Resistance Management Guide and Plan
<Insert project name>

Overview

Resistance can be a natural, psychological and physiological reaction to change. Proactively planning for resistance is a core element of successfully managing change. The goal is not to eliminate resistance. We want to anticipate and mitigate the impacts.

Resistance Management is critical to building desire to participate and support change with each staff member, and in reinforcing the benefits of your change.

Resistance Management in the Change Process

In Phase 1 – Prepare Approach of our Change Framework we identify potential areas of resistance (in particular from the sponsor assessments and group impact analysis).

A Resistance Management Plan is developed as part of Phase 2 – Manage Change. We create change plans that integrate with the project plan and detail the steps that we take to support individuals and teams transition successfully through change. The key area of ADKAR® in which resistance management plays the largest role is predominantly Desire.

Desire can be influenced by engaging the project team, sponsors and coaches (managers and leaders) with a proactive plan and set of tools for managing resistance. As your project or initiative progresses, you may find additional areas of resistance may surface and your plan is adapted as needed.

Why prepare a Resistance Management Plan?

Managing resistance before resistance is encountered during a project will increase the effectiveness of the overall success of your project. With many initiatives we cannot underestimate the level of 'comfort' with how things are today. A structured change approach at the start of a project will increase change effectiveness.

A Resistance Management Plan is designed to identify what resistance might look like, where it might come from and what steps will be taken to mitigate or prevent the resistance. This is a proactive effort to work with staff, address concerns and build support early.

A plan is important to support managers and leaders with what needs to be done to ensure sustained results (i.e., adoption, utilisation, and proficiency) for the project.

Proactive resistance management (anticipation and early identification so it can be planned for and addressed) can also free up resources to provide reactive resistance management if needed.

Where to Get Help

For assistance, please contact strategy@csu.edu.au

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Resistance Management Plan

Purpose

Resistance is a natural reaction to change, and we should expect it to occur.

The purpose of this document is to help you develop a Resistance Management Plan to take a proactive approach to managing resistance. This includes how you identify what resistance might look like for your change project, where it might come from, and what steps you will take to mitigate or prevent resistance. This is a proactive effort to address concerns and build support early in the project, rather than waiting until implementation.

Resistance Management is a critical tool used to support staff through developing 'Desire' in the ADKAR® Model. Desire is created by providing the project team, sponsors and coaches (managers and leaders) with a proactive plan and set of tools for managing resistance.

This Plan is designed to be shared with the Project Sponsor, Project Team, and Sponsor Coalition.

How to use the Resistance Management Plan?

The questions in the template will assist you with your planning. The plan can be inserted into a combined Change Plan or used as a stand-alone resource. This is a template document and sections can be added or removed as required. You will find it beneficial to engage your sponsor and sponsor coalition in developing resistance management solutions that will support your project to succeed.

Preparing the Resistance Management Plan

The steps include:

- Defining what resistance may look like and how it may be identified
- Defining a strategy for managing resistance by group or level
- Preparing resources and tools to support teams and managers and leaders
- Reviewing the resistance management approach with relevant sponsor/s
- Communicating the plan with the key managers and leaders of the impacted staff or group.

You may find it helpful to work with a Change Lead on your project and link closely with your primary sponsor as well as managers and leaders to identify and manage resistance that may occur.

Types of resistance you may observe:

- Emotional – fear, loss, sadness, anger, anxiety, frustration, depression, and focusing on self
- Disengaged – quiet, avoidance, ignoring communications, indifference, apathy, and low morale
- Work impact – reduced productivity/efficiency, non-compliance, absenteeism, and mistakes
- Acting out – conflict, overbearing, arguments, sabotage, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and celebrate failure
- Negativity – rumours/gossip, miscommunication, objections, complaining, sarcasm, and focusing on problems
- Avoidance – ignoring change, reverting to old behaviours, workarounds, and abdicating responsibilities
- Building barriers – excuses, counter-approaches, recruiting dissenters, secrecy, breakdown of trust
- Controlling – asking many questions, influencing outcomes, defending the current state, using status.

Action Steps for Managing Resistance

The following table lists some of the recommended tactics for managing resistance.

