



Comparing Change Management Methodologies: **What You Need to Know to Drive Success**

Prosci[®]



The Critical Role of Change Methodology

Sustainable change doesn't come from top-down directives—it comes from shared ownership. Methodology is the bridge between intention and adoption.

Change doesn't stick unless people commit to it. Too often, organizations focus on what needs to change without thinking about how people will experience it. Following a proven change methodology helps teams feel part of the process, not subject to it. It embeds communication, feedback, and reinforcement into every phase, so change becomes something people shape, not something that happens to them.

On the flip side, mismanaging change risks lost opportunities, disengaged employees, frustrated customers and weakened brand trust.

The right methodology drives behavioral change. It defines how smoothly transformations happen and how enduring the results are. It aligns leaders, managers and teams around a clear path to success.

This guide explores today's leading change methodologies and shows how the Prosci Methodology enhances their impact by focusing on the people side of change.

Change is a critical capability. Here's how to build it right.



Table of Contents

Choosing the Right Change Management Methodology	04
What is the Prosci Methodology?	05
Kotter's 8-Step Change Model	09
Lewin's Change Management Model	12
The McKinsey 7-S Model	14
The Kübler-Ross Change Curve	17
Take the Next Step in Building Your Change Capability	20



Choosing the Right Change Management Methodology: Why a People-Centered Approach is Essential

Because lasting transformation starts with the people experiencing it.

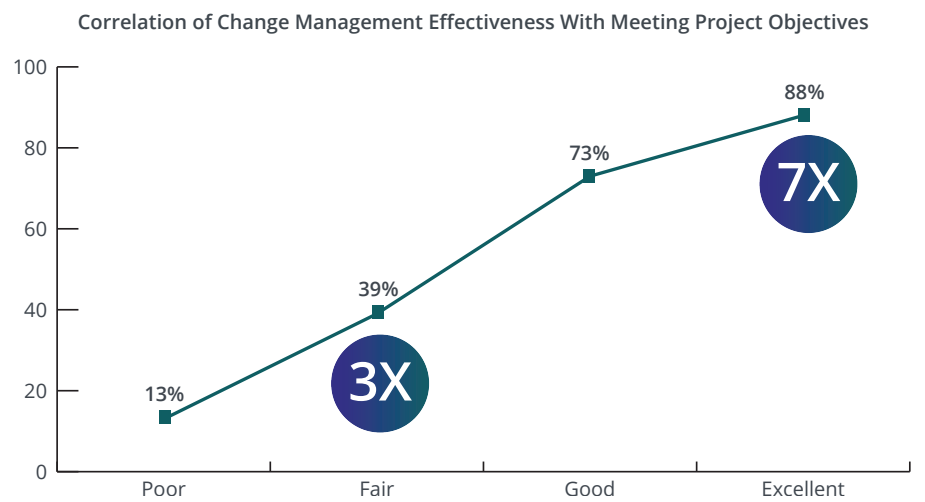
Organizations change when individuals do. Yet too often, change efforts focus only on tasks and deliverables and overlook how people experience and adopt change.

In fact, only **31%** of organizational transformations succeed at both improving performance and sustaining those improvements. Effective change management addresses this: **Prosci research** shows that organizations with excellent change management programs are seven times more likely to achieve their objectives.

Focusing on people is how you turn change into impact.

A people-centered methodology drives stronger results by aligning individual change journeys with project goals. It builds resilience, agility and long-term capability.

Correlation of Change Management Effectiveness With Meeting Project Objectives



Source: Research Hub, © 2023 Prosci, Inc.



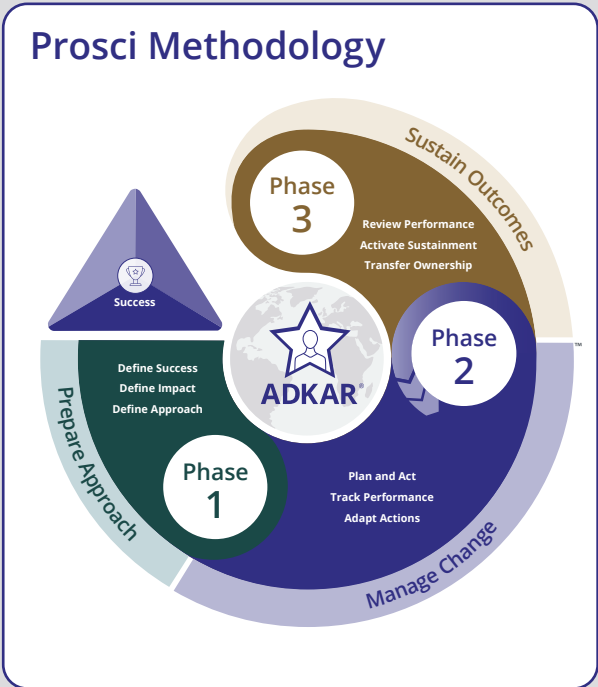
What Is the Prosci Methodology?

