Best Practices in Change Management

Prosci has researched change management best practices for more than 25 years. For every edition of Best Practices in Change Management, we ask our study participants, "What are the greatest contributors to a successful change management initiative?"

Collectively and consistently, participant responses point to seven straightforward factors that impact the results of a change initiative. These are the best practices in change management, as reported to Prosci by thousands of change leaders around the world.

Starting with the 12th Edition, Prosci's *Best Practices in Change Management* research report offers you deeper insights through interactive features. You can customize data by industry, organization size and project type to support your specific changes. You can also read participant comments, cross-reference data, and free-explore data in a variety of areas. Our aim is to empower you to uncover the change management insights that matter most to you and your organization.

The discussion that follows here is a small sample of our findings.

7 Change Management Best Practices

1 Mobilize active and visible executive sponsorship

2 Apply a structured change management approach

3 Engage with front-line employees

4 Communicate frequently and openly

5 Engage and integrate with project management

6 Dedicate change management resources

7 Engage with and support people managers

Research participants who identified these contributors to successful change are experienced practitioners, project leaders, executives and consultants. Forty percent of participants in the 12th edition of Best Practices in Change Management study have more than nine years of experience in change management, while 9% have been applying change management less than a year.

Having a positive leader who actively guides the organization through change and participates visibly throughout the lifecycle of change has endured as the top contributor to success since 1998. The importance of sponsorship is cited more frequently than any other contributor, and participants consistently use the key words "active and visible" to describe it. Active and visible sponsorship means the sponsor:

- Supports the change by giving consistent attention to the change and the need for change management
- Champions the change by leading and motivating others in the organization
- Makes effective and influential decisions regarding the change, including aligning priorities among other leaders in the organization
- Maintains direct communication with the project management and change management teams, and remains accessible during the change
- Influences peers to maintain support and to participate in a coalition of sponsorship

Forty-eight percent of participants in the 12th edition research say they have an effective or very effective sponsor. Because sponsor effectiveness correlates with the likelihood of meeting project objectives, their organizations usually enjoy high rates of change success.

In fact, our research clearly shows that projects with extremely ineffective sponsors are only 27% likely to meet their objectives as compared with only 79% with extremely effective sponsors—a nearly threefold increase in the likelihood of success.

