



New technology
requires new behaviors.





Executive Summary

To make the most of their capital investment in technology, organizations should view technology adoption as a change management process. Change management is a systematic approach to dealing with change that considers both organizational and individual needs to define and implement the procedures that accompany change. To facilitate a successful technology implementation, organizations should 1) appoint an executive sponsor; 2) explain the reason for the change, including expected benefits and potential consequences of failure, to the entire team; 3) teach employees how to use the technology and set deadlines for individual adoption; 4) recruit technology champions to lead by example and serve as subject matter experts; and 5) set objectives to hold the team accountable.

New technology requires new behaviors.

When organizations invest in technology, they usually do so in the hopes of realizing operational advantages that represent a return on their capital outlay. Yet all too often, new technologies are inconsistently adopted by users and fail to deliver to their full potential. At times, technology initiatives may even be postponed or abandoned altogether, representing a loss of not just the initial investment, but also the internal effort spent on technology selection, process development, and failed deployment.

For technology to deliver its promised benefits — whether that's reduced costs, increased productivity, or better customer service — the human element must be considered. Technology doesn't run itself; the people who use the technology have a huge impact on its success and are impacted by it in turn. When technology initiatives fail, it's often because the people most impacted by the technology feel threatened by it. They may have insufficient information about the scope of change and training implications, or they may worry about the possibility of role changes as paper-based work processes are replaced by ones that require more computer literacy. The information vacuum is often filled with rumors.

If these concerns go unaddressed, the earliest symptoms of a recent technology adoption may actually be a negative impact on performance — which is the last thing anyone wants to explain to their board of directors.

Too often, the finger is pointed at the technology itself, when in reality a lack of engagement with the technology is the real culprit. Study after study has proven that the success of a technology initiative is directly tied to the ability of leaders to influence user adoption, and that means changing behaviors.

In short, successful technology adoption is a change management process. Change management is a systematic approach to dealing with change that considers both organizational and individual needs to define and implement the procedures that accompany change. According to Prosci, a leader in change management research, initiatives with excellent change management are six times more likely to meet their objectives than those with poor change management.¹

In this paper, we share five critical steps to managing change. Each time-tested tactic has proven effective in studies by leading change management consulting and research firms. By applying a change management approach to technology initiatives, organizations dramatically increase their odds of driving employee adoption and delivering a high return on technology investment.

¹Prosci, Inc. Best Practices in Change Management, 2014 Edition
<https://www.prosci.com/change-management/why-change-management>

A Change Management Approach to Technology Adoption

1. APPOINT AN EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

- The executive sponsor acts as a visible advocate of the project to other executives and employees at large.
- Choosing the right executive sponsor is critical. Employees want to hear from an experienced leader at the top of the organization. If it's not important to the boss, why should it be important to anyone else?
- If it's not the CEO, the executive sponsor should be another senior leader with a vested interest in the project's success and the authority to secure the resources needed for a successful adoption.
- To demonstrate the company's commitment to the project, the executive sponsor should assign a project lead and allocate sufficient resources to see the project through.

2. CLEARLY EXPLAIN THE "WHY" TO THE WHOLE TEAM

- Employees need to understand why the change is being made and the potential costs of failure.
- The executive sponsor should articulate the competitive advantages of the new technology, connecting those advantages to larger company goals as well as tangible employee benefits whenever possible.

For example, improving profit margins through reduced operating expenses might be a milestone on the company roadmap and might also mean a larger bonus pool for employees.

- Employees also need to know the downstream implications of their actions and decisions. How are other processes or participants affected?

3. SHOW THEM HOW IT'S DONE

- The project lead allocates resources to complete the project. Too often, assignments start and end with the core implementation and technology integration teams.
- Resources should also be allocated to conduct mandatory training and provide job aids that explain how to use the technology. Give direct comparisons between "old state" and "new state" processes.
- Clearly communicate expectations for when individual adoption must occur. Articulate any permissible exceptions to the new workflow — don't leave it to the imagination.
- Anticipate barriers and address them explicitly. For example, tell employees in advance what they should do if they get stuck; make it clear that simply reverting to "the old way" is not acceptable.

4. RECRUIT CHAMPIONS TO “WALK THE TALK”

- Technology champions, also called “change agents,” are a special group of individuals who lead by example.
- As early adopters, they play a role in assisting others with learning the new technology and processes. They may also serve as the project knowledge base or subject matter expert.
- Champions serve as a conduit for funneling information and questions between employees and the executive sponsor.
- Recruit volunteers or assign this role to top performers, long-tenured employees, or employees who have demonstrated an interest in the project. Be sure to recognize and reward these champions visibly.

5. SET OBJECTIVES AND HOLD THE TEAM ACCOUNTABLE

- The executive sponsor should work together with the champions to create specific goals around individual and team adoption and assign a target date to each goal.
- Next, identify key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure ROI and assess downstream impacts of the technology adoption on business performance.
- The executive sponsor should share both the goals and ongoing results with the whole team — not just leaders — on a regular basis.
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