The Prosci Methodology is a structured, research-based approach to enabling successful organizational change. Backed by more than 25 years of global research, it's been tested and proven across industries, cultures and change types.

The methodology integrates three key components that work in unison.

The Prosci ADKAR® Model supports individual adoption, the **Prosci 3-Phase Process** drives change at the project level, and the **Prosci Change Triangle (PCT) Model** ensures organizational alignment and adoption.

Together, they form a complete system for designing, implementing and sustaining successful change.



Using the Prosci Methodology with other change methodologies

The **Prosci Methodology** can be used as a complete, standalone system. But it can also strengthen other approaches and fill critical gaps, especially around individual adoption and sustained change.



The Prosci ADKAR Model

The **ADKAR Model** is a framework for individual change. It outlines the five key building blocks a person needs to acquire to adopt change successfully:

- Awareness of the need for change and why it's necessary
- Desire to support and participate in the change
- Knowledge of how to change, including required skills
- Ability to implement the required skills to execute the change
- Reinforcement to sustain change over time

The model emphasizes that sustainable organizational change happens one person at a time and provides a structured approach to facilitate this. It equips leaders with the right strategies and tools and individuals with the right information, motivation, and ability to successfully navigate organizational changes.

For manufacturing firm Husky Injection Molding Systems, the **ADKAR Model became a standard part of project planning**—one that enabled thousands of employees to adopt change more effectively and consistently.

Prosci ADKAR Model

A	Awareness - Of the need for change
D	Desire - To participate and support the change
K	Knowledge - On how to change
A	Ability - To implement required skills & behavior
R	Reinforcement - To sustain the change

The Prosci 3-Phase Process

The **Prosci 3-Phase Process** focuses on organizational change by guiding practitioners through three distinct phases:

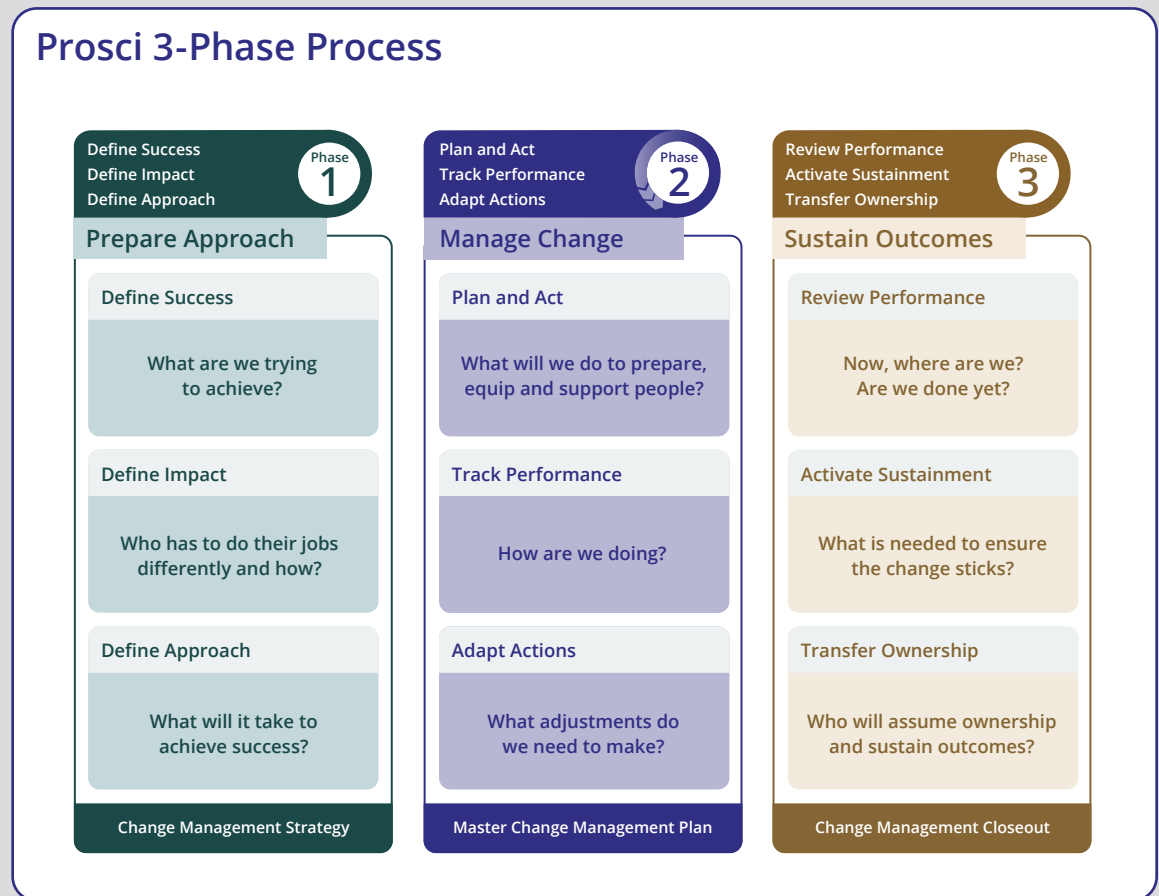
Phase 1 – Prepare Approach – Develop a customized change management strategy that defines success, impact and approach.

