What is Change Management?

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We want change, but we don’t want to change. Studies show that most of us are willing to change and want to become more change resilient if only we had the know how to get us there.

So along comes a toolset called change management. Change management focuses on the people side of change. The goal of change management is to change stakeholder behavior. For a change project to achieve its business goals, a change in behavior by stakeholders is usually a requirement.

Managers commonly think that if the project team frequently communicates (“communicate, communicate, communicate”) the change and provides training on the new systems or processes; change will naturally occur. These are two of several activities that absolutely need to occur, but there is so much more to the practice of change management.

According to the 2016 Prosci® research study on change management, the greatest contributors to a successful change project include:

- **Active and visible executive sponsorship**
  - This was the most important contributor, reported more than three times more often than other contributors. The sponsor should come from the correct level within the organization and have sufficient influence to affect the budget and other members of the executive leadership.

- **Structured change management approach**
  - Using a structured approach provides a shared language that supports application of change management on a project and throughout the organization.

- **Dedicated change management resources**
  - Having and maintaining an appropriate level of funding is crucial to success. The team should include an experienced and dedicated change resource along with influential resources who can represent diverse business areas and impact groups.

- **Integration and engagement with project management**
Engaging and integrating with the project team at the beginning to merge and align work streams is important to the project success. Change management works with the project team daily to understand how this impacts the business.

- **Employee engagement and participation**
  - Focus on working to engage employees in the change by highlighting “what’s in it for me?” (WIIFM), identifying and building relationships with impacted groups, and ensuring these groups receive the appropriate level of training.

- **Frequent and open communication**
  - Beyond frequency, consistency, openness, and transparency (as well as who delivers the messages) were cited as important.

- **Engagement with middle managers**
  - Engage middle managers to ensure there is an appropriate level of buy-in, commitment, and involvement from middle managers. It is important to leverage managers as change champions who act as early adopters and vocal advocates of the change to their direct reports and other impacted groups.

With these top seven change (management) readiness techniques focused on the people side of change, we increase our chances of change adoption and project success.