



Sponsor Activation Checklist

YOU KNOW SPONSORSHIP
MATTERS. BUT ARE YOU
GETTING IT RIGHT?

For more than 25 years, Prosci's Best Practices in Change Management research has identified that executive sponsorship is the #1 contributor to change success—most recently by a three-to-one margin. But knowing sponsorship matters and actually getting effective sponsorship are completely different challenges. Many practitioners struggle with how to activate their sponsors to fulfill their necessary roles: being active and visible, building a coalition of support, and communicating with stakeholders. **Change done right requires sponsors who are coached right.**

This diagnostic helps close that gap. Based on Prosci's research with 300+ executives, it reveals what sponsors implicitly need from you—and gives you a framework to enable them. Use it to diagnose where your sponsor relationship is strong, identify critical gaps, and take immediate action to strengthen sponsorship on your change.



How to Use This Checklist

This diagnostic tool is built on the DREAM framework—five categories of support that executives implicitly need from change practitioners. Based on Prosci's 2023 research with over 300 senior executives, these represent the 23 distinct asks that leaders hold but may never articulate directly:

- D** DEFINE SUCCESS
- R** REALIZE PROGRESS
- E** ELEVATE IMPACT
- A** ADVANCE PERSONALLY
- M** MATURE PROFESSIONALLY

The DREAM framework gives you a shared language to align expectations with your sponsor and diagnose where your partnership is strong or needs strengthening.

Instructions

- 1 Check each box where you've completed the action or established the practice
- 2 Identify gaps where your sponsor needs more support
- 3 Prioritize 2-3 unchecked items to tackle in the next two weeks
- 4 Use the "Quick Win" and "Conversation Starter" prompts to take immediate action

Remember: Your sponsor wants to lead change well—they just need you to show them how. This checklist helps you become their strategic partner, not just project support.

Struggling to get executive buy-in for sponsorship best practices?

The Prosci Sponsor Briefing delivers peer-to-peer validation that your sponsor needs to hear from other executives, not just from you.

[Explore the Sponsor Briefing](#)





Define Success

Help your sponsor clearly articulate what success looks like and ensure alignment across the organization.

Have you...

Facilitated a success definition workshop about the initiative with your sponsor, key leaders, and the project team in the first 2-3 weeks?

Created a one-page success scorecard that documents: technical milestones, adoption metrics (ADKAR scores, proficiency targets), business outcomes (KPIs, efficiency gains, revenue impact), and risk indicators (resistance, turnover, performance)?

Connected technical success to people readiness by helping your sponsor see the difference between go-live and true adoption?

Established clear success metrics that answer: "How will we know people have adopted this change?"

Aligned the definition of success across the project team, leadership team, and key stakeholders?

Documented what your sponsor is willing to risk or trade off to achieve success?

Built success criteria into project governance and steering committee reporting?

Your Score:

/7

QUICK WIN

Schedule 30 minutes with your sponsor this week to create a simple success scorecard.

Ask: "What does success look like in 6 months? How will we measure it?"

CONVERSATION STARTER

"I want to make sure we're aligned on what success looks like for this change. Can we spend 20 minutes defining what 'good adoption' means and how we'll track it?"



Realize Progress

Show your sponsor tangible progress, maintain momentum, and remove barriers to keep the change moving forward.

Have you...

Built a progress dashboard with people-side metrics that your sponsor reviews regularly: ADKAR assessment results, manager readiness scores, adoption rates and usage data, resistance indicators, and employee sentiment data?

Established a standing monthly sponsor check-in (30 minutes) to review progress, celebrate wins, and identify barriers?

Provided your sponsor with wins they can celebrate and share with the organization?

Tracked and reported progress against the success scorecard you created together?

Identified barriers that require executive action and brought them to your sponsor with options and recommendations?

Bridged gaps between teams or functions by surfacing misalignment or silos to your sponsor?

Translated people-side data into executive language (e.g., "Manager readiness increased 25 points" becomes "Teams are now 40% more likely to hit adoption targets")?

