

# USING THE ADKAR MODEL TO FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

Applications of ADKAR Research Study



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# INTRODUCTION

At its foundation, the **Prosci ADKAR® Model** (ADKAR) is a powerful framework for understanding how change can happen with a single individual. It answers the question, “what outcomes must be present for successful, sustainable change to take hold in a single person?” When we understand what outcomes one team member (or family member or friend) needs to have in place, we can take practical steps to influence and help that individual achieve those outcomes.

Leaders who are looking to facilitate change with an individual use ADKAR as an organizing structure to inform their planning, coaching and action steps. Assessing an individual team member’s ADKAR profile provides them with a customized view of where or why an individual is struggling with change. Armed with that information, they can tailor an individualized approach to overcoming barrier points and helping an individual progress through change.

Using ADKAR as a coaching tool for leading individuals through change is one of the simplest and earliest applications of the model. As part of a research effort to validate how organizations leverage ADKAR, Prosci asked business leaders and change professionals questions about how they are applying ADKAR with individuals.

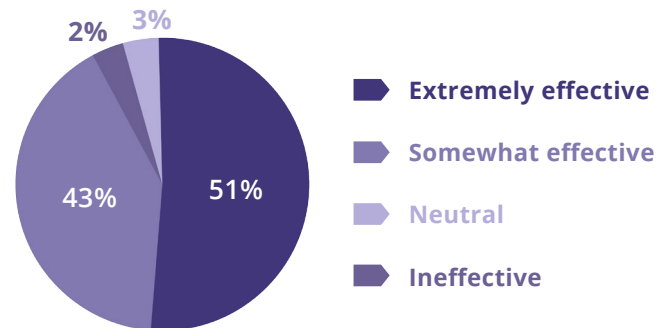
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“  
*The model fits nicely and naturally with a personal journey of change, irrespective of whether linked to a wider corporate change.*

“  
*[ADKAR] has helped focus discussions when individual employees are having trouble with change.*

# USING THE ADKAR MODEL TO FACILITATE CHANGE WITH AN INDIVIDUAL

The use of ADKAR to facilitate individual change was reported to be broadly effective. Over 90% percent of those who used ADKAR in this way indicated the model's use was effective, with more than half rating it as "extremely" effective.



Percent of Study Respondents Who Used ADKAR to Facilitate Change with an Individual

| USE CASE                                       | PREVALENCE | FREQUENCY |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Leverage a structured approach and methodology | 80%        | 95%       |
| Facilitate individual change                   | 45%        | 95%       |
| Measure change outcomes                        | 44%        | 91%       |
| Create a common language for change            | 34%        | 98%       |
| Integrate with project management              | 34%        | 90%       |
| Empower managers                               | 32%        | 87%       |
| Equip senior leaders                           | 25%        | 97%       |

# WHY USE THE ADKAR MODEL TO FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

Prosci asked study participants why they had leveraged ADKAR to lead an individual through the change process. Three broad themes emerged in the responses:

## 1 ADKAR informs tailored action when change is required

When change is an organizational imperative, ADKAR provides a framework for efficiently focusing and scaling intervention efforts. When facing behaviors, beliefs or habits that need to change in an individual employee, ADKAR was selected as a tool to help customize support and coaching. Study participants used ADKAR to identify exactly where the person was struggling and to create tailored action steps to help the individual move through the change process.

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*[ADKAR] helps me gauge where someone is on the change continuum, and how much rigor I need to devote to getting the individual up to speed quickly.*

## 2 ADKAR is effective and easy to use

Participants reported that they chose ADKAR as a tool because of its simplicity and effectiveness. The model itself is clear, accessible and broadly applicable to a wide variety of changes. In application, ADKAR makes the change process easy to understand because it intuitively aligns with the users' experiences. ADKAR's focus on achieving change outcomes also allowed participants to see quick, early wins.

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### 3 ADKAR proactively identifies barriers to change

Participants reported using ADKAR to proactively engage individuals in a required change. Through structured conversations that identify potential barriers to change and points of resistance, ADKAR helps both the individual needing to change and the change agents surface and address issues in a positive way before they materialize.

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*When acting as a coach, I find ADKAR is great to help people work through a change in their own minds. It helps them understand what they want to change and why.*

# IMPACT OF USING THE ADKAR MODEL TO FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

Prosci asked research participants how using ADKAR to facilitate individual change impacted their organizations. Overwhelmingly, participants reported tangible positive impacts to their organization. The responses aligned to the following categories:

## 1 Enabled change progress

Applying ADKAR at the individual level allowed the individual to make progress in a change by proactively overcoming change barriers and resistance. Organizationally, projects were more successful and goals were more likely to be achieved because adoption of change was smoother.

THE USE OF ADKAR TO  
FACILITATE CHANGE HAD  
A POSITIVE IMPACT ON  
ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

## 2 Increased engagement

The use of ADKAR to facilitate change had a positive impact on engagement levels. Some of the anecdotal outcomes reported included an increase in trust among groups, increased morale, and higher employee engagement scores. Team members were able to work with less stress and had a more positive outlook on the change.

### 3 Improved change maturity

The use of ADKAR with individuals created a mindset shift around how to implement change, with more effort focused on the individual as the unit change. Organizations saw markers of increased change maturity, including more effective and more frequent communications, a broader application of change management on more projects, a more structured approach to change, and a shared language for change. Additional emphasis was put on awareness and desire prior to customary training activities.