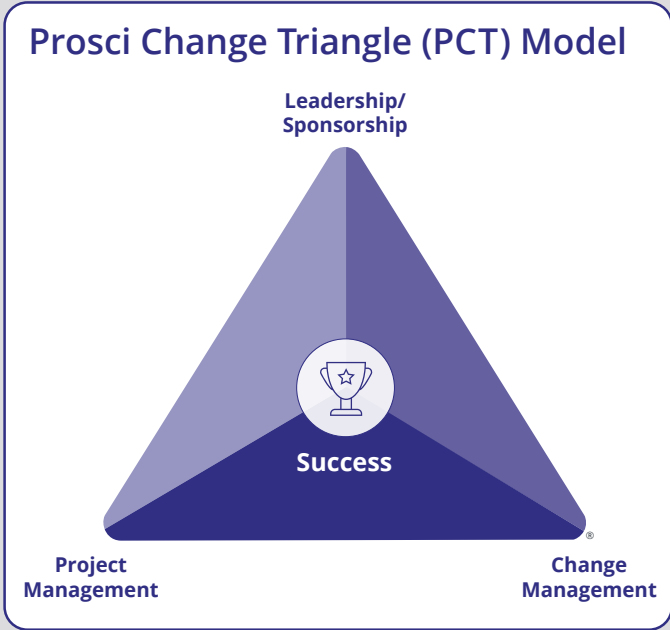
Phase 2 – Manage Change – Create and implement plans that help individuals transition through the ADKAR Model.

Phase 3 – Sustain Outcomes – Ensure the change is adopted and sustained over time, reviewing performance and transferring ownership.

Organizations that apply Prosci’s structured but flexible 3-Phase Process can achieve higher adoption rates, stronger alignment across teams and greater ability to sustain change over time.

At Sunflower Electric, the **Prosci 3-Phase Process helped reduce employee resistance**, improve project performance, and establish a more change-ready culture across the organization.





The Prosci Change Triangle (PCT) Model

The Prosci Change Triangle (PCT) Model is a framework for enabling successful change. It highlights the interconnected roles of leadership/sponsorship, project management, and change management and is anchored by a clear definition of success.

When these elements work together, you can strengthen

project health, align teams and create the conditions needed to deliver lasting impact.

At the University of Virginia, the **Prosci Change Triangle (PCT) Model helped align key roles and build a shared understanding of success**. This enabled hundreds of improvements and measurable operational savings.

In the next section, we'll explore four popular methodologies and how Prosci can complement and enhance each one.



Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model takes a leadership-driven approach to major transformation. It emphasizes building urgency, aligning leaders and sustaining momentum. This makes it a strong model for mobilizing organizations and driving top-down alignment.

