

# USING THE ADKAR MODEL AS A STRUCTURED APPROACH FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Applications of ADKAR Research Study

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# INTRODUCTION

A structured approach to managing change contributes to a smoother transition and enables higher adoption and usage amongst impacted groups. Organizations of all sizes across industries have adopted change management because they want to succeed at changes more efficiently and reliably. These organizations look for ways to instill a formalized, reliable and repeatable process to change management.

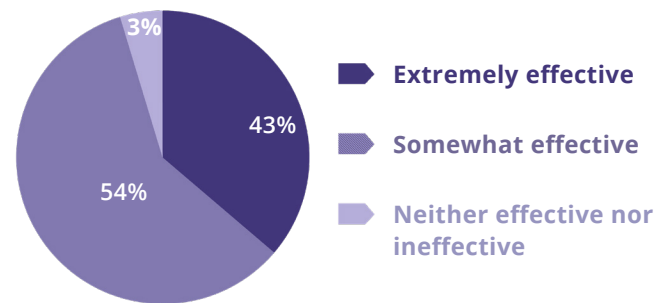
Many organizations use the **Prosci ADKAR® Model** (ADKAR) to support, supplement and reinforce their structured change management approach. ADKAR's ease of use, scalability and simple language make it a model that can be quickly deployed throughout an organization. ADKAR provides a means of understanding and talking about the change process in a way each individual in an organization understands.

97% OF PARTICIPANTS SAID  
THAT ADKAR WAS EITHER  
SOMEWHAT OR EXTREMELY  
EFFECTIVE AS A STRUCTURED  
APPROACH TO CHANGE  
MANAGEMENT.

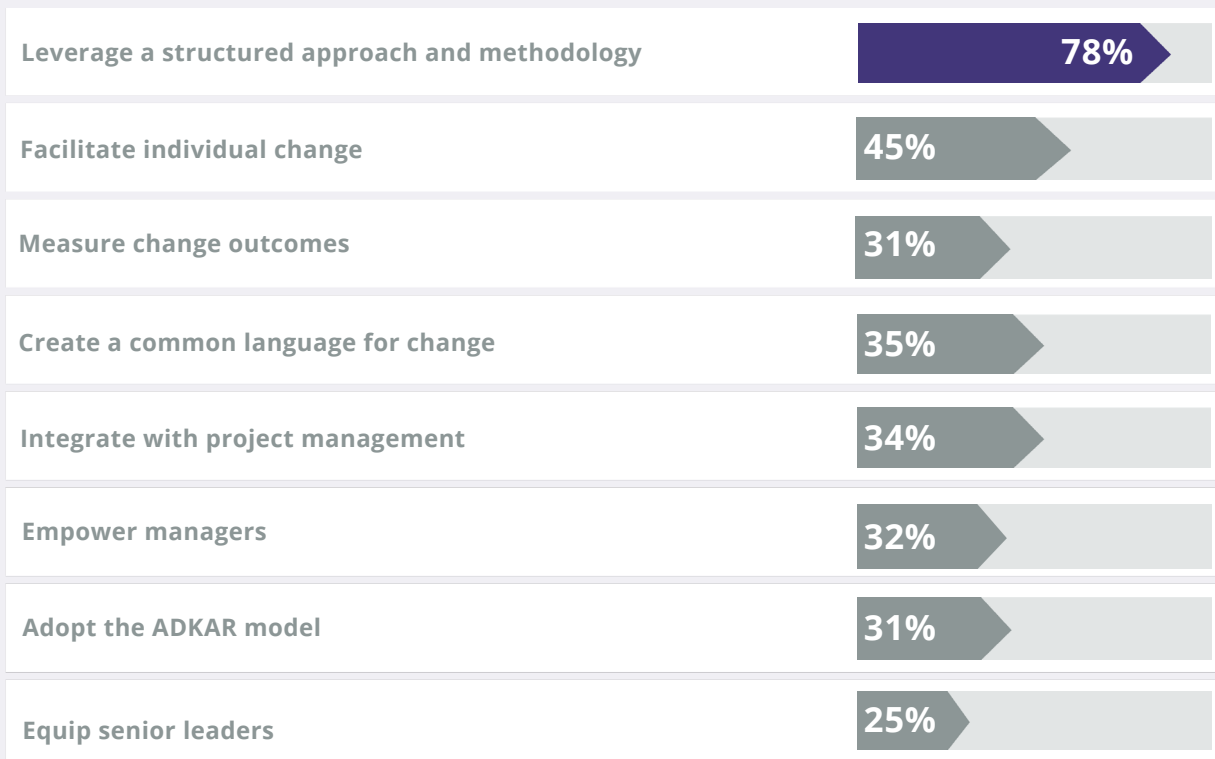
# USING ADKAR AS A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Over three-fourths of study participants reported they used ADKAR as a structured approach to change management, and nearly all of these participants said that ADKAR was effective for this particular use.

