

THE ADKAR MODEL AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Applications of ADKAR Research Study



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Using ADKAR to Equip Senior Leaders	4
Results of Having Senior Leaders Use ADKAR	5
Introducing ADKAR to Senior Leadership	7
Aspects of ADKAR That Resonated With Senior Leaders	8
Conclusion	9
Success Story: Texas Religious Organization	10

INTRODUCTION

A good leader can increase efficiency, increase effectiveness, and drive results in an organization. A bad leader can bring a strong organization to its knees by communicating poorly, refusing to be an early adopter, and not sponsoring change. The positive impact of effective senior leaders has been documented in numerous best practices studies over the last two decades. It is not surprising that this positive impact is also observed when senior leaders effectively participate in the change management process.

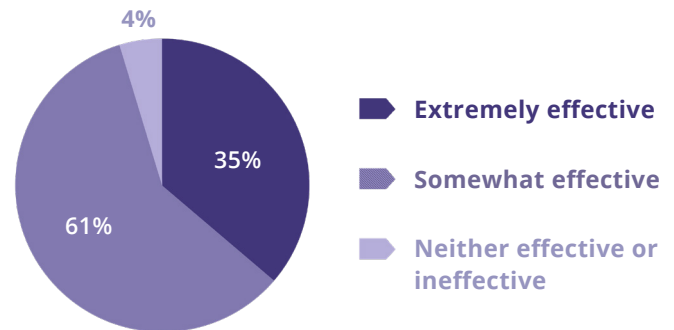
Equipping senior leaders with a model of change helps them effectively participate in the change management process. Further, employee adoption has been shown to increase when senior leaders are seen adopting and actively using a change management model.

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In a research effort to understand how organizations use the **Prosci ADKAR® Model** (ADKAR), Prosci explored how to equip senior leaders with ADKAR and the impact it has.

USING ADKAR TO EQUIP SENIOR LEADERS

About one-fourth of study participants reported that they had equipped their senior leaders with ADKAR, and nearly all of these participants said that ADKAR was either somewhat (61%) or extremely effective (35%) for this particular use.



Percent of Study Respondents Who Used ADKAR to Equip Senior Leaders

USE CASE	FREQUENCY
Leverage a structured approach and methodology	78%
Facilitate individual change	45%
Measure change outcomes	44%
Create a common language for change	34%
Integrate with project management	34%
Empower managers	32%
Equip senior leaders	25%

RESULTS OF HAVING SENIOR LEADERS USE ADKAR

1 Role understanding

Participants reported that their senior leaders, after being introduced to ADKAR, had a better understanding of their role in leading an effective change process. More importantly, senior leaders were able to act on their role and aid in the change process in a meaningful way.

2 Common language

Participants reported that ADKAR enabled their senior leaders to talk about the change initiative and the change process using a common language, and that the common language cascaded through the organization. This helped participants talk about change in a meaningful way throughout their organization from the top down.


3 Identifying resistant leaders

ADKAR helped participants identify resistant senior leaders. Participants reported that ADKAR, when coupled with additional change management training, had a clear call to action for senior leaders. This forced those senior leaders who did not support the change to make their resistance more vocal.

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Immediate mindset change [for senior leaders] in terms of how to prioritize change programs, identify those with the most/least chance of success and a common framework/language to describe change programs and methodologies.

While participants who reported on senior leaders found that their understanding of their role increased from the use of ADKAR, participants still encountered the following challenges with senior leaders:



**ADKAR ENABLED SENIOR
LEADERS TO TALK ABOUT THE
CHANGE INITIATIVE AND THE
CHANGE PROCESS**

1 Second-guessing methodology

While senior leaders understood the methodology, understanding did not always result in buy-in.

2 Unwilling to step up

Either because they were not bought into the change or because they did not think it was necessary, senior leaders were unwilling to step up.

3 Taking the easy way

Participants reported that senior leaders, while understanding the benefit of ADKAR, looked for an easy way out.

INTRODUCING ADKAR TO SENIOR LEADERSHIP

When research participants were asked how senior leaders at their organizations were introduced to ADKAR, participants reported various methods of training:



Training sessions for sponsors

Participants reported undertaking training sessions with their sponsors. These sessions focused on all aspects of the role of sponsorship, not just introducing ADKAR. These sessions were reported as being facilitated by either internal resources or an external change management training company.



Building ADKAR into current development plans

The second most frequently used approach was to add a change management module into either their leadership development curriculum or annual leadership meetings.

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We held a specific PROSCI-led half [day] course for the senior leadership. We made change management one of the themes of our annual leadership meetings where we explained the ADKAR methodology. We have embedded the assessments in to [sic] our projects' planning phases so that senior leaders understand change dynamics prior to approving or launching projects.