The model focuses primarily on leadership activity rather than on how individuals adopt and sustain change. To close that gap, Kotter's approach can be paired with the Prosci Methodology to support the people side of change.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Kotter's 8-Step

- ✓ Create urgency
- ✓ Build a guiding coalition
- ✓ Form a strategic vision
- ✓ Communicate the vision
- ✓ Remove obstacles
- ✓ Create short-term wins
- ✓ Consolidate gains
- ✓ Anchor changes in culture

Strengths of Kotter's 8-Step Process

Kotter's model offers practical guidance for leading transformation, with a strong focus on leadership alignment, strategic momentum and visible progress.

Provides clear steps for change

A step-by-step process helps leaders guide change with structure and consistency. This makes it easier to stay focused on key objectives from start to finish.

Creates a sense of urgency

The model starts by building urgency. This initiates early engagement and motivates action quickly, which is especially valuable during complex transformations.

Builds a guiding coalition

Successful change requires leadership alignment. Kotter's model emphasizes the need for a robust guiding coalition that sets the direction and sustains momentum.

Emphasizes short-term wins

Celebrating early progress is a core part of Kotter's approach. Recognizing these short-term wins helps build confidence and commitment across the organization.

Aligns initiatives into a cohesive strategy

Kotter's model brings fragmented change efforts under a single, coordinated vision—one that improves focus, reduces duplication and ensures everyone works toward shared outcomes.

Limitations of Kotter's 8-Step Process

This model offers valuable leadership strategies. But it leaves some critical areas of change management unaddressed, especially those involving individual adoption and sustainment.

Overlooks individual change experiences

Kotter's model fails to address how individuals experience and adopt change. Without structure around individual change, it's harder to drive adoption and sustain outcomes.

Assumes linear progression

Complex transformations often require flexibility and adaptation. A strictly linear model can limit responsiveness and make it difficult to adjust the course when new challenges emerge.

Lacks tools for managing resistance

Building urgency is essential, but it's only the beginning. Without tools to support emotional and behavioral change, it's hard to sustain engagement when obstacles arise.

Emphasizes initial momentum without long-term reinforcement

Kotter emphasizes short-term wins, but doesn't address how to reinforce new behaviors over time. Once early energy fades, teams can be left unclear on how to maintain outcomes.

How the Prosci Methodology complements Kotter's approach

Kotter's model is strong on leadership alignment and momentum. The Prosci Methodology builds on that foundation by focusing on individual adoption and sustained outcomes. It connects organizational strategy with human experience, turning top-down direction into measurable results.



You can use the Prosci ADKAR Model within Kotter's framework to connect leadership actions with individual change:

Step 1: Creating a sense of urgency – The Awareness element of the ADKAR Model helps individuals understand the need for change and why it's happening, through targeted communication and early engagement activities. This is critical to sustaining urgency beyond leadership messaging.

Step 2-3: Forming a powerful coalition and building vision – The ADKAR Model builds Desire for change through activities like sponsor coaching and role-based training. This helps guiding coalitions connect with employees and ensures leaders are visible, aligned and equipped to model commitment.

Steps 4-5: Communicating the vision and empowering action – ADKAR's Awareness element focuses on clear leadership communication, ensuring the vision is conveyed effectively. The Knowledge and Ability elements equip individuals with the skills and confidence to move from understanding to action, through targeted training and support.

Steps 6-7: Generating short-term wins and consolidating goals – The Reinforcement element recognizes and rewards individual achievement, helping to embed change within the organization.

Step 8: Anchoring changes in culture – Ongoing reinforcement strategies help make new behaviors part of how work gets done. Change becomes embedded through consistent support at the individual level.

Prosci research shows that over 90% of participants who used the ADKAR Model to facilitate individual change found it effective, with many reporting increased engagement and smoother transitions through change processes.



Lewin's Change Management Model

Lewin's Change Management Model introduced a foundational perspective on how people experience change. It breaks change into three stages: unfreezing the current state, moving to a new state and refreezing to reinforce stability. This simple framework draws attention to the psychological side of change.

Lewin's Model of Change Management



Strengths of Lewin's Change Management Model

Lewin's model laid the groundwork for understanding how change unfolds. Its simplicity and focus on human behavior give it lasting value in many contexts.

Offers a simple, structured framework

The model breaks change into three clear stages, making it easy to understand and apply, especially in settings where change concepts are new.

