

Implementing Change Management

Staffing and recruiting firms, like companies in nearly all industries, often hire outside vendors and outsourcing partners. In many cases the work done is straightforward, such as when the outsourced work is background testing or payrolling. But sometimes the work is more involved, including when recruiting and research work is outsourced. In these more complex partnerships, current processes will naturally change. At the same time, it is also natural that internal staff will be comfortable with the old way of doing things, and that they might be resistant to any changes. That's why it's critical that companies avoid the pitfall of having their team "just run with it" when a new outsourcing partner is hired. Instead, companies should go through a basic change management program that addresses some of the common hiccups to bringing on a new outsourced process.

Given its importance, there are a large and growing number of approaches available to change management. One of the more prevalent models today is called the ADKAR approach, which is valued for being practical and straightforward. While this article will seek to provide a brief overview of the model, there is much more information available on it online (a few links are listed at the end of the article).

The ADKAR model (the name is an acronym for the steps in the change management process) was developed after research with hundreds of companies undergoing major change projects. It offers a step-by-step approach to ensuring change management, but also serves as a checklist of sorts by helping you pinpoint where the process might be breaking down. While many of the steps seem obvious and self-explanatory, it's stunning how often organizations fail to manage major changes in business process.

There are five steps to the process:

1. **A**wareness of the need for change.
2. **D**esire to participate in and support the change.
3. **K**nowledge on how to change.
4. **A**bility to implement required skills and behaviors.
5. **R**einforcement to sustain the change.

Here is a brief summary of each of the five steps:

1. **Awareness:** Create an understanding for the need to change. Key questions include 1) Why is the change necessary?; 2) What is wrong with what we are doing now?; 3) What's in it for the individuals?
2. **Desire:** Create the desire to support and take part in the change. This typically involves

informing the team of the benefits of making the change, including benefits the company will realize and the benefits staff will realize. Effective leadership can go a long way to help people to embrace change.

3. **Knowledge:** Give knowledge so people understand what to do and how the change will impact them. Typically this includes offering training and education, providing a detailed understanding of new tasks, and processes, and explaining new roles and responsibilities.
4. **Ability:** Provide the skills and support to execute the new process. This can include providing access to subject matter experts and performance monitoring.
5. **Reinforcement:** Create the ability and environment to sustain the change and maintain positive momentum. This can include recognition (celebrations, rewards, feedback) and accountability (audits, performance measurement, linking performance to compensation).

While it is easy to overlook a change management effort when starting an outsourcing program, it's one of the most critical components to making such programs successful. In fact, in surveys of firms that underwent embarked on outsourcing efforts and similar projects, 'effective change management with employees' was the third most important success factor for the project and 'helping managers be effective sponsors of change' was considered the most critical success factor overall.

The following links provide additional detail on the ADKAR process:

- <http://www.change-management-coach.com/adkar.html>
- <http://www.change-management.com/tutorial-adkar-overview.htm>
- <http://www.managing-change.net/adkar.html>

Brian Cotter is founder and president of [PSG Global Solutions](#), the world's largest and fastest growing provider of outsourced recruiting support to the staffing and HR industry. He can be reached at bcotter@psgglobalsolutions.com.