ASPECTS OF ADKAR THAT RESONATED WITH SENIOR LEADERS

Participants reported on what aspects of ADKAR they found resonated well with senior leaders at their organization:

1 Provided a simple and easy-to-follow structure

Senior leaders appreciated the simplicity of ADKAR, as well as the structured process it provided individuals to follow. It was cited as being something any person could use, as well as being easy to facilitate with others.

2 Provided an awareness building tool

Many participants reported that beginning with awareness of the need for and impact of change, rather than training for the change, was a revelation to a lot of senior leaders.

3 Provided a tool to identify and align change management milestones

The ability to use the ADKAR steps as milestones and the ease at which those steps could be aligned to and integrated with project plans (i.e. timelines, objectives, toll gates, etc.) were consistently cited as effective tools that helped senior leaders identify and communicate change milestones on projects.

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The steps of first holding awareness even if things aren't certain, getting ahead of the change and communicating clearly helps in building trust and in mitigating the rumor mill. It [ADKAR] had a lot of buy-in because they were concerned about the anxiety levels of employees.

CONCLUSION

Using ADKAR with senior leadership proved to increase understanding change and buy-in of methodology within the organizations studied. For many leaders ADKAR created clarity around their roles during change. It also allowed the organization to cascade the common language of ADKAR throughout their employees. The simplicity and scalability of the model was very attractive to senior leaders, and they also appreciated the alignment of the model with the project timeline. When senior leaders start with awareness, messaging to their employees tends to be received in a much more receptive manner.



SUCCESS STORY: TEXAS RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

Graham's organization—a large religious conference located in Texas—was looking for ways to consciously develop into a more effective and efficient organization that had more resources for ministry work. More than six hundred local churches reported to nine district superintendents, and these superintendents were so focused on the minutia of local church issues that they did not have time or capacity to focus on growing their churches.

"The superintendents were being called to address every local issue with individual churches...We needed them to focus on the bigger picture rather than running off to bury a grandmother's cat," Graham said. He needed a tool to refocus his superintendents on the key responsibilities of their jobs while at the same time empowering the local ministers and church councils to address local issues on their own. He found that tool in ADKAR.

They had been looking for ways to help shift their superintendents' work priorities to larger church issues for the past six years without success. Then, in 2013, Graham attended a Prosci Change Management Certification Program. He took ADKAR back to his organization and, after introducing it to his superiors, began introducing it to the superintendents.

Graham viewed this project as a move to efficiency that had many parts. His superintendents were convinced that the issues they faced in their districts were entirely unique, each district was already saturated with countless changes, many of which local churches did not understand or want, and the superintendents were too risk averse to tackle and enforce some of these changes head on. This was a complex issue, but one that Graham knew ADKAR could address.

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ADKAR flattened the management structure. Everyone was following the ADKAR approach and could start sharing success stories and advice on their own. The superintendents were able to empower the local churches to resolve their own local issues by equipping them with ADKAR, which freed up the superintendents to better manage change.

Graham introduced ADKAR to the superintendents over the course of a four-hour training. They were resistant at first, thinking that the model was too simple to address their needs, but once Graham walked them through practical demonstrations, the superintendents were willing to try viewing their problems through its lens. Once Graham had gotten the superintendents to look at the changes they faced through the lens of ADKAR, they stopped viewing each of their individual changes as completely unique from any other change and started seeing them as a change that dealt with individuals and, more importantly, one that they could successfully manage by addressing each of the ADKAR phases.

The superintendents began using ADKAR with their local churches, and those churches began to become more successful at change. This freed up time for other projects and lowered the feeling of saturation when it came to change. Finally, once the superintendents started using ADKAR, they started being proactive on large-scale projects and took steps to minimize the risk involved in each project. The superintendents started to feel more comfortable taking on changes because they felt that they could minimize the risk by using ADKAR.

Graham highlighted one specific success story regarding a local church:

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A superintendent had let me know that a church in his district was dying. Attendance was dropping off and there was very few young families in the congregation. I asked him 'Is your church council aware of this?' He said yes. 'Does your church council have a desire to fix this?' Again yes. 'Does your church council know how to address this?' This time the answer was no. I told him, 'Well that is where you need to have them spend their energies. You are already 40% of the way there. Just focus on this knowledge phase.' That superintendent left that meeting fired up. He had a focus, he knew where to put his energies. Three months later, a huge amount of progress had been made by him and the local church council. All they needed was a way of understanding and addressing the problem.

Graham's organization took to ADKAR very quickly. The superintendents quickly adopted the model because it was simple and easy to use, and it provided them a mental framework for thinking about and addressing the changes in their organization. When the superintendents were charged again with focusing their time more on the big picture and less on local issues, they used ADKAR to identify the unique and larger issues that kept each of them from using their time and resources on the larger work required to grow their congregation.