The Essence of ADKAR: a model for individual change management

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Consider that when a group undergoes a change, it is not the organization that changes, but rather the behaviors of individuals. This change in collective behavior is what produces different outcomes for the organization. For example, when a company reorganizes, it is not the restructuring that represents the change, but rather the shift in accountabilities and responsibilities for each person. New behavior results, and different business outcomes are achieved. In other words, **organizations don't change, people within organizations change**.

With this basic principle of organizational change, a simple connection can be made between change projects and business results. The link between any strategy, process or system change and the associated business results is the **collection of individual changes** that occur one person at a time.

Understanding how to achieve change at an individual level, therefore, is essential to achieving the objectives of any large-scale change. This is called **individual change management**. Organizational change management and individual change management must be used together to manage change successfully.

The ADKAR Model reflects the necessary building blocks for individual change and was developed based on analysis of research data from over 900 organizations over a 10-year period. The abbreviation stands for:

A   ❑   **Awareness** of the need for change
D   ❑   **Desire** to support and participate in the change
K   ❑   **Knowledge** of how to change
A   ❑   **Ability** to implement the change
R   ❑   **Reinforcement** to sustain the change

These elements represent the most basic requirements for a person to achieve and sustain a change. By their nature, they cannot be skipped or reordered. For example, you cannot manage change with employees in a business by simply sending them to a training class. They may not know why the change is happening and may be resistant to both the training and the change.

The link, therefore, between strategy, process or systems changes and associated business results is the collective achievement of the ADKAR elements by individuals in an organization. Specifically, the ultimate business results are a function of how many individuals work through the elements of the ADKAR model leading to the **ability** to implement the change, and to what degree that capability is **reinforced**.

With this working model for individual change management, organizational change management models can now be **applied more effectively and more deliberately**. Said another way, organizational change management approaches are not as effective without a method for measuring success at an individual level.

For example, consider the many different forms of organizational change management including:

- ❑ Communications
- ❑ Sponsorship
- ❑ Employee involvement
- ❑ Training and education
- ❑ Resistance management
- ❑ Rewards and recognition
- ❑ Coaching by managers and supervisors

Successful change does not result by merely completing these **activities**. Our goal, and what we can subsequently measure, are the **outcomes** of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. This is also true for structured approaches for managing change including processes from John Kotter, Daryl Connor, Jeanenne LaMarsh and Prosci. You can map or align nearly all change management techniques to an ADKAR element, allowing your change management team to connect "activities" to a measurable standard for moving individuals through the change process. **The ADKAR model is that link between individual performance, organizational change management and business results.**

For more information, read the new book, ADKAR: a model for change in business, government and our community *available now from Amazon.com or Prosci at 970-203-9332.*