**Effectiveness of the ADKAR Model as a Structured Approach to Change Management**



**Percent of Study Respondents Who Used ADKAR as a structured change management approach**



# WHY PARTICIPANTS USED ADKAR AS A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Those participants who were involved in selecting ADKAR as a structured approach to change management revealed three primary reasons for its selection:

## 1 ADKAR is simple and easy to use

ADKAR was seen as capturing the most basic and yet critically important concepts necessary to help participants manage change effectively. Participants stressed the small amount of time needed to learn the fundamentals and become proficient in using the model.

“

*[ADKAR] aligns with individual change and transition and provides authentic ways of supporting people.*

## 2 ADKAR focuses on user adoption

The model's focus on driving project outcomes and enabling successful adoption and usage of solutions made ADKAR the obvious choice and easier to sell to the organization. Participants were looking for a model that goes beyond theory and provides actionable steps and clear, measurable outcomes to increasing adoption and usage on a project.

## 3 ADKAR has a strong reputation.

ADKAR has a strong reputation for being simple, easy to use and impactful in the change management industry. Organizations were able to see ADKAR successfully deployed in a variety of industries and regions; which in turn made leaders feel confident they would be able to deploy it in their organization.

# HOW PARTICIPANTS USED ADKAR AS A STRUCTURED APPROACH

In addition to asking participants why they selected ADKAR as their structured approach to change management, this study also explored what steps participants took to begin using ADKAR as their structured approach to change management.



## **Informed and intentional planning to integrate ADKAR as a structured approach**

Participants reported spending a large amount of time planning exactly how ADKAR would come to life as a structured approach to change management in their organization. The majority of participants planned to use ADKAR behind the scenes to ensure that each change management activity was driving individual transitions. In this way, ADKAR was used mostly by change managers and rarely encountered by front-end employees. Some participants used the model as a guide for their overall approach, moving through each of the ADKAR phases on each change management project. Other participants planned to use the model to specifically structure their change management activities.



## **Integrating ADKAR into the project plan**

Participants aligned and integrated ADKAR into their project management plans. This integration often included laying out the ADKAR phases across a project timeline and ensuring the project plan addressed each phase before it moved on to another.



## **Educating the organization on ADKAR**

Participants focused on educating the organization on ADKAR. While the methods of education differed, participants stressed the importance of a concerted education program with multiple parts and ways to engage and learn about ADKAR.



## **Iterative assessments**

Participants reported consistently evaluating their organization's uses of ADKAR. This was different than assessing the organization against ADKAR phases, as this focused specifically on the use of ADKAR by different groups and departments. Participants would use the data from these assessments to evaluate if more training or education on ADKAR was needed.

# THE IMPACT OF USING ADKAR AS A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Participants were asked to reflect on and identify the impacts that they had seen in their organization when ADKAR was used as a structured approach to change management. Participants reported on broad impacts and project-specific impacts.

## Broad Impacts:

### 1 More effective and efficient planning

The most frequently experienced impact was an increase in the effectiveness of project planning. By leveraging ADKAR, participants reported they were able to identify where individual users were in their change journey. This enabled participants to cater their plans and activities to address where individuals and groups were in their transition.

“  
*Deployment packages are more consistent with higher quality.*”

### 2 Increased organizational change capacity

Participants who reported using ADKAR on multiple projects throughout their organization also reported seeing an increased capacity for change and a higher level of change management maturity through every level of their organization. Specific examples included: the development of a common language for talking about change, the ability to use ADKAR to help customize plans, and the collection of ADKAR data via assessments and surveys being used to influence change management activities.



