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# DESIRE

HOW TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE A PERSON'S DESIRE  
TO EMBRACE CHANGE

***Prosci***<sup>®</sup>  
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The first step in the individual change process is establishing a clear understanding of why the change is happening. Leading successful change starts with building awareness of the need for change. When awareness has been established, the next step for an individual is to make a personal decision to participate in the change.

The five parts of the Prosci ADKAR® Model show the milestones an individual must achieve for a change to be successful: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement.

Desire is the second milestone. Desire represents the willingness to support and engage in a change. Desire is ultimately about a personal choice that is influenced by the nature of the change and personal circumstances.



## Making the Transition From Awareness to Desire

Desire is often the most challenging ADKAR element to achieve. Awareness enables people to understand the impacts and value of the future state, but creating more and more awareness will not result in desire. Continuing to focus on the reasons for change rather than translating those reasons into personal and organizational motivating factors can be discouraging and frustrating for employees.



Creating the desire to change, by definition, is not under a leader's direct control. Change leaders can take definitive steps to influence desire, but each individual ultimately makes his or her own choice to support the change. Desire has been achieved when an individual genuinely says, "I will be part of this change."

In a business context, influencing desire requires a change management strategy that matches the personal motivators of the impacted teams and leverages the influence of leaders in the organization. Key business leaders act as sponsors of change. Managers and supervisors are coaches to employees during the change process. Incentives are aligned with new behaviors and employees are proactively engaged in the change process.

# Factors That Influence a Person's Desire to Change

Understanding the underlying factors that influence a person's level of desire informs how to plan for and respond to the behaviors that employees express when confronted with change. These behaviors include:

## 1. The Nature of the Change and WIIFM

Individuals and groups assess a forthcoming change with questions like: "What is the change?" "How will the change impact me?" and "What's in it for me?" (or WIIFM). The answers to these questions help them determine whether the future state represents a threat or an opportunity. They may also assess how effectively or fairly they think the change will be deployed with other impacted groups.



## 2. The Organizational Context for the Change

Every individual experiences change in the context of their own perception of the history and culture of their organization. Organizational context includes the previous track record with change, current levels of change saturation, and the overall direction of the organization. Employees may be less willing to engage in new changes, for example, if the company has a negative history of starting changes, not following through, or allowing individuals to opt out. Each person's experience is unique. How they view the environment and interpret the context of the current change will vary considerably.

### 3. An Employee's Personal Situation

An individual's personal situation impacts their desire to change. Personal context includes a wide variety of factors that can influence desire: family status, financial security, career aspirations, age, health, relationships at home and at work, educational background, upcoming personal events, and past successes in the work environment.

A reaction to change that appears counterintuitive or excessive, on the surface, may have very little to do with the change itself. Understanding an individual's personal situation is very helpful in understanding their choice to support or resist a change.



### 4. Personal Values and Motivators



Personal motivators are inherent attributes that drive our choices and make us unique as individuals. Some people value advancement and strive for respect, power and position. Other people desire depth in relationships and financial security. The decision to engage with change is much easier when the future state aligns with an employee's personal motivators. In addition to what we value, internal beliefs about whether we

can be successful with the change being made also impact our desire to change.

# Creating Desire

Leaders of change can positively influence the decision to embrace change by considering the factors that impact desire. Below are several tactics for effectively building desire:

## 1. Effectively Sponsor the Change With Employees and Peers



*Twice as often as any other obstacle, participants in the Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition reported “Lack of active and visible sponsorship” as the number one obstacle to successful change outcomes.*

Executive sponsors are instrumental in creating desire to support and engage in a change among employees. To see the best results and the most adoption of the new solution, senior leaders need to be present, interact on a personal level, and be willing to answer difficult questions throughout the change process. Employees watch their leaders closely. If leadership actively and visibly supports the change, employees will determine that the change is still important.



Sponsors who disengage from a project, are absent or delegate the role of sponsorship entirely communicate that the change is not important. Momentum and support from employees diminishes. There is greater resistance to the change, slower adoption throughout the organization and, in some cases, project failure.



Sponsors of change are also responsible to build a strong coalition of support with their peers. Senior leaders need to take the time to build buy-in for the change throughout the management levels of the organization. This includes addressing concerns and conflicting priorities head-on. A weak sponsorship coalition allows resistance to grow.



*In the Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition, 56% of participants reported that their sponsors did not have an adequate understanding of the role of an effective sponsor. Participants also reported that nearly one-third of sponsors failed to build a coalition in support of their change.*

## 2. Equip Managers to Be Change Leaders

Employees look to their immediate supervisors for cues about how to respond to change. Managers and supervisors must be prepared to help individuals on their teams make sense of the change. Ideally, leaders demonstrate their own commitment to the change in actions and words, leading by example and proactively addressing their teams' barriers.

