

The Prosci ADKAR Model

In order to create change within organizations, the people working in them must support the change. There must be:

- **Awareness** of the need for change
- **Desire** to participate in 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

Understanding these five factors can help organizations diagnose employee resistance to change; help employees transition through the change process; and create successful action plans for personal and professional advancement during a change initiative.

Two Ways to Use ADKAR

Let's look at two examples of the ADKAR Model in practice, the first in a personal change scenario and the second in a professional change scenario. While the contexts are different, the framework for successful change is the same.

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? Desire is very individual. 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 your motivation, you must make a personal decision to begin exercising, based on your own reasons.

- **Knowledge:** In order to effectively change, you need to know how. Do you know how to effectively and safely exercise? If not, perhaps you will hire a personal trainer to teach you the basics, attend an exercise class with an instructor, or order a workout video or book.
- **Ability:** Technically knowing how to do something doesn't 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.
- **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.

Now let's consider how this framework applies to employees in a professional environment and how you as a leader can help influence their progress toward the desired outcome.

Organizational Change

This example scenario is about the implementation of a new software tool at work.

- **Awareness:** If employees are not aware that the organization's software is problematic in some way, their reaction might be resistance: "Now I've got to spend time learning some new system?" If, on the other hand, they understand that new software will help them be more efficient or meet customer needs more effectively, their reaction might be excitement: "It's going to be so much better!"
- **Desire:** Even with the awareness that a change is required, an employee still might resist logging in and using the new software. That person may end up being labeled as difficult, inflexible, pessimistic, or unsupportive. The best person to help a resistant employee is their direct manager or supervisor, who can translate the change into the employee's personal context.
- **Knowledge:** Unfortunately, when organizations see a change coming, the first thing many do is send employees to training. Training only works when employees are ready to learn. They're only ready to learn when they are aware of the need for the change and have a desire to change. Only at that point are they ready to acquire the necessary knowledge.
- **Ability:** Knowledge is knowing what to do; ability is being able to actually put that knowledge into practice. If an employee has knowledge but not ability, you might hear: "I'm not getting these new steps right," or "I understand the instructions, but it just never works when I try it." To bridge the "knowledge-to-ability gap," employees can benefit from hands-on

coaching and practice using the software before going live. This practice can be formal or informal, or even both.

- **Reinforcement:** Without reinforcement, people tend to fall back into their old habits. Employees may start 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.” To reinforce change, we need to monitor whether the change is being sustained or not. When it is, we celebrate that it has taken hold. If some employees are reverting to old processes, follow-up is needed to understand where their barriers are. Do they need more training or coaching? Reinforcement confirms that they are expected to continue working in the new way.

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