	Action	Description
1	Listen and understand the objections	• Understand the objections. Often this can provide a clear path toward resolution. • Clarify any misunderstandings, rumours, or background information. • Avoid debating or arguing. The goal is to listen, understand and provide clarity.
2	Focus on the 'what' and let go of the 'how'	• Share a clear vision of the future state along with specific goals and timelines. • Involvement and ownership can naturally build desire. • Very useful in small groups in which the change falls within the team scope.
3	Remove barriers	• Desire to change can be inhibited by obstacles or barriers. • First follow #1 to understand what the obstacle is. The individual may not be really resistant to the change but cannot see pass the obstacle. • Determine ways that the organisation may be able to address the barrier.
4	Provide simple, clear choices and consequences	• Be clear about the choices staff have during the change. Ultimately building desire is about choices. • Communication must be simple and in clear terms so there are no misunderstandings.
5	Create hope	• Share your passion for the change, creating hope in a better future for staff and the organisation. • Staff will follow a manager and leader that can create hope and whom they respect and trust. • Many times, this method is most effective when a manager and leader or someone that has the ability to truly create hope and energy around the future state conveys the message.
6	Show the benefits in a real and tangible way	• For some staff, seeing is believing. Demonstrating the benefits of change in a real and tangible way can create desire. • Visibly demonstrate the success of pilots. • Share success stories for previous groups.
7	Make a personal appeal	• A personal appeal works best with honest, open relationships where there is a high degree of trust and respect. E.g.: "I believe in this change", "I want your support", "It is important to me". • There is an emotional component and an expectation component.
8	Convert the strongest dissenters	• Within every organisation, there exists outspoken opinion leaders. When one or more of these strong and vocal staff are against the change, they can negatively influence others. • Target the strongest dissenters with the techniques listed and seek to engage. • Strongest dissenters can become your strongest advocates.

Types of Resistance Anticipated Template

The following section details the anticipated resistance in the impacted groups

[Insert Group name]

Resistance Identified	How Resistance Identified
	Example: [ADKAR Assessment and open forum discussion with multiple impacted users.] **ADKAR Barrier Point: XX**

[Insert Group name]

Resistance Identified	How Resistance Identified
	Example: [ADKAR Assessment and open forum discussion with multiple impacted users.] **ADKAR Barrier Point: XX**

Add more groups as needed

Anticipated Resistance Due to Organisational Attributes Analysis

The Organisational Attributes assessment conducted in Phase 1 highlighted additional areas of potential resistance:

Organisational Attributes	Resistance and Mitigation Strategy/Special Tactics
Sample attributes: *Change Capacity* *Past Changes* *Organisational Reinforcement* *Change Competencies*	

How Resistance will be Identified

This section outlines how resistance will be monitored and identified for this project.

As the project moves forward, the project team will be implementing specific mechanisms (measurement tools and soft measurements) to identify resistance:

1. Staff Feedback

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   [Eg. Staff feedback loops are being created as a component of the Communications Plan and Coaching Plan. This will allow for both named and anonymous input throughout all stages of the implementation with close monitoring by the Change and Project leads.]

2. Manager and Leader Input

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   [Eg. Managers and leaders will have the opportunity during the coaching activities to provide direct feedback to the project team. Going forward, they are being asked by the leadership team if any resistance has been identified that they cannot address through group and individual coaching.]

3. Project Team Feedback

   -
   [Eg. Issues that are identified by the project team are being logged directly to the project issues log or risk log to be monitored closely by the Change and Project leads.]

4. Audits

   -
   [Eg. Compliance audits will be conducted as part of the post-implement support activities with a focus on proficiency metrics rather than error rates. This is intended to elicit a positive view of audit reports as a method to identify additional areas of support.]

The Project team could leverage ADKAR surveys as a tool to gauge and measure areas for potential resistance throughout the project. Contact the Change Team for more assistance on this tool.

Resistance Management by Level

This section outlines causes of resistance and the process for Resistance Management for this project.

Why individuals resist change varies at different levels of the organisation. The following tables summarise the root causes and reasons for anticipated resistance informed by *Prosci's Best Practices in Change Management Research* (refer to the Resistance Management Guide). This has informed our specific activities that address resistance prevention and proactive resistance management.

