

Building great executive sponsorship

Prosci and the Change Management Learning Center are proud to present this four-part tutorial series focused on building great executive sponsorship for your change projects. This first tutorial provides the research foundation for the importance of sponsors and their critical role in successful projects. The following tutorials in the series will provide hands-on steps you can take to enable excellent sponsorship by your business leaders.

The problem

When asked to identify the greatest contributor to success when managing change, project teams state *executive sponsorship*. Yet, project managers consistently report a lack of visible and active sponsorship on the part of their executive business leaders.¹ In fact, nearly 50% of teams rate the effectiveness of their sponsor as poor to fair.

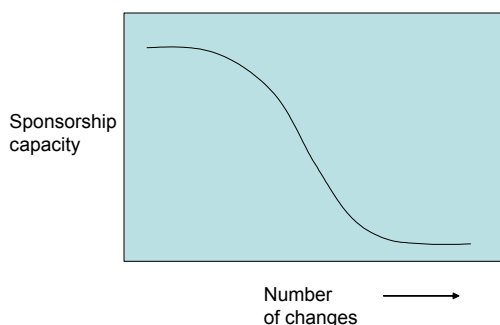
What is the breakdown? What is the root cause of this problem that plagues many change initiatives?

Research results

Prosci's research points to three common causes of this failure to create great executive sponsorship.

Failure mode 1 – Change saturation

In Failure Mode 1, executive sponsors are change saturated in much the same way an organization can become change saturated.



Their ability to effectively sponsor multiple changes diminishes as the total number of

¹ Best practices in Change Management, Benchmarking Report, Prosci, 2005

changes increases. As the number of changes increase, their schedule availability decreases, their visible and active participation declines, and the ability of the primary sponsor to build sponsor coalitions goes down.

Failure mode 2 – A disconnect in roles

In Failure Mode 2, executive managers are simply not aware of their role in sponsoring change. Many equate support with sponsorship, and look to the project team to implement the change. The 2005 Best Practices in Change Management Report identified the following top-three roles and expectations of executive sponsors:

1. Participate actively and visibly throughout the project.
2. Build a coalition of sponsorship with peers and managers.
3. Communicate effectively with employees and managers.

Many project teams struggle to create awareness of these roles with their sponsor and often cannot communicate clearly the specific actions their executive sponsor should take to be a great sponsor of change.

Failure mode 3 – Lack of knowledge and ability

The final failure mode is simply a lack of knowledge and ability on the part of the executive manager to carry out their sponsorship role. Many project teams assume that senior business leaders naturally have this sponsor knowledge and skill. In fact, many senior business leaders need the on-going support of the project team. They need coaching that can range from assistance with key talking points for an upcoming presentation to preparing drafts of key email announcements. What surprises project teams the most is to know that most executives welcome this support.

Summary

The most common pitfalls related to executive sponsorship include change saturation, the disconnect in roles between the business leaders and their project teams, and a lack of knowledge or ability on the part of the senior manager to carry out the sponsorship role. Project teams have a direct impact on two of these challenges facing business leaders. The next tutorial in this series will uncover the steps you can take to enable great executive sponsorship for your project.

Resource guide

Benchmarking Reports and Toolkits

Best Practices in Change Management: 288 companies share experiences in managing change and lesson on how to build great executive sponsorship. Includes success factors, methodology, role of top management, communications, team structure and more. The report makes it easy to learn change management best practices and discover the mistakes to avoid when creating executive sponsorship.

Change Management Toolkit: a comprehensive change management process, including templates, worksheets, assessments, checklists and guidelines - a *must have* for change management team members and consultants.

Change Management Guide for Managers and Supervisors: a guide specifically designed for managers and supervisors dealing with change - complete with team and individual coaching activities, best practices findings and frequently asked questions.

Online tools

Change Management Pilot: a fully electronic version of Prosci's popular change management toolkit with templates, worksheets, assessments, checklists, eLearning modules, ready-to-use presentations and guidelines.

Change Management Pilot Professional: a fully electronic version that combines the Change Management Pilot with the Change Management Guide for Managers and Supervisors and Employee's Survival Guide - a combination that allows you to reach **each level** of the organization.

Books and Resources to distribute

Change Management: the people side of change: a solid foundation in change management perspectives, theories, activities and practices.

Employee's Survival Guide to Change: answers questions most employees are unwilling to ask and uncovers what it takes to survive and thrive in today's changing workplace. Employees will learn the ADKAR model and become effective change agents, instead of difficult change barriers.

Executive team training

Prosci provides customized executive training. Please call 970-203-9332 for more details.