Highlights the need for preparation

The "unfreeze" phase emphasizes disrupting the current state. It encourages leaders to prepare people emotionally and mentally before introducing new ways of working.

Emphasizes reinforcement to sustain change

The "refreeze" stage reinforces stability. It embeds new behaviors, processes or mindsets to help people stay committed and maintain the change over time.



Limitations of Lewin's Change Management Model

While Lewin's model shaped early thinking on change, it lacks the depth and flexibility needed to address the complexities of a modern change landscape.

Oversimplifies modern change environments

The model's linear structure doesn't fit the ongoing, iterative nature of change today. In dynamic environments, the idea of "refreezing" can limit adaptability and responsiveness.

does not explain how to manage it. The model lacks practical support for addressing resistance or supporting people through fear and uncertainty.

Provides limited guidance for complex change

Lewin outlines what change looks like, but

Assumes a fixed end state

The model implies a clear finish line. Yet most organizations today operate a continuous improvement culture, making this approach unrealistic and impractical.

How the Prosci Methodology builds on Lewin's foundation

Lewin's model introduced critical concepts but doesn't offer tactical guidance for navigating complex, continuous change. The Prosci Methodology fills those gaps with structured, people-centered tools that guide individuals through change and sustain transformation outcomes.

Here's how the Prosci 3-Phase Process can be used to enhance Lewin's approach:

Unfreeze – The Prosci 3 – Phase Process

begins with Phase 1 – Prepare Approach, which aligns with the Unfreeze stage of Lewin's model. By clearly defining success, impact and approach, this phase establishes a clear rationale for change and prepares stakeholders.

Change – In Phase 2 – Manage Change, the emphasis is on planning and acting, tracking performance and adapting actions to ensure successful change adoption. This supports the change implementation focus of the second step in Lewin's model.

Refreeze – Phase 3 – Sustain Outcomes

involves reinforcement to embed changes into the organization and prepare the organization to own the change moving forward. This includes reviewing performance, activating sustainment, and transferring ownership. This phase solidifies the new state after the change has been implemented, supporting Lewin's Refreeze step.

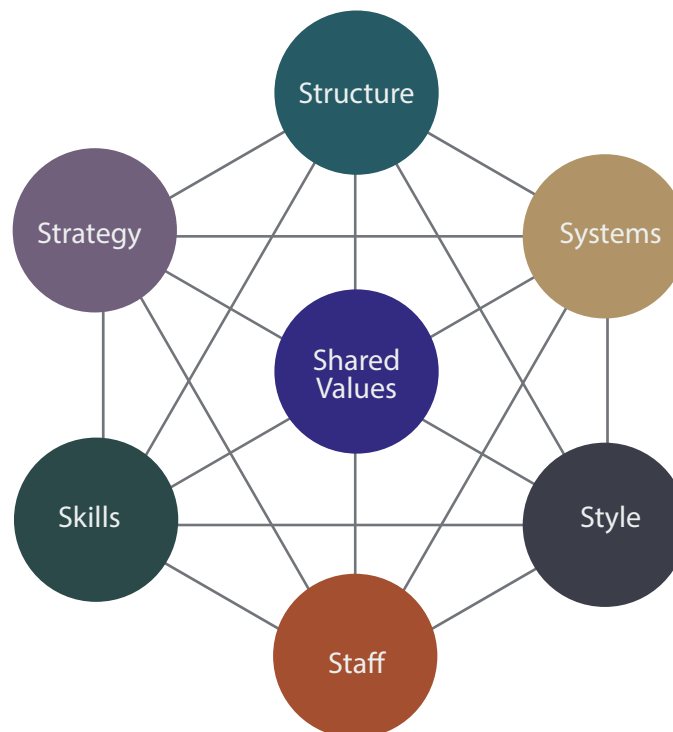
These elements turn Lewin's high-level stages into a repeatable, scalable approach designed for modern change.



The McKinsey 7-S Model

The McKinsey 7-S Model guides change by focusing on seven internal elements—strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, style and staff. It highlights that culture, capabilities and leadership must work together to drive transformation.

The McKinsey 7-S Model



While the model is useful for assessing organizational readiness, it doesn't offer a process for supporting people through change. This is the critical factor in turning implementation into sustained outcomes

Strengths of the McKinsey 7-S Model

The 7-S Model helps organizations take a broad, structured view of change, emphasizing alignment across people, processes and culture.

