
THE

PROSCI ADKAR MODEL

A GOAL-ORIENTED CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODEL
TO GUIDE INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Prosci[®]
PEOPLE. CHANGE. RESULTS.

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WHY THE ADKAR MODEL?

Change is often a complex and difficult process. Leading successful change in other people and across whole organizations requires new thinking and new tools. The **Prosci ADKAR® Model** is a valuable framework for organizational leaders, change managers and project managers to effectively lead a wide variety of changes. The lens of **ADKAR** reveals both key concepts that influence successful change and actionable insights for implementing these concepts.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Having the clearest vision or the most effectively-designed solution to a problem will not, alone, produce successful change. The secret to leading successful change is rooted in

something much simpler: how to facilitate change with one person.

Change happens at the individual level. In order for a group or organization to change, all the individuals within that group or organization must change. This means that in order to affect change in our organizations, businesses and communities, we must first understand how to affect change one person at a time. The **Prosci ADKAR Model** is a framework for understanding and managing individual change. It provides structure and tangible guidance for leaders who want to motivate change in others.

ADKAR is an acronym that represents the five milestones or outcomes an individual must achieve for change to be successfully realized: ***awareness, desire, knowledge, ability*** and ***reinforcement***. When applied to organizational change, this model allows leaders and change management teams to focus their activities on what will drive individual change and produce organizational results collectively.

The goals or outcomes defined by **ADKAR** are sequential and cumulative. They must be achieved in order. For a change to be implemented and sustained, an individual must progress through each of the milestones, starting with awareness.

ADKAR was initially conceived through Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt's early research to align traditional change management activities with project goals and results. **The ADKAR Model** was first used to determine the effectiveness of change management activities like communication and training in achieving desired organizational change results.

USING ADKAR WITH TRADITIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The ADKAR Model outlines an individual's successful journey through change. Each step of the model naturally aligns to typical activities associated with change management and articulates clear goals for these activities.

For example:

1. **Awareness** of the business reasons for change. Awareness is a goal/outcome of early communications related to an organizational change.
2. **Desire** to engage and participate in the change. Desire is a goal/outcome of sponsorship and resistance management.
3. **Knowledge** about how to change. Knowledge is a goal/outcome of training and coaching.
4. **Ability** to realize or implement the change at the required performance level. Ability is a goal/outcome of additional coaching, practice and time.
5. **Reinforcement** to ensure change sticks. Reinforcement is a goal/outcome of adoption measurement, corrective actions and recognition of successful change.

In identifying the outcomes of change management activities, **the ADKAR Model** provides a useful framework for change management teams in both the planning and the execution of their work.



THE FRAMEWORK OF A CHANGE INITIATIVE

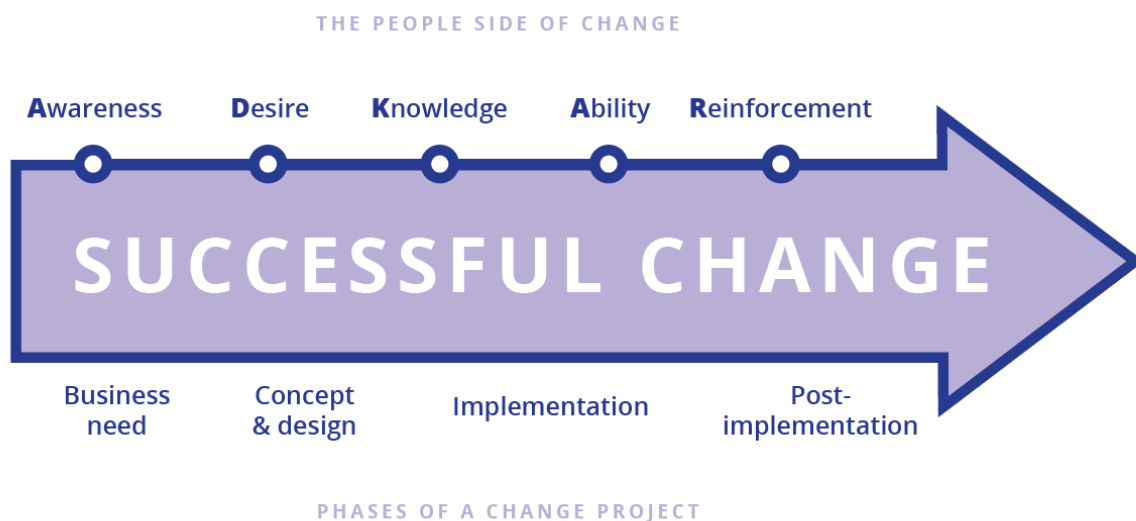
The ADKAR Model can be used to identify gaps within your change management process.

