

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Individual Change and Implementation

Prosci ADKAR · Kegan & Lahey · Rogers

PAPER 03 / 03

A Furtherance reference compendium on the intellectual traditions behind organisational design, leadership, execution, and culture.

IN THIS PAPER

Organisational change is, in the end, a large number of individual changes. This closing paper covers the traditions that work at that level – how a single person moves through change, why they resist it even when they want it, and how change spreads through a population. The question: what actually has to shift inside people for a change to stick?

The three frameworks are complementary. ADKAR sequences the steps an individual must complete. Kegan and Lahey explain the hidden resistance that stalls people mid-sequence. Rogers maps how adoption moves through a social system over time. Read together, they cover the person, the psychology, and the population.

Prosci ADKAR Jeff Hiatt · 1990s–

Individual change model · practitioner framework

CORE THESIS

Change happens **one person at a time**, and each person moves through five building blocks in sequence. Because the blocks are sequential, change stalls at whichever one is missing – the **barrier point** – and effort should be directed there rather than spread evenly.

FRAMEWORK

Block	The question it answers
Awareness	Do I understand why the change is needed?
Desire	Am I willing to support and take part in it?
Knowledge	Do I know how to change?
Ability	Can I actually do it in practice?
Reinforcement	What makes the change stick?

METHODOLOGY

Benchmarking research conducted by Prosci across its member organisations, distilled into a proprietary, commercially delivered methodology.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

One of the most widely used change models in corporate practice, valued for being concrete, individual-level and diagnostic. The critique, noted plainly in the caveat below, is that it is proprietary with limited independent validation, and that its linear sequence treats change as more programmatic than it usually is.

A NOTE ON EVIDENCE

Two of this paper's frameworks warrant caution. ADKAR is a commercial product: its evidence base is largely in-house benchmarking rather than independent peer review, so we present it for its practical structure, not as validated science. Kegan and Lahey's work rests on constructive-developmental "stage" theory, which – like the vertical-development traditions treated elsewhere in this library – is harder to measure and validate than its confident presentation suggests. Both are useful; neither is settled evidence.

Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey *Immunity to Change*, 2009

Adult development · Harvard Graduate School of Education

CORE THESIS

Much resistance to change is not weakness of will but a hidden **immunity to change**: alongside the goal we sincerely hold sits a **competing commitment**, protected by a **big assumption**, that keeps us anxious-safe by not changing. Real change therefore often requires adult development – an increase in mental complexity – not just new behaviours or information.

FRAMEWORK

Column of the immunity map	What it surfaces
1 · Improvement goal	The change the person genuinely wants to make
2 · Doing / not doing	The behaviours that work against that goal
3 · Competing commitments	The hidden goals those behaviours actually serve
4 · Big assumptions	The beliefs that make the competing commitment feel necessary

This sits on Kegan's developmental account of how the adult mind grows in complexity:

Order of mind	Orientation
Socialised mind	Shaped by, and loyal to, the expectations around us
Self-authoring mind	Governed by an internal, self-owned system and agenda
Self-transforming mind	Able to hold and question its own system; open to others'

METHODOLOGY

Constructive-developmental psychology – built on Kegan's subject-object theory – applied through structured coaching and the immunity-mapping process, evidenced largely through case studies.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The sharpest available explanation of why sincere, capable people fail to change, and a genuine bridge from behaviour to development. The critique, per the caveat, is that the developmental-stage claims are difficult to measure, and the process is intensive and hard to run at scale.

Everett Rogers 1931–2004

Communication studies · Diffusion of Innovations

CORE THESIS

An innovation – a new practice, tool or idea – spreads through a social system over time along an **S-shaped curve**, as different groups adopt at different rates. Adoption is a social process driven by communication and opinion leaders, not a simple matter of the innovation's merit.

FRAMEWORK

Adopter category	Share	Character
Innovators	~2.5%	Venturesome; tolerate risk and failure
Early adopters	~13.5%	Respected opinion leaders; the group to win first
Early majority	~34%	Deliberate; adopt just before the average
Late majority	~34%	Sceptical; adopt under peer and economic pressure
Laggards	~16%	Traditional; adopt last, if at all

Five attributes of the innovation itself govern how fast it spreads:

Attribute	Speeds adoption when...
Relative advantage	It is clearly better than what it replaces
Compatibility	It fits existing values and ways of working
Complexity	It is simple to understand and use (low complexity)
Trialability	It can be tried on a limited basis first
Observability	Its results are visible to others

METHODOLOGY

A synthesis of several thousand diffusion studies across agriculture, medicine, marketing and public health – among the most extensive empirical evidence bases in the social sciences.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Unusually robust and cross-disciplinary; it explains the adoption dynamics behind any change or technology rollout. The critiques: a **pro-innovation bias** (assuming adoption is always good), an individual-blame tendency, and reliance on adopters' recall of when they adopted.

Synthesis

Theorist	Level	Framework	Evidence base
ADKAR	The individual's steps	Five building blocks	Proprietary benchmarking
Kegan & Lahey	The individual's psychology	Immunity to Change	Developmental theory; cases
Rogers	The population	Diffusion of Innovations	Thousands of empirical studies

FOR THE OPERATOR

Implementation lives at the individual level. For the operator: pair a diffusion view – who adopts, when, and through which opinion leaders – with an individual-transition view of what each person needs to move, and use the proprietary step-models as scaffolding rather than evidence. That closes the Change Management series. Its arc – from Lewin's unfreeze to Rogers' adoption curve – is that change is at once structural and psychological, planned and emergent, collective and, finally, personal.