“  
*[ADKAR] helps people...look at change from an individual's point of view, rather than focusing solely on scope, schedule and budget.*”

A number of responses from participants who did not report on the organizational impacts of ADKAR identified that the specific and direct organizational benefits of using ADKAR with individuals can be challenging to evaluate and measure in isolation.



# HOW THE ADKAR MODEL IS USED TO FACILITATE CHANGE WITH AN INDIVIDUAL

Prosci asked participants what specific steps they took in the application of ADKAR to facilitate change with an individual. Participants generally began with one of two starting points:

## 1 **Provide an overt introduction to ADKAR**

The most common starting point for implementing ADKAR with an individual was to educate the individual on ADKAR directly. The format and formality of the introduction to ADKAR varied from one-on-one conversations to experiential classroom activities. Study participants focused their education activities on providing an overview of the model and its elements and on contexting change as a process. Many participants reported walking through an example of ADKAR applied to a change with other groups, or to a past change.

## 2 **Apply ADKAR indirectly**

A substantial portion of study participants started applying ADKAR without openly sharing the model with the individual who needed to change. This approach commonly involved using ADKAR to inform and structure conversations and one-on-one coaching sessions.

Beyond the initial starting points, though, the steps that participants reported in applying ADKAR with individuals were fairly consistent, validating that the basic implementation steps simply mirror the steps of the model itself.

## 1. Assess the individual

Participants identified the individual's levels in each of the five elements of ADKAR relative to the change at hand. Participants reported accomplishing this through formal ADKAR assessments and tools such as the ADKAR Dashboard, or less formally through conversations or blank paper exercises. Participants using the indirect application method as a starting point assessed ADKAR scores through observation and open-ended questions. In cases where the model had already been formally introduced, many participants reported asking the individual to assess themselves.



## 2. Identify barrier points

Participants then evaluated which of the ADKAR elements, if any, were blocking progress through change. Some participants reported asking the participant to reflect on their own barrier points, while others diagnosed the barriers directly themselves.



## 3. Develop and implement tailored action plans

Finally, participants defined individualized action steps to enable the individual to move forward and overcome current barriers based on their unique ADKAR profile. They developed expectations with the individual about their role in the success of the change, and communicated what support they would provide. Participants reported that ongoing coaching and progress monitoring enabled the individual to progress through building the elements of ADKAR.



# CONCLUSION

In one of its simplest applications, ADKAR is an effective and impactful tool for facilitating change with a single individual. It serves as an organizing framework to engage individuals in change and a coaching tool to inform tailored action steps that help an individual progress through their own unique change process.



# SUCCESS STORY: HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATION

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*People in my organization would ask me: What did you do to implement so quickly? I would always tell them 'I used my change management tool!'*

The health care industry has an interesting paradox. On one hand, health care organizations are constantly looking for innovations, approaches and methods to improve the care of their patients. Medical professionals are required to go to continuing education classes to ensure that their skills stay up-to-date. They must ensure they are aware of and can implement new practices and procedures. On the other hand, implementing change in these high-risk environments can be challenging. When changes come about that challenge the institutional core beliefs, practices and norms of health care organizations, they are often strongly resisted. Medical practitioners adapt to ever-evolving medical practices but can be some of the strongest resisters when it comes to institutional changes. Therefore, a proven change management model is essential to ensuring adoption of institutional change.

Catharina B. first encountered ADKAR when earning her Masters in change management. While working on her masters, Catharina worked for a large health care organization in the Middle East. Catharina identified two changes that would benefit from the application of change management, and specifically, ADKAR.

Catharina first applied change management on a system implementation with the goal of increasing user adoption. Catharina understood that adoption would ultimately happen at the individual level, and it was at that level that she needed to address adoption. In her own words, she had to “ADKAR them.”

Catharina started small and built “micro programs” to help a handful of impacted employees adopt the changes required by the new system. She worked directly with single people or small groups of people to build awareness and desire for the new system, then knowledge and ability to use it. Once this small group had adopted the change, she worked directly with them to reinforce their adoption. Through this direct work with impacted users, Catharina saw an improvement in the project’s overall implementation. Soon, other people in her organization saw how smoothly the project was progressing and asked her how she was

managing it. Her answer was “Prosci’s change management.” By focusing on a small group of people and helping them reach the individual milestones of ADKAR, Catharina was able to influence the project’s overall success.

The second change Catharina applied ADKAR to was less technical and more personal. Catharina worked with a group of nurses who specialized in wound care and pain management. This new and recently promoted group of nurses, because of their expertise, could act as consultants for the primary care physicians assigned to a patient. Catharina had seen that the primary care physicians were, in many cases, unwilling to take advice and input from the nurses, even though the nurses were often more aware of the patient’s pain or wound-care management. Catharina saw this as another opportunity to apply ADKAR to facilitate individual change with the physicians.

Catharina coached the nurses to first build the physicians’ awareness of the need to leverage the nurses’ expertise and slowly build their desire to collaborate more on patients’ care. She also coached the nurses to create mechanisms to ensure the doctors knew when and how to consult with them. Finally, Catharina helped the nurses reinforce the new behavior when doctors consulted them. This change did not happen quickly, and there was resistance from the doctors. However, by focusing on the ADKAR process and building awareness and desire for the change first, the individual doctors embraced a new way of working. After three years, the nurses’ voices are now taken into consideration, their expertise is valued, and they are viewed as an important source of patient information by the primary care physician.

As Catharina experienced, any kind of change, whether a system implementation or redefining roles in an organization, ultimately comes down to being able to move individuals through their own change process. By using ADKAR to focus on the sequential milestones of the individual change process, Catharina influenced broader organizational success.