Created a communication rhythm so your sponsor isn't surprised by issues or delays?

Your Score:

/8

QUICK WIN

Send your sponsor a one-page progress update today highlighting: (1) One major win, (2) Current adoption data, (3) One barrier you need their help removing.

CONVERSATION STARTER

"I'd like to establish a monthly 30-minute check-in where I show you adoption progress and wins you can share, and we identify any barriers you can help remove. I will find time on your calendar and schedule the meeting."



Elevate Impact

Connect change management to business outcomes and help your sponsor see *and communicate* the ROI of the people side of change.

Have you...

Quantified the ROI of change management in language your sponsor understands: time to proficiency gains, cost savings from reduced rework or errors, revenue acceleration, retention improvements, and risk mitigation?

Linked adoption metrics to business KPIs your sponsor already tracks (e.g., customer satisfaction, productivity, efficiency, quality)?

Created before/after stories that demonstrate the impact of effective change management?

Positioned change management as a competitive advantage rather than just “project overhead”?

Provided data your sponsor can use in executive presentations, board meetings, or leadership discussions?

Connected employee experience improvements to organizational outcomes (e.g., “When adoption hit 85%, customer response time dropped 22%”)?

Demonstrated how effective sponsorship specifically contributed to results (e.g., “Resistance dropped 50% after your town hall”)?

Built a business case that shows why investing in the people side accelerates results?

Your Score:

/8

QUICK WIN

Identify one business metric your sponsor cares about and connect it to adoption progress. Share this insight in your next conversation: “When adoption increased from 60% to 80%, we saw [business metric] improve by X%.”

CONVERSATION STARTER

“I want to help you demonstrate the ROI of this change to the leadership team. What business outcomes or metrics matter most to them? I’ll create a one-pager showing how our adoption progress is driving those results.”



Advance Personally

Support your sponsor's leadership development by positioning this change as their growth opportunity.

Have you...

Debriefed after key sponsor moments (town halls, communications, leadership meetings) to offer constructive feedback?

Shared examples of effective sponsorship from other leaders, case studies, or peer organizations?

Acted as a trusted advisor by offering strategic counsel beyond just project updates?

Helped your sponsor navigate difficult conversations or resistance from peers by coaching them on approach?

Provided "coaching in the moment" to help your sponsor improve their change leadership skills?

Created reflection opportunities by asking questions like "What surprised you?" or "What would you do differently next time?"

Recognized and reinforced when your sponsor demonstrates effective sponsorship behaviors?

Your Score:

/7

Note: Not every sponsor will want or need this level of personal development support. Focus on the other DREAM areas if your sponsor isn't showing interest in this dimension.

QUICK WIN

After your sponsor's next major communication or appearance, send a note highlighting what worked well: "Your town hall was powerful because you [specific behavior]. That's what effective sponsorship looks like."

CONVERSATION STARTER

"I'd love to debrief after your town hall next week. A few minutes of feedback can help you strengthen your approach for the next one, and I can share what I'm hearing from the organization about your leadership on this change."



Mature Professionally

Connect your sponsor to resources, peer learning, and enterprise-level capability building that positions change as a strategic competency.

Have you...

Created a curated resource list (“Top 5 Resources for Executives Leading Change”) tailored to your sponsor’s interests?

Introduced your sponsor to the Prosci Sponsor Briefing or other executive development opportunities?

Connected your sponsor with other executives who have successfully led similar changes (peer learning)?

Positioned organizational change capability as a strategic priority, not just project-level execution?

Shared relevant research, case studies, or articles that reinforce the value of effective sponsorship?

Helped your sponsor see patterns across multiple changes in the organization (e.g., “The three initiatives with active sponsors are all tracking ahead of schedule”)?

Identified opportunities for your sponsor to champion change capability more broadly in the organization?

Started conversations about building enterprise-level change capability when your sponsor expresses interest in scaling best practices?