Encourages consideration of multiple factors

The model prompts leaders to evaluate more than structure or strategy. It ensures that crucial elements like systems, skills and values are part of the change conversation.

Recognizes the importance of soft elements

It highlights less tangible but essential factors—like leadership style and mindset—that influence how people respond to change and how that change is sustained.

Promotes holistic, system-wide thinking

By showing the interdependence of the seven elements, the model encourages leaders to align change efforts across the entire organization.

Helps diagnose barriers to change

The model is a valuable tool for identifying misalignment across internal elements. It helps uncover hidden obstacles that could disrupt or undermine progress during transformation.

Connects strategy to organizational capabilities

It reinforces the idea that successful strategy execution depends on internal readiness, stressing that skills, systems and shared values can support long-term goals.

Limitations of the McKinsey 7-S Model

The 7-S Model offers a powerful lens for organizational alignment, but it stops short of addressing how to lead people through the change process.

Focuses more on analysis than action

The model identifies alignment issues, but it doesn't provide a process for planning, executing or sustaining change across the organization.

Overlooks individual adoption challenges

It centers on organizational structure and systems, rather than how individual employees experience, adopt and sustain change.

Requires a deep understanding to apply

Effective use of the model often depends on strong diagnostic skills and cultural awareness. Without these, teams may misdiagnose or overlook key issues.

How the Prosci Methodology fills the gaps in the McKinsey 7-S Model

The McKinsey 7-S Model helps identify what needs to change. What it doesn't show is how to make that change happen. The Prosci Methodology bridges this disconnect with a structured, people-centered approach.



Each element of the Prosci ADKAR Model supports the internal shifts identified through the 7-S framework:

A

Awareness helps individuals understand the “why” behind the change, aligning with Strategy and Shared Values.

D

Desire connects to Style and Staff, fostering individual commitment through sponsorship and active leadership engagement.

K

Knowledge supports Skills by ensuring individuals are equipped to perform in the future state.

A

Ability enables execution within new Structures and Systems, giving individuals the confidence to take action.

R

Reinforcement helps embed the change into daily operations and culture, reinforcing shifts across **Shared Values**, **Style**, and **Systems**.

The Prosci Methodology builds on the strategic insights of the McKinsey 7-S Model, providing the people-centred approach needed for lasting change.



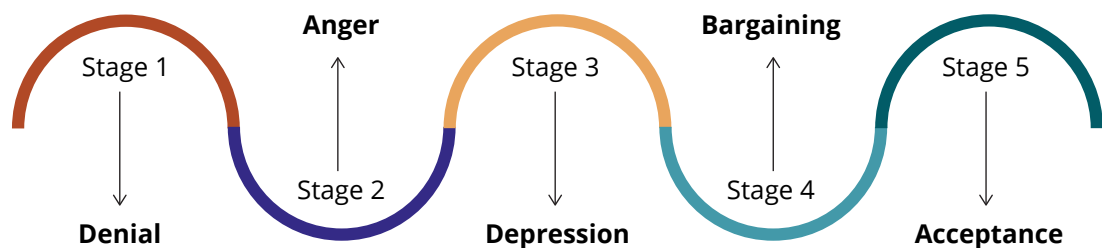
The Kübler-Ross Change Curve

The Kübler-Ross Change Curve maps the emotional responses people often experience during major disruption, such as denial, resistance, exploration and acceptance.

Originally developed to describe grief, the model has been adapted to explain how individuals process organizational change. It offers valuable insight into the psychological journey, helping leaders recognize and empathize with people's feelings.

However, it doesn't provide practical steps to help individuals progress or deliver measurable change outcomes.

Stages of the Kübler-Ross Model



Strengths of the Kübler-Ross Change Curve

The Change Curve offers a helpful framework for understanding the emotional side of change. It gives organizations deeper insight into how people experience and move through change.

Helps leaders anticipate emotional reactions

The model provides a framework to predict how people may respond to major change. This enables leaders to prepare for common emotional reactions during disruption or transition.

Normalizes emotional responses

The approach helps people understand that emotions like denial, anger and acceptance are natural parts of adapting to change. This reduces stigma and encourages openness.