By breaking down a change into the parts of **ADKAR**, you will be able to see where and why a change is not working well. With this understanding, you can address the barrier points, provide effective coaching for your employees and take the necessary steps to improve change success.

The ADKAR Model is useful in:

- Diagnosing employee resistance to change
- Helping employees transition through the change process
- Creating a successful action plan for personal and professional advancement during a change initiative
- Developing a change management plan for your employees

Changes come to life on two dimensions: the business or project side of change and the people side of change. Successful change is a result of both dimensions of change maturing simultaneously (see below). Project management and change management are complementary disciplines with a common purpose of producing results and outcomes.



THE BUSINESS DIMENSION OF CHANGE

Listed below are standard steps of a typical business change project. Whether formalized in a project management discipline or not, most managers will feel comfortable managing these phases:

- **Identify** a business need or opportunity
- **Define** the project (scope and objectives)
- **Design** the business solution (new processes, systems and organizational structure)
- **Develop** the new processes and systems
- **Implement** the solution into the organization

THE PEOPLE DIMENSION OF CHANGE

Even with an effectively architected project plan, however, the most commonly cited reason for project failure is problems with the people side of change.

In parallel, the five steps or outcomes to be built on the people side of change are the elements of **ADKAR**:

- **Awareness** of the need for change
- **Desire** to participate and support the change
- **Knowledge** of how to change
- **Ability** to implement the change on a day-to-day basis
- **Reinforcement** to keep the change in place

HOW TO USE THE ADKAR MODEL

Let's look at two examples of **the ADKAR Model** in application, the first in a personal change scenario and the second in a professional change scenario. Following the examples, there is a simple **ADKAR** activity to help build a clearer understanding of the model and how to apply it.

THE ADKAR MODEL IN A PERSONAL CHANGE

Adding a regular physical exercise regimen is a personal change many people attempt but struggle to sustain over time. Let's look at each element of **ADKAR** in this context:

- **Awareness:** are you aware of the need to exercise? Why should you start an exercise regimen? Some things that may build your awareness are reading articles or seeing news reports that describe the health benefits of regular exercise, from weight control to preventing disease and reducing stress.
- **Desire:** do you have the personal motivation to start exercising? A lot of people are aware of the need to exercise but might not have found the personal desire to start. Desire is a very individual concept. Your motivation may be that you want to lose weight to better keep up with your kids; or you have a need for more physical strength at work; or maybe you're looking for a way to reduce anxiety. Regardless of what your motivation is, you must make a personal decision to make this change, based on your own unique motivations.



- **Knowledge:** do you know how to effectively and safely exercise? This is where you need to gain some knowledge. Perhaps you hire a personal trainer to teach you the basics, attend an exercise class with an instructor or order a workout video or book. In order to effectively change, you need to know how.
- **Ability:** can you put your knowledge into practice? Just because you know how to do something, does not mean you can actually do it. We often need coaching when implementing new behaviors, so you may need additional practice time with a personal trainer to build up to doing exercises effectively or with proper form. Or perhaps conflicting time commitments are preventing you from being able to exercise and you need to rearrange other priorities to make the time.
- **Reinforcement:** do you have reinforcements in place to prevent you from reverting to your old habits? In this example, you may have a reward system for yourself when you hit certain exercise milestones. Or you might have a workout buddy who holds you accountable for showing up to the gym.



Note that each of the five elements of **the ADKAR Model** represents a particular result that you are trying to achieve. Also note that all elements are cumulative and must be performed in order. If, for example, we skip past the desire to start exercising, all attempts to learn how to exercise (to build knowledge and develop ability) will be more ineffective, if not futile.