Effective managers create opportunities to talk openly about the change. They clearly articulate both the negative and positive impacts of the change. They actively listen as their employees work through questions and concerns. In many cases employees simply want to voice their objections and be heard. Although some employees will want to talk about past failed changes and why this change is different, others will need to discuss their personal situation and how this change affects them.





*“Frequent and open communication” was cited as a top contributor to successful change initiatives in the Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition.*

*Participants also highlighted the importance of consistency, openness and transparency in communication during change. As the resource closest to employees on a daily basis and a preferred sender of change messages, managers play a critical role in change communication.*

By understanding each employee’s unique situation and perspective about the change, managers can identify obstacles and sources of resistance. They can assist employees in finding solutions to address these barriers. Understanding what is important to each individual also helps managers build desire around the most impactful motivators.

For managers and supervisors to have effective conversations with employees, they must first be onboard with the change themselves. Managers are employees first. They will be impacted by change and have their own questions and concerns. Before they can effectively lead their teams, they must first have opportunity to process and resolve their own uncertainties and fears.



*“Managers have the greatest challenge as they are in charge of translating the change message from the top to their employees. If they don’t understand the change or don’t have the support to do it, it makes them more resistant.”*

*—Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition.*

Too often, the role of the manager is overlooked in times of change. It is assumed that holding the title of manager means an individual is already an effective coach and

resistance manager. The role is critically important to influencing desire with employees, but change management and change coaching are skills that need to be developed. The project team, the organizational change team and the executive sponsors must all be active in equipping managers to be prepared to lead during change.



### 3. Assess Risks and Anticipate Resistance

Most change management methods include readiness assessments that identify potential challenges and points of resistance. Assessment results serve as proactive planning tools designed to target resistance and mitigate known risks from the onset. Combining assessments about the size and scope of the change itself with assessments about organizational readiness reveals the overall risk of the change. Change impact assessments identify the transitions required from different areas of the organization and the unique challenges for specific groups. With this information, change managers can strategically develop special tactics to proactively build desire. Special tactics may address areas of potential resistance or offer tailored support to those most impacted.

### 4. Engage Employees in the Change Process

Direct participation in and ownership of the change is a fast and effective way to build support and desire. Increased engagement of impacted employees in a change initiative translates directly into increased likelihood of the initiative achieving its desired results.



*Participants in the Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition  
cited “Employee engagement” and “Participation in the change”  
as key contributors to a successful change initiative.*

Employees can play many different roles in the change process. They may get involved in creating the needed solution or participate in testing the new solution to provide feedback on and input for improvements. Natural influencers and peer leaders can engage as change champions or members of a change agent network. Actively engaging key individuals in the change produces a multiplying effect in overall levels of desire to support the change, and ultimately can lead to significant increases in the speed and success of adoption.

## 5. Align Incentive Programs



The behaviors of employees during change are strongly driven by how they are measured and rewarded. If there is an incentive program already in place to reward employees, consider how it could be re-aligned to support the new desired behaviors. An incentive program that rewards employees for the way they currently work undermines other positive motivations to change to a new way of working. The same applies for performance management systems. Employees may resist implementing changes that hinder their ability to meet their current performance objectives.



*For managers in particular, “Misalignment of project goals and personal incentives” was cited as a primary reason for resisting change. Participants in the Best Practices in Change Management – 2016 Edition acknowledged that “Incentives and metrics that did not align with promotion parameters or pay/bonus scales made change unappealing.”*

## Final Thoughts

The lack of control and uncertainty over another person’s desire to change can cause some leaders to disengage from this step in the change process. And yet it is an essential part of realizing successful change. The actions and words of managers and executive leaders have a tremendous influence on an employee’s desire to support a business change. Even if managers and executives cannot dictate the decisions of their employees, they can certainly impact the process. The most successful change initiatives focus their efforts on the proactive steps that sponsors and managers can take to minimize resistance and create energy and engagement around the change.

Before we move on to the next milestone in the Prosci ADKAR Model, it is important to note that awareness and desire can ebb and flow over the course of a change initiative. New information or developments may cause an employee with high awareness and high desire to revert. If this happens, awareness and desire must be re-addressed in the context of the new information before the employee can successfully continue to move forward. Although the natural progression is to move on quickly to building knowledge and ability through training, for a change to be successful, it is absolutely necessary to re-visit awareness and desire, reinforcing these elements with continued communication.

In the following eBook, *Knowledge: How to Effectively Build Knowledge in Individuals*, we explore the next element in the Prosci ADKAR Model.





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