Supports empathetic leadership

The model highlights the need for compassion and support. It gives leaders a way to recognize emotional needs and show up with empathy during change.

Helps plan communication and support strategies

Leaders can use the curve to tailor the timing and delivery of communications and interventions based on people's emotional readiness.

Limitations of the Kübler-Ross Change Curve

The Change Curve highlights important emotional patterns but doesn't provide the structure, tools or flexibility needed to guide successful change in organizations.

Based on grief, not organizational change

Originally developed to explain grief, the model isn't purpose-built for business environments, where urgency, behavior and performance outcomes are critical to success.

Lacks actionable strategies for change management

While emotionally insightful, the model doesn't offer practical tools or guidance for preparing people, building capabilities or reinforcing new ways of working.

Assumes linear emotional progression

The curve suggests a fixed and predictable sequence of emotions. In reality, individuals move through change in different ways, often revisiting stages or progressing nonlinearly.

Focuses heavily on emotions, not behavior

The model maps emotional states, but it doesn't address how individuals develop new skills or take action to adopt change.

How the Prosci Methodology supports emotional transitions in the Change Curve

The Change Curve highlights how people feel during disruption. It doesn't show how to guide them through it. The Prosci Methodology addresses this with a structured framework for supporting emotional engagement at each stage of change.

Our ADKAR Model provides a structured way to help individuals move through these stages by targeting what they need at each point.

Denial

In the early stages of change, people may resist or deny that change is necessary. They lack understanding of the change and why it's needed. The Awareness element of ADKAR reduces confusion and helps people engage with the reality of the change.

Targeted communications and active sponsorship create visibility and help individuals understand the reasons for change.

Anger

As denial subsides, emotions may shift to frustration, fear or anger, which are often rooted in perceived loss or uncertainty. The Desire element of ADKAR helps build commitment to move forward. Leaders and managers play a critical role. Engaging individuals through coaching, support and personal relevance helps them see how the change can benefit them.

Bargaining

At this stage, people may start exploring what the change means, but they lack clarity about what to do next or how to succeed in the new environment. The Knowledge element of ADKAR equips individuals with the information and skills they need to navigate the change through targeted training, access to resources, and a clear understanding of responsibilities.

Depression

Some people may feel overwhelmed or unprepared, even after gaining knowledge. Without support, this can lead to withdrawal or low performance. The Ability element of ADKAR helps individuals develop the confidence and capability to adopt the change. It helps reduce stress and rebuild momentum through proactive support and coaching.

Acceptance

Once people begin to accept and operate within the new environment, sustained effort is needed to avoid falling back into old practices. The ADKAR Reinforcement element solidifies behavior change and helps embed the new approach into daily work and culture through recognition, feedback and ongoing support.

Further to the ADKAR Model, the Prosci Change Triangle (PCT) Model aligns change management with emotional resilience. Leadership can champion training programs that focus on building mental fortitude, such as stress management, adaptability and coping strategies. This training can be part of the broader change management efforts to prepare employees for the transition.

By integrating these models, you can support people through each stage of change, reducing disruption, accelerating adoption and strengthening overall change outcomes.



Take the Next Step in Building Your Change Capability

Knowing how different change methodologies work gives you a sharper edge when leading complex initiatives. Yet while most methodologies focus on isolated aspects of change, such as communication, leadership alignment or process design, few offer a comprehensive, repeatable system for delivering sustained adoption and measurable business results.

The Prosci Methodology was designed to fill that gap. Grounded in over two decades of research, it provides a structured, flexible and research-based approach that can be used on its own or integrated with other models and frameworks.

Organizations that embed the Prosci Methodology build a scalable enterprise change capability—one that not only accelerates adoption but also enables performance improvements at scale. This is how lasting transformation happens: through a disciplined approach that empowers individuals and strengthens organizations from within organization.



Ready to Transform How Your Organization Approaches Change?

Choose Your Path to Change Management Excellence:

For Individual Practitioners

Start Your Certification Journey Build the skills that will set you apart as a change management professional. Our Prosci Change Management Certification Program equips you with research-backed tools, methodologies, and a globally recognized credential.

Get Certified Now

For Enterprise Leaders

Unlock Organizational Change Potential Partner with Prosci to develop a comprehensive change management strategy that drives measurable results across your entire

Schedule Enterprise Consultation

Prosci[®]