### 3 More effective progress tracking

ADKAR allowed participants to track project adoption and usage and monitor individual transitions more effectively. Participants reported having a variety of tools and procedures for tracking the technical aspects of a project or measuring a project against a budget and timeline, but they lacked a tool for measuring individual adoption and usage. ADKAR allowed participants to track the people-side outcomes on projects in a meaningful and actionable way.

#### Project Impacts:

### 1 Increased consistency on project delivery

Participants reported an increase in project delivery consistency when ADKAR was used as a structured change management approach. ADKAR acted as a 'binding' methodology that could be used to encourage projects to hit specific milestones and implement specific activities that positively impacted the people side of a project. Since projects had a consistent approach to address the people side change, the internal project-to-project consistency increased.

WHEN ASKED HOW  
ADKAR IMPACTS PROJECT  
IMPLEMENTATION, ONE  
PARTICIPANT RESPONDED, "WE  
MADE FEWER MISTAKES."

## 2 Provided a way of talking about change

Participants consistently used ADKAR language to talk about change in any context. ADKAR was used as common terminology to enable everyone to speak the same vocabulary. This was seen as a major benefit when organizing change management activities to aid individual and group transitions through a change. This allowed participants to easily engage with and talk about change across a variety of projects.

## 3 Integrated with project management

Participants reported that technical aspects of ADKAR were easily integrated with the project management approach. The ease of integration allowed participants to embed ADKAR on each project in their organization, ensuring that each project addressed change management concerns.

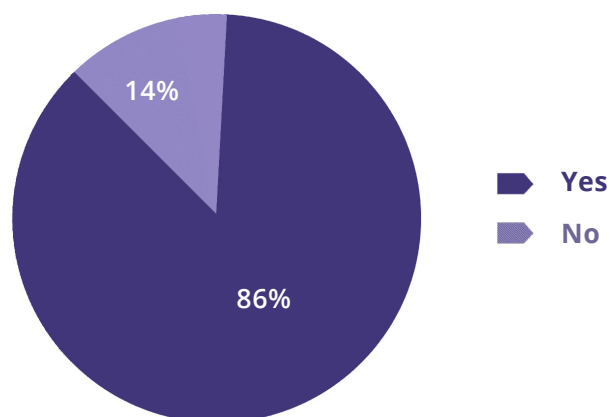
# IMPACTS ON COMMUNICATIONS, RESISTANCE AND GO-LIVE

Participants also identified the impact of using ADKAR as a structured change management approach on communication, resistance management and go-live.

## Percent who used ADKAR to structure their communication

Over three-fourths of participants used ADKAR to structure their communication efforts.

**Percent who used ADKAR to structure their communication**



## Successful practices using ADKAR to structure communication

Participants used ADKAR to structure communication in the following ways:

### 1 To identify stakeholders

A large majority of participants reported they used ADKAR to identify the stakeholders for targeted communication. Some participants used ADKAR to identify broad stakeholder groups while others used ADKAR to differentiate between audiences within stakeholder groups. Once stakeholders were identified, participants were able to focus their communication to address each group, leading to more effective communication.

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*Communication throughout the project and not just during select times. It also helped to identify times when follow-up or reinforcement of messages would be needed.*

### 2 To craft goal-oriented communication

Participants reported using ADKAR to ensure that every communication had a clearly defined goal related to each ADKAR phase. Participants reported deciding up front what the goal of specific communications would be and drafting communication in a way that met or progressed towards that goal. Participants felt this allowed them to be more proactive in managing the change.

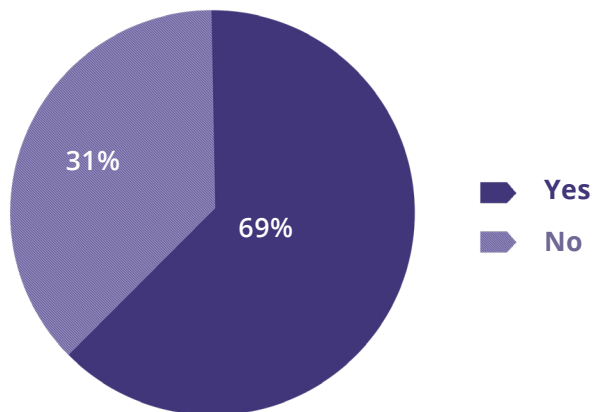
### 3 To focus on awareness and desire

Participants reported using ADKAR to craft more communications that focused on awareness and desire. Participants felt these parts of the model were often the most neglected and were having the greatest impact on their change initiative. Participants felt ADKAR allowed them to focus on both awareness and desire messaging in their communication and enabled them to demonstrate to others that these areas needed additional emphasis.

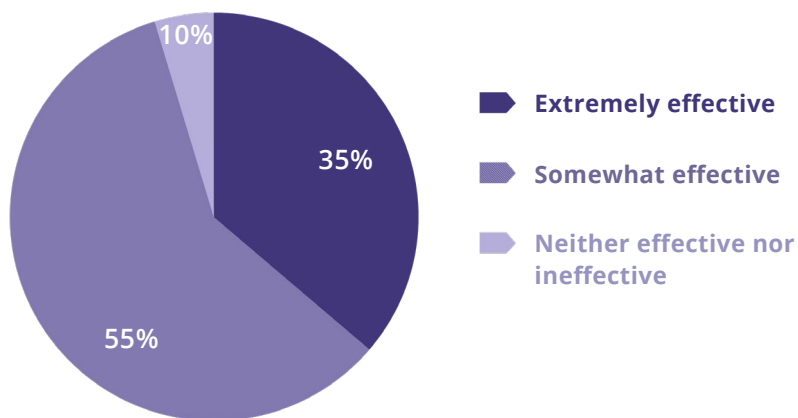
## Using ADKAR to identify the root cause of resistance

More than two-thirds of participants reported using ADKAR to identify the root cause of resistance. Of those who used ADKAR to identify the root cause of resistance, 90% reported that it was effective or very effective for this purpose.

**Used ADKAR as a tool to identify the root cause of resistance**



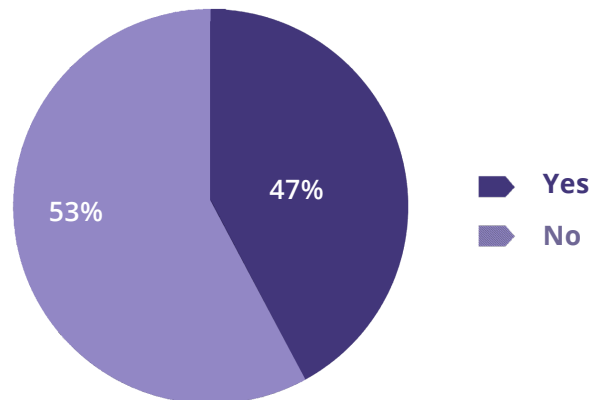
**Effectiveness of ADKAR as a tool to identify the root cause of resistance**



## Using ADKAR as criteria for evaluating project go-live readiness

Almost half of the participants in the study reported using ADKAR as criteria for evaluating go-live readiness on a project.

Used ADKAR as a tool for evaluating project go-live readiness



Those participants who reported they used ADKAR as a criteria for evaluating project go-live readiness provided details of how they used ADKAR in this way:

### 1 As go/no go measures throughout a project

The most frequently reported approach was using the five ADKAR elements as project milestones that must be achieved for a project to progress to future stages. This was done by creating expectations for where in the model individuals needed to be to continue the project. This process began early and continued throughout the project, often after key communications, trainings and even post go-live.

## 2 In readiness assessments to determine go-live

The second most common use of ADKAR in determining project go-live readiness was the creation of a readiness assessment. While most participants reported creating an expectation of where they wanted the organization to be prior to go-live, those expectations varied. Examples of how participants determined go-live are listed on the right.

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*Before the go-live date, we need to have 40% to 50% of the workforce [through] the desired stage of ADKAR.*

## 3 To integrate with project management

While many participants created tangible expectations for where their organization should be prior to go-live, others reported simply integrating ADKAR into their project management methodology, focusing on individual transitions throughout the planning and design phases, then overlaying the ADKAR elements across the project timeline. In this way, participants could ensure that a project was ready for go-live without assessing it.

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*[Before go-live] 75% of employees [must] respond positively to 'I have the knowledge I need to do my job in the new environment on day 1' on the readiness survey.*

## 4 To assess pilot groups

Participants created mock scenarios and pilot programs to test go-live readiness. By creating a tangible realistic experience of the expected future state, project teams were able to use ADKAR to evaluate potential barriers in the pilot group and then use the ADKAR framework to address the identified gaps and potential areas of resistance in their planning. In this way participants were able to assess project go-live readiness in a controlled environment.

