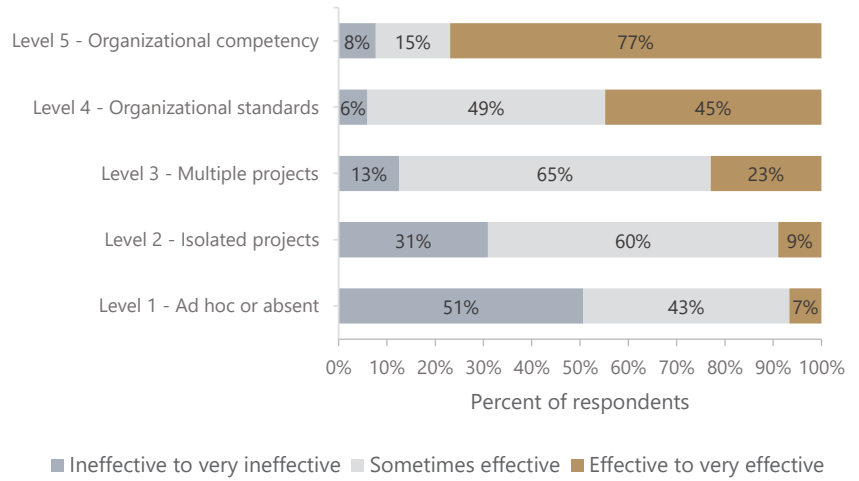
- How effectively organizations defined success
- Process for defining project success
- How often organizations defined success clearly
- Why success is rarely defined

"Projects and leaders are very good at defining the nuts and bolts of the change...They are inadequate at turning this into 'what success looks like'."



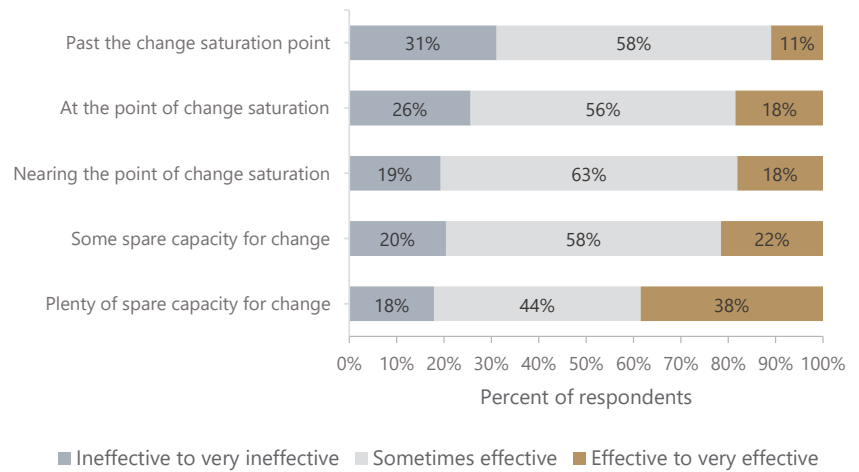
FINDINGS EXCERPT

Figure 43 – Organizational effectiveness at defining project success by maturity



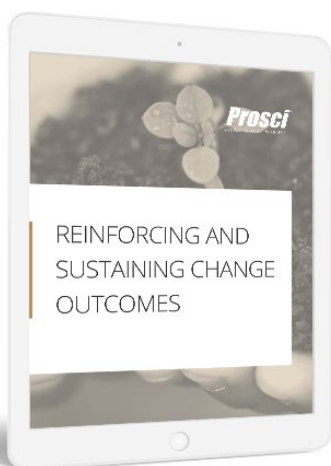
FINDINGS EXCERPT

Figure 44 – Organizational effectiveness at defining project success by change saturation



CONCLUSION

Organizations are increasingly facing the demand to deliver expected results and outcomes when they invest in change initiatives. Unfortunately, many have experienced change regressing after an initial push to installation. Reinforcing change and sustaining outcomes enable the organization to reap the benefit of change over time. This study provides an exploration of how to improve change results with effective sustainment efforts. Senior leadership engagement, actionable metrics and measurement, and effective communication shape successful sustaining work. Change practitioners who can engage early, use specific and targeted plans, engage stakeholders effectively and transfer ownership to leadership are in a position to deliver positive change in their organizations.



Purchase the full study to gain access to all the latest insights related to reinforcing and sustaining change outcomes