Your Score:

/8

QUICK WIN

Create a simple “Top 5 Resources for Executives Leading Change” one-pager with articles, case studies, or tools relevant to your sponsor’s current challenges. Share it with a note: “Thought these might be useful.”

CONVERSATION STARTER

“You’ve been asking great questions about how to be a more effective sponsor. Prosci offers a half-day Sponsor Briefing specifically designed for executives—it’s peer-to-peer learning with immediately applicable strategies. Would this be valuable for you?”

Your DREAM Score Summary

Total your scores across all five areas:

DREAM Area	Your Score	Max Score
Define Success	/7	7
Realize Progress	/8	8
Elevate Impact	/8	8
Advance Personally	/7	7
Mature Professionally	/8	8
TOTAL	/38	38



Interpreting Your Results

29-38 points: Strong Sponsor Partnership

You're effectively coaching your sponsor across all dimensions. Focus on sustaining these practices and look for opportunities to scale this approach to other changes or build enterprise capability.

19-28 points: Good Foundation, Gaps to Address

You've established sponsorship support in some areas but have opportunities to strengthen others. Prioritize the lowest-scoring DREAM area and implement 2-3 quick wins there.

10-18 points: Building Momentum

You're in the early stages of sponsor coaching. Use this checklist to create a focused action plan. Start with Define Success and Realize Progress—these two areas create the foundation for everything else.

0-9 points: Critical Sponsorship Gap

Your change is at risk due to limited sponsor engagement. Schedule time with your sponsor this week using the conversation starters provided. Focus on Define Success first—you need shared clarity before you can move forward. Remember: This score reflects where you are today, not your capability as a practitioner. Many successful changes started here, the key is taking the first step this week.



Need help activating your sponsor?

Explore the Sponsor Briefing program



Your Action Plan

Based on your diagnostic, identify your next steps:

MY LOWEST-SCORING DREAM AREA:

THREE ACTIONS I'LL TAKE IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS:

1

2

3

CONVERSATION I NEED TO HAVE WITH MY SPONSOR:

When Individual Sponsorship Isn't Enough

Wondering if you'll have to coach every sponsor from scratch? If you're managing multiple concurrent projects, working on a must-win initiative, or if your sponsor is asking "How do we build this capability across the whole organization?"—you're ready to scale beyond individual coaching.

QUICK WIN

START WITH THE PROSCI SPONSOR BRIEFING

The Prosci Sponsor Briefing is a half-day program that gives senior leaders peer validation of why sponsorship matters, research-backed strategies for being active and visible, and immediate tactics they can apply.

What it delivers for you: A sponsor who understands their role means less time convincing and more time enabling. You gain executive buy-in backed by research and peer learning. Most importantly, you get a sponsor ready to champion change capability more broadly.

[Equip Your Sponsor](#)

CONVERSATION STARTER

"I've been thinking about how to best support you on this change. There's a half-day program designed specifically for executives leading change—it's peer-to-peer learning with immediately applicable strategies. Based on what we're working on together, I think it would be valuable for you."

Ready to Stop Coaching Every Sponsor From Scratch?

If you're managing multiple projects with the same sponsorship gaps, watching other initiatives struggle while you're stretched thin, or tired of being the only one who knows how to activate sponsors—it's time to build enterprise-level capability.

Build and scale your organizational change capability

Prosci's Enterprise Solutions help you develop leadership capability at scale, embed structured change practices into governance and culture, build internal expertise through role-based training, and advance organizational maturity with assessment and integration.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION:

- Consistent sponsorship across all initiatives—every change has an effective sponsor, not just the ones you personally coach
- Faster execution when leaders understand their roles and fulfill them effectively
- Internal expertise that replaces reliance on expensive external consultants
- Change capability as a competitive advantage in executing strategy

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

You're no longer the only one coaching sponsors—it becomes embedded practice. You gain organizational support, a community of practice, and the satisfaction of creating lasting impact that outlasts any single project.



**Stop coaching every sponsor from scratch.
Start building capability that scales.**

[Learn More About Enterprise Solutions](#)