Making Change Stick: Why Launch Day Is Only the Beginning

Service area: Change Management & Implementation

Opening scenario

A professional services team invested in a new project management tool. The setup was thoughtful, the training session went well, and the launch email was clear. Six weeks later, half the team was back to email threads and personal to-do lists.

Illustrative example: the scenario described is fictional.

The framing

The tool was not the problem. The change was treated as an event instead of a process. People need preparation, practice, and reinforcement before a new way of working becomes the normal way of working.



Key takeaway: Launch day starts a change; preparation, practice, and reinforcement make it stick.

Check readiness before you launch

Before introducing a change, ask a few honest questions.

- Do people understand why it is happening?
- Do they have time to learn it?
- Do managers support it?
- What else is changing at the same time?



A short readiness assessment highlights where resistance or confusion is likely, so you can plan for it instead of reacting to it.

Key takeaway: Assess readiness before launch so resistance and confusion can be planned for.

Understand who is affected

A simple stakeholder analysis lists each group affected by the change, how much it affects them, how much influence they have, and what they need.

Group affected	Impact	Influence	What they need



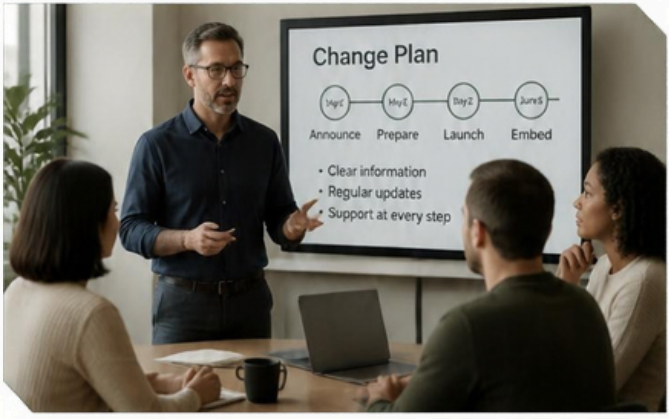
People most affected by a change deserve the earliest and clearest communication and often the best ideas about how to make it work.

Key takeaway: Start with the people affected by the change and learn what they need.

Communicate more than feels necessary

One announcement is rarely enough.
A practical communication plan covers:

- **Why:** the problem the change solves
- **What:** what will be different, and what will stay the same
- **When:** key dates and what to expect at each stage
- **Support:** where to go with questions



Key takeaway: **Repeated, practical communication reduces uncertainty throughout the change.**

Train for the real work

Training works best when it uses people's actual tasks rather than generic demonstrations.



Short, role-specific sessions

Focus on the tasks people actually do, not the theory.

Quick reference guides

Give people clear, simple instructions they can use on the job.

A named go-to person

Make sure everyone knows who they can turn to for help.

These supports help people build confidence quickly.

Key takeaway: Use real tasks, role-specific practice, and accessible support to build confidence.

Track adoption and reinforce it

Adoption is visible in behavior: are people using the new process, and is it producing the intended result?

Check in at regular intervals such as 30 and 60 days after launch to ask what is working, what is not, and what support is still needed.



Reinforcement actions

- Recognize early adopters
- Remove obstacles
- Adjust the process where feedback shows a genuine gap

Key takeaway: Track behavior after launch, reinforce progress, and respond to genuine gaps.

Review what you learned

Once the change has settled, hold a short post-implementation review.

Review questions

1. Did it deliver the expected outcome?
2. What would you do differently next time?



Capturing these lessons makes every future change easier.

Key takeaway: A short review turns one change into learning for the next.

Quick exercise



Think of a change your business introduced in the past year.

Rate it from 1 to 5 on readiness, communication, training, and follow-up.

Area	Score from 1 to 5	What would improve it?
Readiness		
Communication		
Training		
follow-up		

The lowest score is where to focus on the next change.

Key takeaway: Use the lowest score to identify the most important improvement for your next change.

Next step

Before your next change, write a one-paragraph 'why' list the people affected, and schedule a 30-day check-in before you launch.

If you would like a second set of eyes on this work, contact AuofOnyx to talk through where your business is today and what would help most.



- Write the why
- List the people affected
- Schedule a 30-day check-in

Key takeaway: Prepare the why, the people, and the follow-up before launch day.

Source:Prosci. "The Prosci ADKAR® Model."
Read the ADKAR model overview: https://www.prosci.com/methodology/adkar

Source: Prosci. "The Comprehensive Guide To Mastering Change Readiness."
Read the change-readiness guide:
https://www.prosci.com/change-readiness