Senior Leaders

Potential Causes / Reasons	Process for Resistance Management
•	•
•	•
•	•

Managers and Leaders

Potential Causes / Reasons	Process for Resistance Management
Examples: • *Lack of awareness, loss of control, overload of current responsibilities* • *Organisational culture* • *Lack of awareness and knowledge* • *Lack of buy-in* • *Misalignment of project goals and current role* • *Lack of confidence in ability to manage the people side of change*	*Examples:* • *Develop and deliver effective communications (as defined in the Communications Plan)* • *Monitor effectiveness of the Sponsor Coalition* • *Engage senior leaders in their role* • *Involve impacted groups at the manager and leader level* • *Coach and train managers to use ADKAR (first on themselves and then on their direct reports)* • *Provide ongoing coaching by the change lead*
•	•
•	•

Staff

Potential Causes / Reasons	Process for Resistance Management
Examples: • *Lack of awareness of why the change is happening and WIIFM* • *Comfort with the status quo* • *Lack of awareness of why a change is needed* • *Change specific reasons* • *Change saturation* • *Fear of the unknown* • *Lack of support from managers or leaders*	*Examples:* • *Develop and deliver effective communications conveying the right messages at the right time (as defined in the Communications Plan)* • *Communicate authentically and honestly* • *Engage staff in development of solutions* • *Where possible, offer decisions for staff to have input on what is happening, how and when* • *Follow a structured change process that addresses anticipated resistance and quality training* • *Coach managers and leaders to engage with staff to equip, support, and enable during the change*
•	•

Resistance Management Plan by Group

Impacted Group	ADKAR barrier	Resistance anticipated or identified *(what & when)*	How to identify resistance *(what it will look and sound like)*	Approach for managing resistance *(who, what, when)*
[Group 1 name]	Awareness			
[Group 2 name]	Desire			
[Group 3 name]	Knowledge			
[Group 4 name]	Ability			

Resistance Management Plan by Level

Level	Why they may resist this change	Root causes of resistance	Approach for managing resistance *(who, what, when)*
Staff		*Examples:* • *Lack of awareness of why the change is happening* • *WIIFM (What's in it for me?)* •	
Managers and Leaders		• *Loss of control* • *Overload of current responsibilities* •	
Senior Leaders		• *Disconnect with their strategy or objectives* •	
		•	
		•	

Appendix:

Checklist for Your Change

The following questions can be used as a tool to guide you in how you approach resistance.

Are you expecting and planning for resistance?
✓ Resistance is the natural response to change. This holds true for changes at home and at work. Even if 'the change' or 'the solution' is expected to improve the staff members' situation, do not be surprised if you experience resistance. Expect and plan for resistance and identify the steps you can take to build buy-in and commitment.

Have you identified where in the organisation resistance to change might come from?
✓ For a particular change, think about where resistance might come from and how you will deal with it before you begin implementing a solution. For instance, you can expect to see resistance coming from groups that are heavily invested in how things are done today. You can also expect resistance from parts of the organisation that experience the most drastic changes or where changes have failed in the past.

Have you identified what resistance to the change might look like?
✓ Early in the project lifecycle, brainstorm what resistance to change might look like so you can be better prepared to identify it and react to it when it happens. For each group targeted by the change, as the question "How will resistance manifest itself in this group?"

Have you identified potential risks to the project related to resistance?
✓ Resistance to change is a significant source of risk for the project and the organisation as a whole. Resistance to change can result in project delays, projects missing objectives, lower ROI, or a change being totally scrapped. Document risks at the beginning of the project and how you can begin.

Are you ready to diagnose the root cause of resistance?
✓ Many organisations fall into a trap of addressing the symptoms of resistance and not dealing directly with the root causes. Be sure to have methods for understanding why resistance is occurring and the root cause.

Do you know the top reasons staff resist change?
✓ The top reason cited in research is lack of awareness of the business need for change.

Do you know the top reasons managers and leaders resist change?
✓ The top reason cited in research is organisational culture followed by lack of awareness and knowledge about the change.