Using exercise as our example, it is easy to trace how change occurs on a personal level through **the ADKAR Model**. Now let's consider how this framework applies to employees in a professional environment and how you can help influence their progress towards the desired outcome.

THE ADKAR MODEL IN AN ORGANIZATION

Just as with a personal change, **the ADKAR Model** helps us understand an individual's needs during a change at work and directs what kind of support enables employees to successfully change. The change we will look at is the implementation of a new software tool.

Awareness

If the new software is implemented and employees are not aware that any changes are needed, their reaction might be:

"This is a waste of time."

"It was working just fine before."

"They never tell us what's going on!"

A natural human reaction to change, even in the best circumstances, is to resist. Awareness of the business or organizational need to change is a critical component to overcoming resistance.

If, on the other hand, employees clearly understand that the old software version will no longer be supported by the vendor, or that new software will help them meet customer needs more effectively, the reaction (based on increased awareness) could look very different:

"How soon will this happen?"

"How will this impact me?"

"Will I receive new training?"

Desire

Armed with awareness that a change is required, an employee still may have low desire to log in and use the new software:

“I’m not interested in changing.”

“What’s in it for me?”

“I doubt they are really serious about this.”

The employee’s personal motivators or barriers contribute to their level of desire to use the new software. Each person could have their own unique reasons for engaging or resisting; sometimes reasons that are not even related to the change.

If an employee has no desire to change, they may be labeled as difficult, inflexible, pessimistic or unsupportive. The best person to help a resistant employee is their direct manager or supervisor, who is usually closest to the employee and able to translate the change into the employee’s personal context. Managers need to engage in coaching conversations to help connect the change to personal motivators and to identify how barriers can be removed or minimized.

Knowledge

Only after awareness and desire are built should we begin providing detailed knowledge of how to use the new software. Unfortunately, it is often the case that an organization sees a change coming and the very first step that they take is to send employees to training. The result of this approach is that the investment in the training is not highly effective. Employees are not engaged in the detailed functionality of the software because they are not prepared

to learn. They may not even know why they are there in the first place. To make the most of a training investment, it must come after initial awareness and desire building.

Ability

After helping employees gain intellectual understanding of how to navigate in the software interface, there may still be a gap between knowledge and ability. Knowledge is knowing what to do; ability is being able to actually put that knowledge into practice. Demonstrated ability to operate with the software in a live, real-world situation is where the change actually takes place. If an employee has knowledge but not ability, you might hear:



"I'm not getting these new steps right."

"I eventually get there but it takes me twice as long."

"I understand the manual, but when I have to do it, I freeze."

To bridge the "knowledge to ability gap," employees will benefit from hands-on coaching and practice using the software before go-live. This practice could happen in a formal training setting or by working through a simulated live environment. The important factor is that the employees using the software can try it out, make mistakes and identify questions in a safe environment. Often, employees simply need time to realize changes and the best thing we can do is to give them time to practice.

Reinforcement

The final element of **the ADKAR Model** is reinforcement. The human brain is wired for habit. We are physiologically programmed to revert to our old habits. When reinforcement is not in place, we see employees using work-arounds or relying on their old spreadsheets instead of the new software. We may hear things like:

“The new way just takes too long; I’m going to keep doing it my way.”

“I keep forgetting to include the new department.”

To reinforce change, we need to monitor whether the change is being sustained or not. Who is logging in, following workflows and using the new software successfully? Where are individuals recognizing new efficiencies in their work? With this information, the first step is to celebrate and recognize where the change has taken hold. Positive recognition is a great way to reward employees for working hard to make changes and demonstrate to the organization that participating in the change is important. If some employees are reverting to work-arounds or old processes, follow-up is needed to understand where their barriers are. Do they need more training or coaching? Are they missing any of the **ADKAR** elements? Reinforcement confirms that they are expected to continue working in the new way.

THE POWER OF ADKAR FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Approaching change using **the ADKAR Model** will help you to plan effectively for a new change. Equally, if a current change is failing, the model can immediately diagnose where the process is breaking down so that you can take the most effective corrective action. This results-oriented approach helps focus energy on the area(s) that will produce the highest probability for success, providing structure and direction. **The ADKAR Model** helps you identify any elements

that have been overlooked along the way.