Correlation of Sponsor Effectiveness With Meeting Objectives

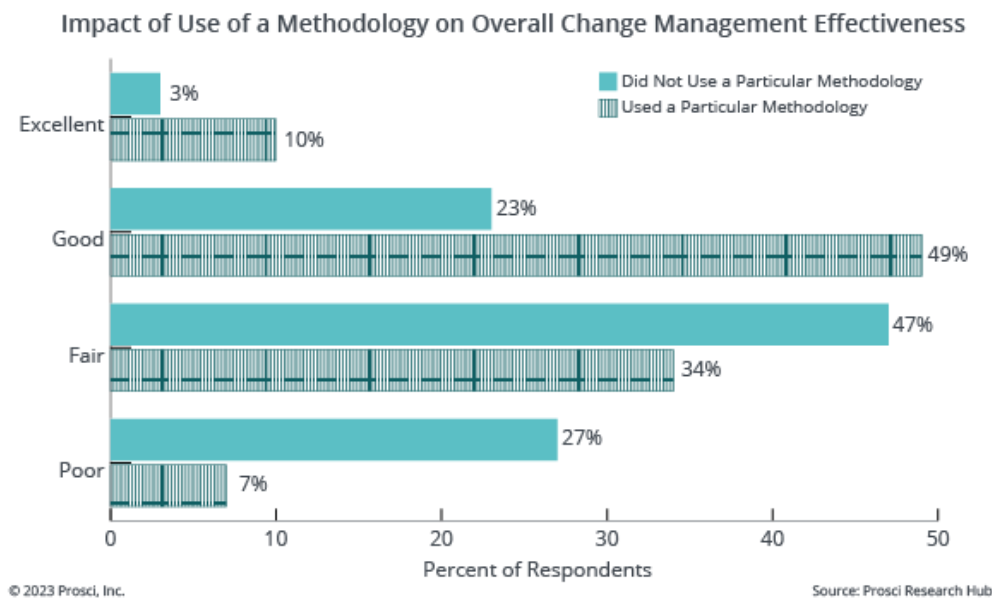© 2023 Prosci, Inc.   Source: Prosci Research Hub
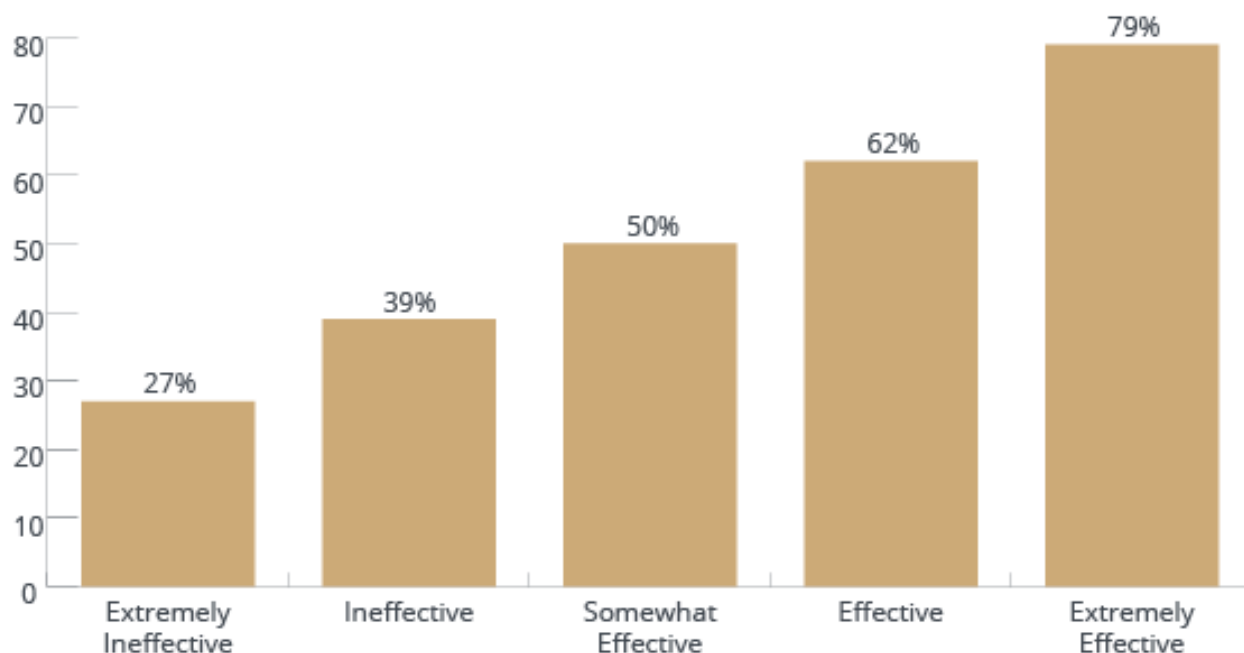
An intentional and defined approach to managing change provides the structure necessary to stay on track. It designates adequate time for meaningful activities and allows space to identify and address gaps throughout the project lifecycle. Using a formal approach also makes processes repeatable for consistent application of change management on more initiatives throughout the organization. Key words that emerged when participants described this best practice include:

- Established
- Customizable
- Scalable
- Clear and well thought out
- Easy to implement across multiple changes
- Easy to apply at every phase of the project

How organizations use a structured approach varied in the research. Sixty-nine percent use a change management methodology for general guidance, as a checklist for activities, to monitor progress, or a combination of these.

Again, the research reveals just how much applying a structured approach contributes to success. Of the participants who applied a particular methodology, 59% achieved good or excellent levels of change management effectiveness, while only 26% achieved the same levels of effectiveness without a structured approach.

Impact of Use of a Methodology on Overall Change Management Effectiveness

Legend:
- Did Not Use a Particular Methodology
- Used a Particular Methodology

Effectiveness	Did Not Use a Particular Methodology	Used a Particular Methodology
Excellent	3%	10%
Good	23%	49%
Fair	47%	34%
Poor	27%	7%

Percent of Respondents

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In the 12th Edition, engaging with people on the front line of the organization moves up a spot to the third most cited best practice, shifting frequent and open communications to the fourth position.
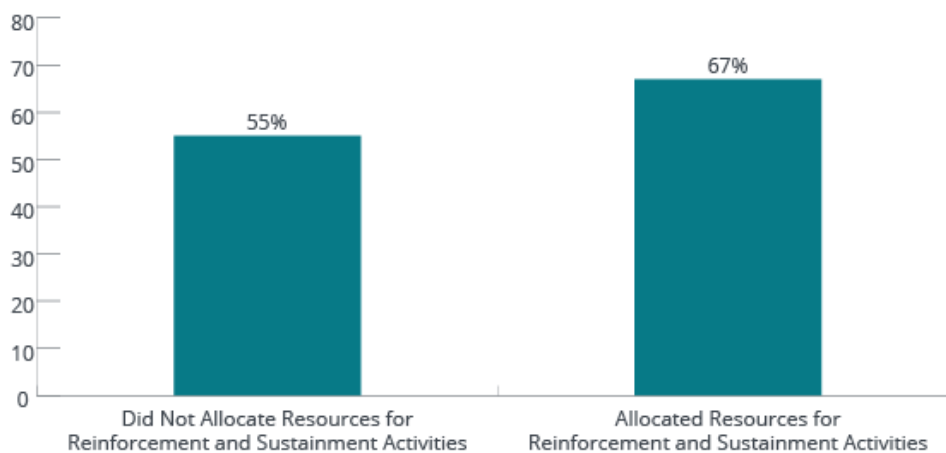
We apply change management to help employees understand why change is necessary and how it will affect them, and to equip them to transition through the process successfully—which results in successful outcomes for organizations. Given this objective, it is clear why employee engagement and participation is identified as a top contributor to success. Tactics to increase engagement include:

- Highlighting "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM)
- Identifying and building relationships with impacted groups
- Ensuring impacted groups receive the appropriate level of training
- Involving employees in identifying and planning a proposed solution and future state

The goal of these efforts is to help employees demonstrate willingness to participate in the change and collaborate with the people leading the change.

Engaging in reinforcement activities with front-line employees is a critical step in the change management process. But organizations that are saturated with change often neglect sustainment activities and consider a change complete at go-live. Inadequately addressing reinforcement and sustainment activities has a negative impact on the outcome of the change. As the data shows, participants who allocated resources for reinforcement activities, including engaging with impacted employees, were more likely to achieve project objectives than those who did not.

Impact of Allocating Resources for Reinforcement and Sustainment on Meeting Objectives

Category	Percentage
Did Not Allocate Resources for Reinforcement and Sustainment Activities	55%
Allocated Resources for Reinforcement and Sustainment Activities	67%

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Change management practitioners often struggle against the misconception that change management is "just communications." Although change management is much more than that, effective communications are critical to leading change successfully. Beyond frequency, participants cite these factors as important to success:

- Cadence
- Consistency
- Transparency
- Leveraging multiple communications channels
- Preferred senders

Notably, 58% of employees prefer to receive communications about the personal impacts of change directly from their supervisors. Most want to hear about the business reasons for the change from the CEO. However, a significant number of participants in the 12th Edition study also cite other executives, senior managers, and department heads as preferred senders of organizational messages.

Additionally, participants identified important topics to communicate, such as why the change is happening, expectations, long-term plan perspectives, how the change will impact employees, and essential business drivers.

Preferred Senders of Messages
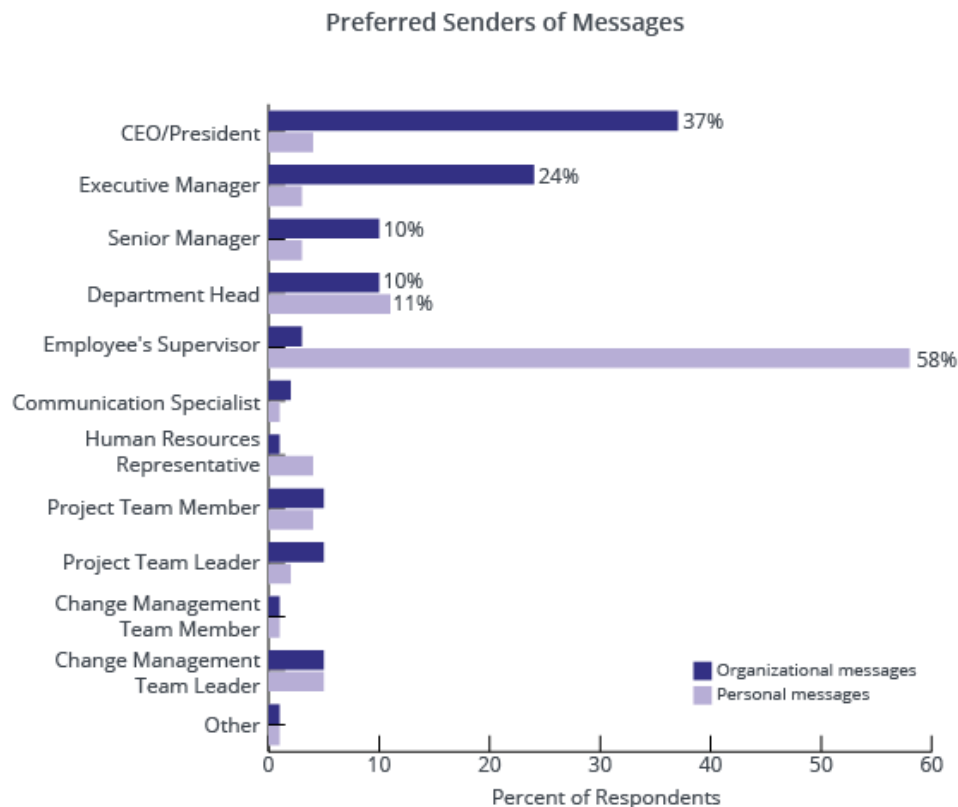
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Prosci's research underscores the best practice of integrating change management work with project management activities. These complementary disciplines naturally cross paths throughout the life of an initiative, enabling a unified value proposition and more successful changes. In our research, nearly three-quarters of all respondents integrate project management work and change management work to some degree. Integration dimensions include people, processes, methodology, results and outcomes, tools, and other areas, with people being the most common dimension at 86%.

Specific examples of integration include:

• Adding change management activities to the project plan
• Working collaboratively with the project team
• Aligning change plans and dates with project plans and dates
• Combining or assigning responsibilities and roles
• Providing change management training to the project team

More and more organizations realize the value of integrating project management and change management. And participants who do integrated these two disciplines were far more likely to meet or exceed project objectives than those who did not integrate.

Percent of Respondents Who Met or Exceeded Project Objectives
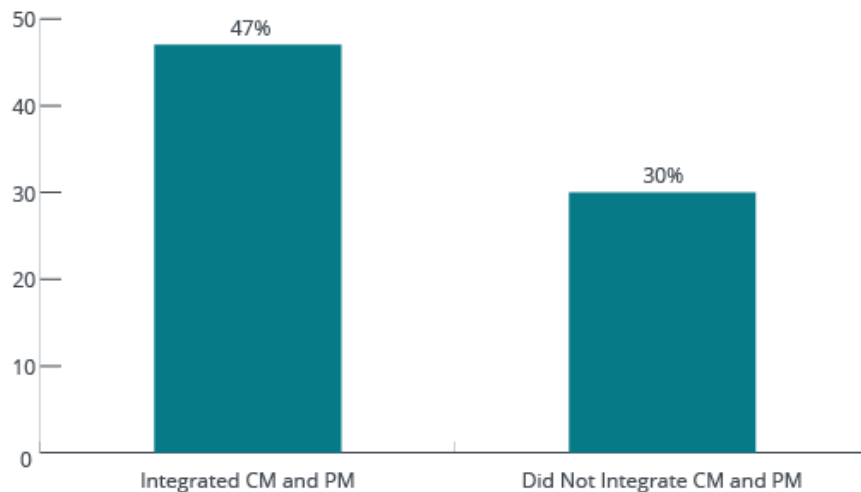
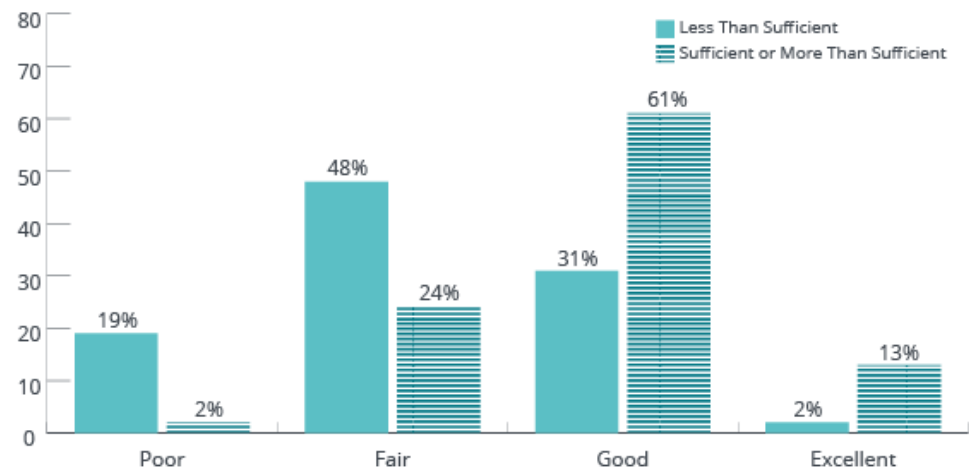© 2023 Prosci, Inc.   Source: Prosci Research Hub

Your project needs dedicated resources and funding to get change management work done. Dedicated change management resources and funding means having access to:

• Sufficient funding and resources

• Dedicated resources with change management experience

• A change team or community of flexible, ambitious, decisive, collaborative individuals

As one research participant said, "If it isn't someone's job, then it's no one's job." To realize the benefits of change management, someone must be responsible for it and have access to an appropriate amount of funding. The data reveals a positive and meaningful correlation between having a dedicated resource (person) and overall change management effectiveness. Participants who had dedicated resources were significantly more likely to have good or excellent change management effectiveness than those without a dedicated resource.

Relationship Between Sufficient Resources and Change Management Effectiveness

Legend:
- Less Than Sufficient
- Sufficient or More Than Sufficient

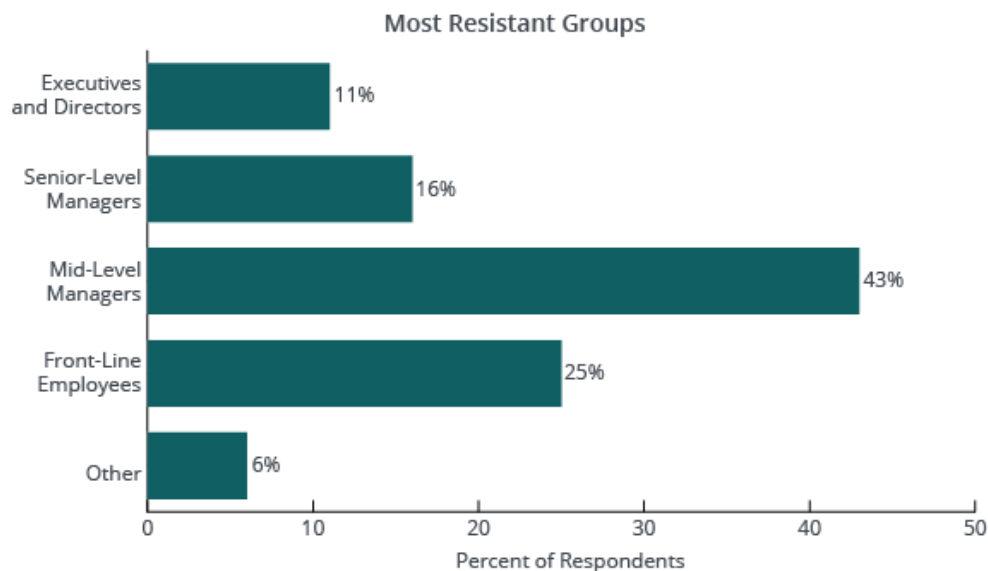| Effectiveness	Less Than Sufficient	Sufficient or More Than Sufficient
Poor	19%	2%
Fair	48%	24%
Good	31%	61%
Excellent	2%	13%

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People managers can become a change practitioner's greatest ally in times of change because they are closest to employees impacted by change. Participants explained this top contributor as:

- Emphasizing communication about the change and the managers' roles in change
- Holding one-on-one meetings, team meetings and alignment sessions
- Focusing on awareness building, including how the change will affect them, the business reasons for the change, and the need for change management
- Providing materials, tools and support that will help managers understand and navigate the change
- Engaging and involving managers during the early phases of the change and throughout the project lifecycle

The research identifies mid-level managers as the group most resistant to change, with 43% of participants identifying them as such. Past research shows that a majority of this resistance can be mitigated by thoroughly addressing this group in the change plans.

Most Resistant Groups

Group	Percent
Executives and Directors	11%
Senior-Level Managers	16%
Mid-Level Managers	43%
Front-Line Employees	25%
Other	6%

Percent of Respondents

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Source: Prosci Research Hub

Best Practices in Change Management Interactive Data

Prosci has produced 12 *Best Practices in Change Management* reports over the last 25 years, compiling the data from more than 10,800 responses provided by change management professionals in 38 industries in 101 countries. You can apply the best practices and interactive research in Research Hub to:

- Start your change management work with the concepts that matter most
- Evaluate your current approach as compared to aggregate data
- Adapt your approach by understanding effective practices in specific industries and regions, by organization revenue and demographics, and more
- Intentionally incorporate best practices into your daily work
- Grow your organization's maturity in change management

As change management gains momentum as a crucial discipline, organizations worldwide are embracing people-first approaches that facilitate successful transformation. By incorporating these best practices, you and your organization can continue to evolve and learn alongside the discipline, achieving even greater success from change.

25 Years of Prosci Research

Now you can get Best Practices in Change Management - 12th Edition interactive insights—and Prosci's entire library of change management research—all in one place.

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