Are you using an individual change management model to understand resistance?
✓ Resistance happens at an individual level for specific and unique reasons. One staff member's perspective on the change may be very different than other staff perspective, even if they are in the same workgroup. ADKAR gives you a foundation for understanding how one person goes through change and a tool for understanding why a particular individual is resisting change.

Do you have a system in place to identify and react to resistance when it happens?
✓ While there are many measures that can be taken to prevent and mitigate resistance before it impacts the organisation, you must also be prepared to address resistance during implementation when it does occur. The following steps to manage resistance will give managers and leaders concrete actions to take with their staff.

Have you prepared the people you need to respond to resistance?
✓ The most effective 'managers of resistance' are those who have credibility and respect with the individual who is resisting change – likely their supervisor or manager. As a project team member or change management resource, your job is to prepare and support managers and leaders throughout the organisation in their task to manage resistance and help staff through the change process.

Tips for Managers and Leaders

Working with Team Members

When dealing with resistance it is best to meet with your team members face-to face. The following are some sample questions to consider based on the Prosci® ADKAR® Model:

- **Why do you think the change is happening?** For the current change underway, describe the business, customer, or competitor issues that you believe have created a need for change.

- **Do you support this change?** What factors affect your desire to change? Would you consider yourself in favour of the change, neutral towards the change or opposed to the change?

- **Do you have the training you need?** Identify the skills and knowledge that you believe are necessary to support the change. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your current training on these skills and knowledge areas?

- **Are you having any difficulty implementing these skills and knowledge?** If yes, in what areas? Considering the required skills and knowledge, how would you rate your ability to implement the changes?

- **Are you getting the support you need?** Is there adequate reinforcement and support for the change going forward? In what areas can we provide additional support or reinforcement?

After meeting with your team member, the following process can be followed:

- Diagnose the root cause of resistance.
- Address the root cause of this resistance through coaching.
- Provide ongoing coaching opportunities and gather feedback over a defined period of time.

Addressing the root cause of resistance is generally accomplished by coaching and is best attended to by the immediate manager. Resistance can be a normal reaction to change and not the exception. Ignoring resistance and expecting it to go away on its own or underestimating the resistance are ineffective ways to deal with resistance. Dealing effectively with resistance by coaching is a key component to achieving the project's objectives.
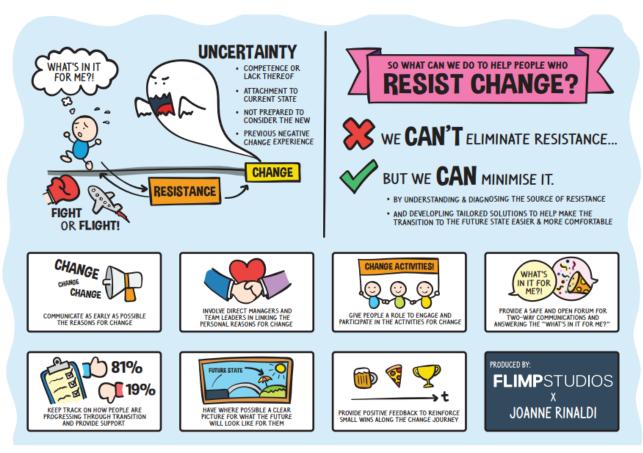
Working with Managers and Leaders

When dealing with manager resistance remember they are staff first and could be working through the change at an individual level. The techniques listed can be followed for all levels. In addition, for managers and leaders, other techniques can also be employed, such as:

- Give managers and leaders the necessary tools and time to succeed at the change:
  - Understand their competing priorities and timeframe for this change
  - Break the change down into smaller actionable steps
  - Give them enough time to adequately prepare their team.

- Engage senior leadership:
  - Provide active support from leadership
  - Provide the resources necessary to make the change effective
  - Listen to the manager and leader by someone they feel can understand their position and is at a level that can take action on their concerns

- Involve managers and leaders in all stages of the project:
  - As much as possible, involve them so they feel part of the solution
  - Provide clear status on the progress of the solution
  - Give them some 'ownership' of the project's tasks.

Resource - Minimising Resistance to Change

The image below provides a helpful snapshot:

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEJzPeyqODo