

Introduction to the Change Management Framework: ADKAR



Organizations don't change—people do, one person at a time



ADKAR: a goal-oriented model for individual change, not a full methodology



Five elements: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement



Complements Kotter and the Prosci Methodology (3-Phase Process, PCT Model)



ADKAR diagnoses the 'last mile': are individuals actually ready?



Learning objectives: diagnose barriers, apply targeted interventions, sustain adoption



Origins and the Individual Change Principle

- Developed by Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt, grounded in research across 900+ organizations
- Core principle: organizational change is the cumulative result of individual transitions
- Organizations don't change—the behaviors of individuals change, producing new outcomes
- Communications, training and sponsorship only succeed if they produce individual outcomes (A, D, K, A, R)
- ADKAR is prescriptive, not descriptive: it shows where to focus



The Five Building Blocks of ADKAR



Each element is a milestone with an observable signal ("I understand why" → "I will continue to").

Why Sequence Matters: Cumulative and Not Strictly Linear



- Elements build in order; each enables the one after it
- Skipping Awareness or Desire makes training ineffective and frustrating
- Training before Awareness and Desire is a leading cause of resistance
- Sequential but not linear: people can move backward with new information
- A low score in one element blocks everything downstream
- Practical rule: never invest downstream of a barrier point



Reading the Signals: Symptoms of Each Element



OBSERVE
UNDERSTAND
SUPPORT CHANGE



Awareness/Desire barriers

change isn't
happening;
disengagement,
rumors, passive or
active resistance



Knowledge barriers

honest attempts
that don't work out;
confusion and
frustration after
training



Ability barriers

trying but slower;
low productivity,
asking for help,
workarounds



Reinforcement barriers

reverting to old
ways; "Why keep
doing this?" after
go-live



Describe observable behaviors—avoid labeling people as resistant

Diagnosing Barrier Points with the ADKAR Assessment



Barrier point = first ADKAR element scoring 3 or below (1–5 scale)



It marks where progress has stopped—address it before moving forward



Assess at multiple milestones to see progress, persistence, or regression



Persistent, regressive, or progressive—each calls for a different response



Segment by group and role; different groups stall at different elements



Diagnose barrier vs. root cause before you act



Targeted Interventions Aligned to Each Element

Different barriers require different approaches. Choose interventions that address the real need.



Awareness



Awareness: honest, repeated communication of the business case and why now

Desire



Desire: sponsorship, manager one-to-ones, WIIFM, early resistance management

Knowledge



Knowledge: role-specific training, job aids, just-in-time learning, knowledge checks

Ability



Ability: practice, coaching, time, mentors, removing practical barriers

Reinforcement



Reinforcement: recognition, visibility, accountability, aligned rewards



Match the intervention to the barrier: more training won't fix a Desire problem

Building Desire: The Most Challenging Element



Desire is a personal choice—levers can influence it, never mandate it



69% of practitioners name Desire as the hardest element to build



Common obstacles: comfort with status quo, fear, unrecognized loss, poor change history, saturation



Root causes: no personal benefit, unacknowledged impact, low trust, overwhelming pace



Manager one-to-one coaching is the most effective route to Desire



Visible sponsorship shifts "Is this real?" to "I will participate"



Overcoming Resistance: Prevention First, Response When Needed



Prevention is cheaper and more effective than response—address root causes early



Use ADKAR to diagnose: which element is presenting the barrier?



Build Desire through empathy, involvement, credible sponsorship, aligned incentives



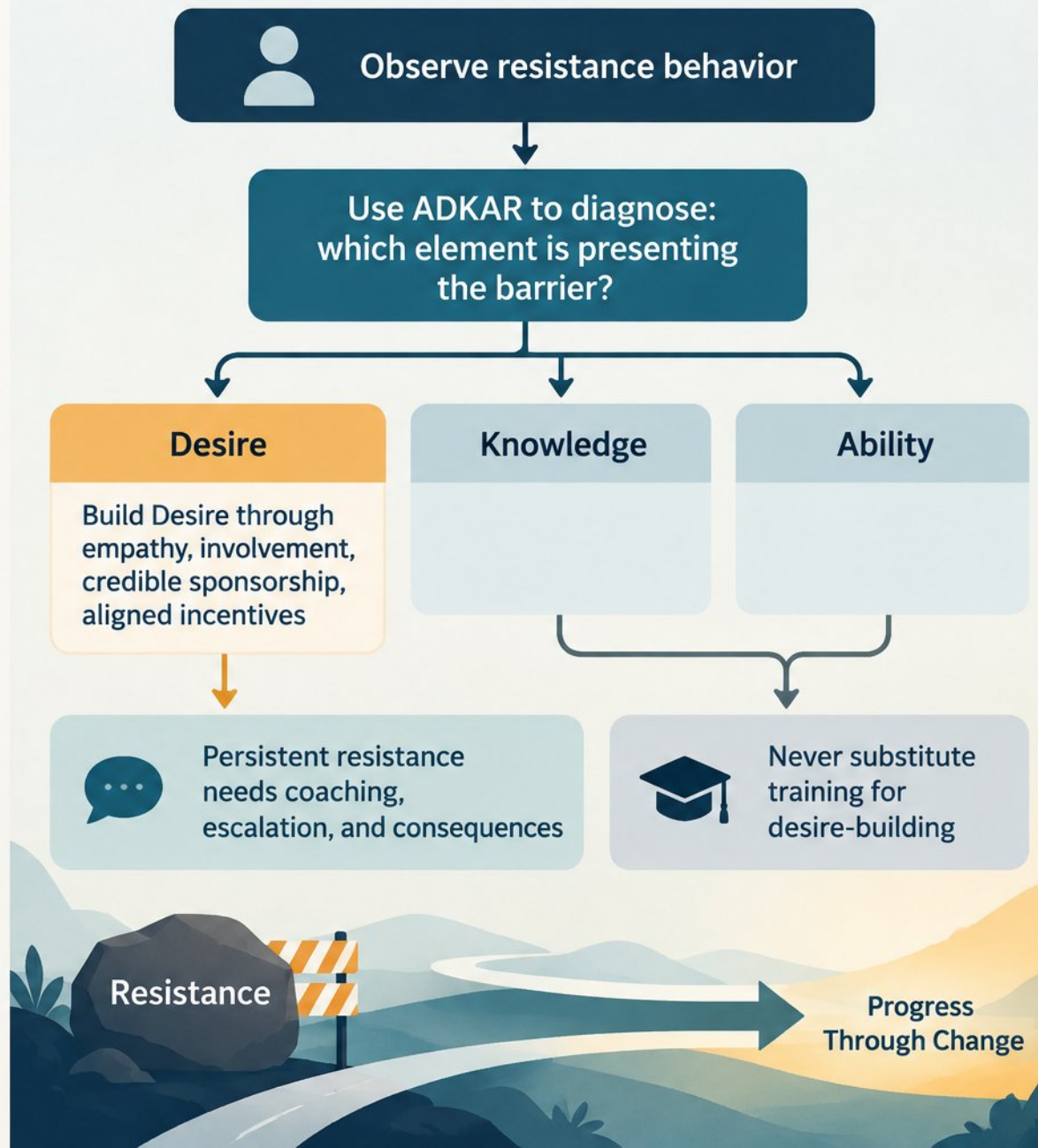
Persistent resistance needs coaching, escalation, and consequences



Distinguish Desire from Knowledge or Ability—the intervention differs



Never substitute training for desire-building



Reinforcement:

Designing for Sustainment from Day One

- Reinforcement makes the new way the default; without it, people revert
- Tactics: recognition, visible scorecards, manager feedback, celebrations, corrections
- Align accountability: performance, appraisals and incentives
- Design reinforcement into the initiative from day one, not after go-live
- Prosci: 81% with a reinforcement plan met objectives vs. 15% without
- Build it to survive leadership churn, distributed teams and tool overload



PEOPLE CHANGE
BUILDS A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Measuring Adoption and Sustaining Change

- **Measure each element:** Awareness (can they articulate why?), Desire (voluntary engagement), Knowledge (task completion), Ability (error rates, speed), Reinforcement (sustained after 90 days)
- **Behavioral indicators** beat training attendance and communication counts
- **Track** adoption rate, time to proficiency, regression rate, embedding scores
- **Report** weekly during launch and stabilization, then monthly
- **Link** individual adoption to business outcomes and benefit realization
- **ADKAR assessment** is an ongoing framework, not a one-off snapshot



**From Adoption
to Lasting Impact**

Scaling Individual Change to Teams, Programmes and Agile



Aggregate individual ADKAR profiles into team and organisational readiness views



Align milestones: Ability to go-live, Knowledge to the training window



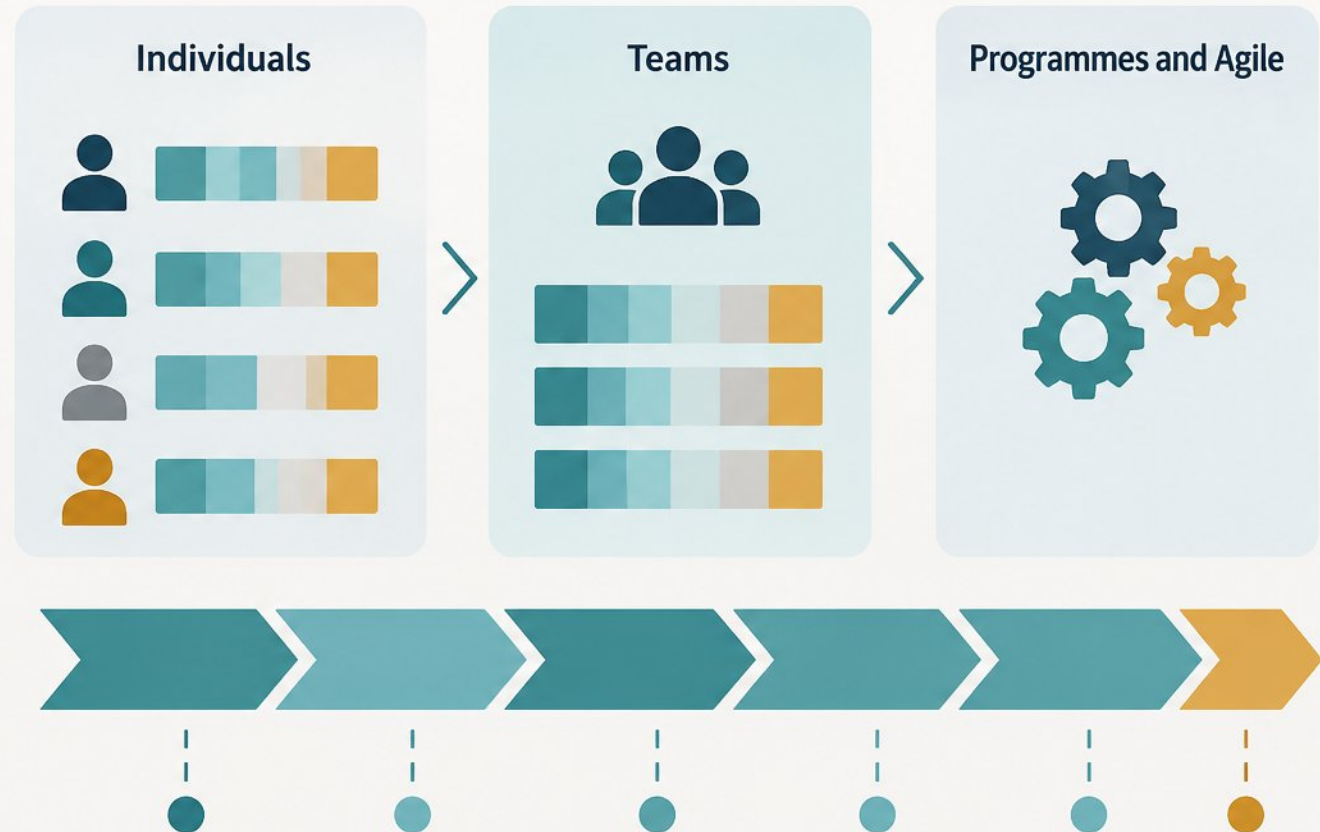
Awareness and Desire sustained across all sprints; Knowledge and Ability just-in-time



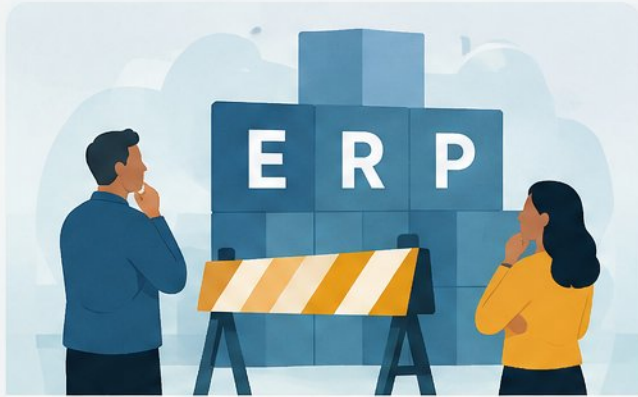
Reinforce at every release, not only after go-live



Segment by team and role to target group-level interventions



Case Studies and Practical Scenarios



Scenario 1: ERP rollout stalls—diagnose the barrier before prescribing



Scenario 2: Process change—separate a Desire gap from a Knowledge gap



Scenario 3: AI adoption—sustained Awareness, manager-led Desire, just-in-time Knowledge

- > Group exercise: segment, score ADKAR, find the barrier point, design actions
- > Diagnose before you prescribe; avoid the training-default trap
- > Practitioners using ADKAR for measurement: two-thirds rated it extremely effective



Action Planning: Applying ADKAR to Your Initiative

PEOPLE

PLANS

PROGRESS

Turning
change into
a brighter
tomorrow.



ADKAR Blueprint: estimate effort, define actions, assign roles, set start and finish dates



Run assessments: baseline, segment, target, then re-score to track movement



Address the barrier point first, then sequence interventions



Define roles: sponsors, people managers, change practitioners



Align milestones to the project lifecycle; Reinforcement extends 6–12 months

A

Awareness

D

Desire

K

Knowledge

A

Ability

R

Reinforcement



Commitment: pick one change and one first intervention for this week

PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform



Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/5398dd6e/public