

The ADKAR® Change Management Model

Using Goals to Accomplish Change

Clearly, for change to be successful, people have to change the way that they work.

Typically, you'll persuade them to do this by explaining the need for change, by getting their buy-in, by training them, and by giving them support.

But how do you know if you've communicated enough? Or trained enough? And which outcomes should you concentrate on during each stage of a project, to make sure that you implement change effectively?

The ADKAR® Change Management Model helps you answer these questions by providing a clear communication goal for each stage of your change project. By focusing on what you need to do to achieve these goals, you can get everyone on board with your project, and implement change successfully.

About the Model

The ADKAR Model was created by the **Prosci research organization** in the late 90s, following research involving more than 300 companies engaged in major change projects. It was then published in Jeff Hiatt's 2006 book, "**ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government and Our Community.**"

The model focuses on the way that you share information with the project's **stakeholders** – the people affected by the change. According to the model, for change to succeed, you need to achieve five successive knowledge-sharing goals as the project proceeds. These are:

1. Awareness (of the need for change).
2. Desire (to participate in and support the change).
3. Knowledge (of how to change).
4. Ability (to change).
5. Reinforcement (to sustain the change).

You need to achieve each goal before you can move on to the next.

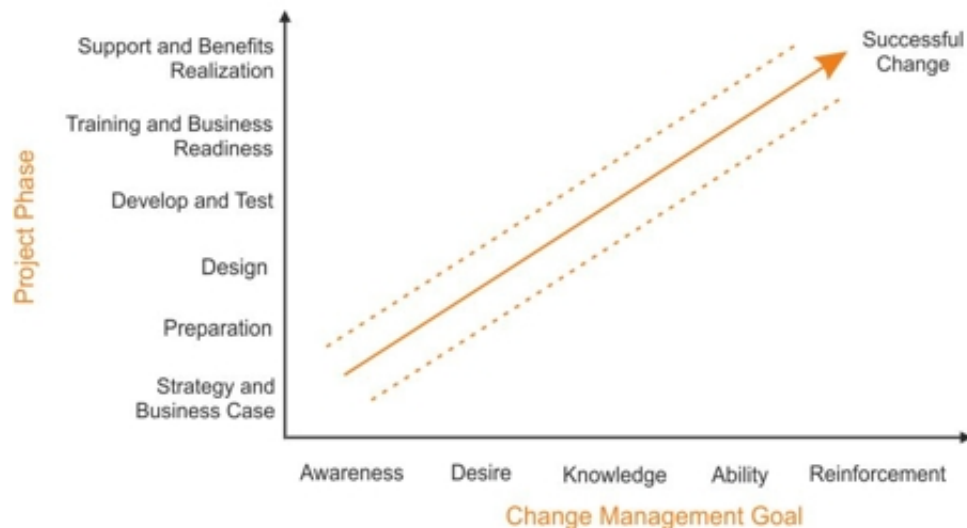
To start with, stakeholders must be made **aware** of the need for change. You then need to translate this awareness into a **desire** to be involved in it, so that people put in the effort needed to create a good design for the project.

Once the design has been approved, your stakeholders should then **know** what they need to do to make the change project happen.

And after the implementation has been completed and the project is "live," users need to be trained so they are **able** to apply the new skills and behaviors that will make the project a success. These behaviors should then be **reinforced**, so that the project continues to be a success.

The graph in figure 1, below, outlines when you need to achieve each goal. **Project phases** are shown on the vertical axis, while each of the five ADKAR goals is shown on the horizontal axis. However, this is provided as guidance only – the stage at which you need to achieve each goal may vary, depending on the project.

Figure 1. The ADKAR Model



The main advantage of using the ADKAR Model is that it encourages you to focus on achieving clear, finite communication goals at specific project stages, rather than just doing many activities and hoping that what you do is sufficient to achieve your project's overall objectives.

Using the ADKAR Model

The ADKAR Model is useful in a range of change management situations. For instance:

- During planning, so you can think about how much time you'll allocate for communication.
- When you're in the middle of a project phase, where it helps you think about whether your planned activity is achieving its goals.
- When you're not getting the results you expected.

We'll now go through the ADKAR goals, and show you how to achieve them in practice.

1. Awareness

Building awareness of the need for change usually takes place during the Business Case and Preparation phases of a project.

Here, you need to think about the people who are your project's stakeholders, and ask yourself what they need to know, understand, or experience so that they can "buy in" to the change.

To do this, make sure that you and your management team communicate your **vision** for change to stakeholders, and that you give them access to all of the information they need to understand this. (At this stage, make sure that you listen carefully to their feedback, and adjust the vision if you feel this is necessary.)

2. Desire to Participate and Support the Change

Next, you need your stakeholders to want to participate with and support the change. You should focus on this goal in parallel with the Design phase of your project: this is the time where stakeholders can start to see the detail of what the project will look like, understand the impact it will have, and see the benefits it will bring.

There are many reasons why people may support or resist change, so gaining people's desire to participate can often be difficult.

You can see some of the reasons that stakeholders may support or resist change below:

Supporting Factors

- Discontent with the current state.
- Enhanced job security.
- Affiliation and sense of belonging.
- Career advancement.
- Acquisition of power or position.
- Incentive or compensation.
- Trust and respect for leadership.
- Hope about the future state.

Resisting Factors

- The threat of job losses.
- Imminent negative consequences.
- Worry about loss of productivity during the change process.
- Worry about increased workload, particularly during any parallel run of new systems against old systems.
- Worry about loss of personal prestige, power or benefits, particularly with people who are experts in the old system.

Tip 1:

Our articles on **Beckhard and Harris's Change Equation** , **The Change Curve** , and **Coaching through Change** will help you think about how to overcome people's natural resistance to change.

Tip 2:

The higher the impact and significance of the change, the less likely it is that you'll gain everyone's support. It's important, therefore, to identify whose support is critical – **Stakeholder Analysis** and **Influence Mapping** will help you do this.

Tip 3:

It's often difficult to understand why other people may not be excited by the change that you're advocating. But remember, they haven't been through the same thinking process that you have. Try to think about **how they see things** , and identify what information or insights they would need to see things the way you do.

3. Knowledge of How to Change

The next step is to help people learn the skills and gain the knowledge they need to deliver change. It's useful, here, to conduct a **Training Needs Assessment** to identify the skills that people need to develop. Common ways of delivering this training are through **Instructor-Led Training** and **On-the-Job Training** , although the precise approach that you use will depend on the project.

4. Ability to Change

Now you need to give people opportunities to apply their new skills, and you need to provide them with extra support whilst they're trying out unfamiliar processes. (For example, you may want to use **coaching** or **mentoring** at this stage.)

As people start to become more comfortable with new processes and improve their skills, they may identify issues that weren't obvious beforehand.

For instance, let's say an organization has sent a group of managers on a training course to improve their focus on customers. On their return, they get extra support using these skills through

coaching and mentoring, and through use of peer-to-peer knowledge sharing sessions.

However, as they implement their new processes and skills, it becomes clear that other changes are needed for them to behave in a fully customer-focused way. They decide to change the way that they file customer records, they move the location of the office reception, and they change the way that support staff are organized, so that they can help customers more effectively.

Tip:

Listen carefully if people start to identify new issues once the project has been implemented. This shows that they're taking ownership of the change, and are thinking about how they can do things in an even better way.

5. Reinforcement to Sustain the Change

Once your users are fully effective and all of the project deliverables are in place, you're ready to move on to reinforcement in order to sustain the change.

There are several positive things that you can do here, such as giving financial or non-financial rewards, adjusting compensation arrangements, and ensuring that people are **rewarded in non-financial ways** for their contribution.

You will also need to continue communicating your vision, as well as letting people know about the success of the project and the things that it has achieved.

Tip:

Remember, stakeholders can "slip back" at any point during the change process. For instance, a stakeholder might withdraw his or her desire to support the change (goal 2) as more detailed information about the concept and design is revealed. In this situation, you ideally need to re-establish their desire before you can move back to ensuring that relevant knowledge is once again being shared (goal 3).

Key Points

The ADKAR Change Management Model helps you implement change effectively by providing a clear information-sharing goal for each stage of your project.

The model describes five successive communication goals, which are:

1. Awareness (of the need for change).
2. Desire (to participate and support the change).
3. Knowledge (of how to change).
4. Ability (to change).
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You need to achieve each goal before you can move on to the next.

The main benefit of using the ADKAR model is that it encourages you to focus on achieving clear, finite communication goals as you work through the stages of your project.