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*We set a threshold level for all points in the ADKAR spectrum, and once we achieved them, we knew it was time to go.*

# CONCLUSION

Research has shown that having a structured approach to change management is a key factor in having a successful change management initiative. Participants in this study demonstrated how ADKAR can be a key part of a structured and successful change management approach: acting as an assessment tool, providing guidelines and other foundational elements for structuring key parts of a change management program, and facilitating important conversations about the change throughout the organization. ADKAR is an important part of a structured approach to managing change in an organization.





# SUCCESS STORY: CANADIAN BANK EMBRACES A STRUCTURED APPROACH TO CHANGE

Banks are busy during the holidays. As people increase spending and banking activity during this season, fraudulent activity rises sharply as well. Because of this, bank managers and team leads can be understandably resistant to implementing any new system or process during this time of year. For one bank in Canada, not only did the busyness of the holiday season tie up resources necessary to a successful launch, but there was also an expectation throughout the organization that every large-scale project would be fraught with stress, pain and long nights with no guarantee of success.

That grim reality is no longer the case. Now, frontline leaders are able and willing to take on new product, process and system launches during even the busiest times. By the time a change is underway in their branches, they are bought in for both the business and personal reasons for the change and are equipped with the knowledge and ability to implement it. What has changed from just a few years ago? The application of ADKAR is now done ahead of time on projects.

As with other large and geographically dispersed organizations, this Canadian bank strives to unify and streamline customer experience across its branches to better serve its millions of customers. To do this, leadership is consistently refining and improving their customer experience by pushing out new processes and procedures to its branches. These projects are the definition of people-dependent projects as the customer experience comes to life primarily in the interaction between employees and clients.

Like many other organizations are experiencing today, this bank saw a series of project failures not due to any technical issues or project management failures but from lack of adoption by frontline employees. These failures created an environment where managers and employees were fearful of change. There was an expectation that something would go wrong on every project, and many resources were applied post-launch to address these issues. It became clear that a larger investment needed to be made to increase adoption and usage, and so the bank began investing more in its change management competency.

An original framework was purchased and, though it acted as a good first step down the path of growing and eventually instilling a change management competency, it was internally inconsistent and did not go far enough in providing a structured framework and common language for change. From this first purchase, leadership found they needed something that could provide them with guide posts for a change project and help them collect information to prioritize their resources and efforts on individual projects. They needed a robust tool that was easy to use, accessible and could be explained to someone who lacked a change management background. They found that ADKAR, combined with their internally developed change management methodology, met those needs.

ADKAR has become an ingrained part of the organization. ADKAR metrics are baked into each project, and change management learning, including ADKAR, is part of onboarding eLearning for every project manager.

..... “ .....

*The first step was to change manage ADKAR into our organization.*

Through a combination of reinforcement conversations with project managers and employees and intentional internal efforts to increase the desire for and awareness of ADKAR, the bank saw the model take root. However, it was not enough to have the model sit on the shelf; leadership needed it implemented across their organization. To that end, managers are required to show that the “ADKAR work is getting done” when they are implementing a project, including outlining specific places where they have applied the ADKAR framework on individual projects. With awareness and desire messages backed by performance-based requirements, the bank has seen a broad and eager adoption of change management throughout the organization.

..... “ .....

*People are clear about what their expectations are on the change management side of things rather than having us come in and say, ‘I hope you thought about this concept or theory.’ People like knowing what change management is, and ADKAR allows them to understand what skillsets they need to be successful in it.*

Change management and ADKAR has allowed the bank to do “more change with less noise.” The organization has seen an increase in consistency and predictability on projects as well as faster adoption and proactive engagement with changes. Leaders feel they can proactively and impactfully help their people through change rather than trying to force them through it. Project managers are able to ramp up readiness pieces in advance of launches, and change happens faster because each person in the organization knows what they need to do in advance of the change.

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*People can read ADKAR and dismiss it. You need to get them to actively do it to see the benefits and impacts it has on their organization. Make it mandatory, measure it, take it from the theoretical and put it into practical, actionable steps for them. It will be more difficult than you think, but you can do a lot with it, and the benefits will be long lasting and impactful.*