ADKAR EXERCISE - IMPLEMENTING THE ADKAR MODEL

Now, let's put **the ADKAR Model** into action. This exercise will help to separate and clarify the key elements of the model and help you start applying it yourself.

Instructions:

1. To begin, identify a friend, family member, work associate or employee in whom you want to see a particular change take hold. Choose an individual who is not having success, despite your best efforts to support them through the change.
2. Answer the questions in the table below with this person in mind. Use the table for your answers, notes and scores.
3. Once you have completed the table, take a moment to review the scores. Highlight all areas that scored a 3 or below.

ADKAR ASSESSMENT

Brief description of the change	
Notes:	
Awareness of the need for change	Score
Notes:	
Desire to make the change happen	Score
Notes:	
Knowledge about how to change	Score
Notes:	
Ability to change	Score
Notes:	
Reinforcement to retain change	Score
Notes:	

Awareness

List the reasons you believe the change is necessary. Review these reasons and rate the degree to which this person is aware of them, or the need to change. (1 is no awareness, 5 is total awareness)

Desire

List the factors or consequences (good and bad) that create a desire for this change. Rate the person's desire to change, taking into consideration the motivating factors, but also their convictions and any associated consequences. (1 is no desire to change, 5 is strong desire)

Knowledge

List the skills and knowledge needed to support the change, including if the person has a clear picture of what the change looks like. Rate this person's knowledge or level of training in these areas. (1 is no knowledge, 5 is highly knowledgeable)

Ability

Considering the skills and knowledge identified in the previous question, evaluate the person's ability to perform these skills or act on this knowledge. Rate this person's ability to implement the new skills, knowledge and behaviors to support the change. (1 is no ability, 5 is very able)

Reinforcement

List the reinforcements that will help to retain the change. Are incentives in place to reinforce the change and make it stick? Rate the reinforcements and how they help support the change. (1 is not helpful, 5 is very helpful)

Once you have completed the table, take a moment to review the scores. Highlight all areas that scored a 3 or below. Start with your first highlighted area.

APPLYING THE ADKAR ASSESSMENT RESULTS

As mentioned before, the outcomes of the individual change process need to be realized sequentially. When influencing change in someone else, the elements of **the ADKAR Model** must be addressed in order. The first element with a score of 3 or below must be addressed first.

If awareness was identified as the first low-scoring area, this is where you must begin. Working on desire, knowledge or skill development, if awareness is not firmly in place, will not help the change happen.

ACTIONABLE STEPS

If awareness is needed: discuss and explore the reasons and benefits for this change, both on the organizational level and on the individual level.

If more desire is needed: to move this person forward, you must address their inherent desire to change (which may stem from negative or positive consequences). The motivating factors have to be great enough to overcome the individual's personal threshold to resisting the change.

If more knowledge is needed: avoid dwelling on reasons for change and motivating factors, as this could be discouraging to somebody already at this phase. What is needed is education and training for the skills and behaviors necessary to move forward.

If more ability is needed: at least two steps are required. First, time is needed to develop new abilities and behaviors. Second, ongoing coaching and support is required - a one-time training event or an educational program may not be adequate. Consider outside intervention, continued support and mentoring.

If more reinforcement is needed: investigate if the necessary elements are present to keep the person from reverting to old behaviors. Address the incentives or consequences for not continuing to act in the new way.

TO CONCLUDE

The ADKAR Model is an essential tool for both change professionals and any leader who needs to motivate change in others. The model is effective and easy to grasp. It can be applied in a wide variety of organizational settings. If a change is failing, you can use **the ADKAR Model** to identify any gaps within your change management process. **ADKAR** will highlight the areas where focused corrective action can be taken to improve change success.

The ADKAR Model provides structure and direction that helps you to plan for change effectively. Each step of the model outlines an individual's successful journey through change and aligns with the specific activities associated with leading change. If you are ready to lead change, either personally or professionally, this results-oriented approach will increase your change success.



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