

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Large organizations are no strangers to the concept of change management (CM). When companies make internal changes, CM is a collective term for all approaches to preparing and supporting individuals, teams, and organizations in making those changes. This Tech Insight provides a basic introduction to CM, reasons organizations undergo change, and popular change models and applications. This document will also discuss CM within the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Office of Information & Technology (OI&T).

### WHAT IS CHANGE MANAGEMENT?

CM is defined as the management of change and development within a business or similar organization. There are three different levels of CM: the individual, the team, and the organization. A systems approach requires a thorough understanding of the interdependent elements of an organization, including people, process, infrastructure, and environment.

### REASONS FOR CHANGE

There can be many factors leading to change, but most reasons are related to technology and globalization. [Globalization](#) refers to free movement of goods, capital, services, people, and technology, which are constantly evolving. Together, these factors result in a continuously changing business environment.

The ability to manage and adapt to organizational change is essential in today's workplace. Though this may seem like a critical aspect, CM is profoundly difficult when the structure, culture, and routines of an organization reflect ideals of the past and a resistance to change is present. There is no one approach to CM that works for every organization. Organizations must first consider what the change is, such as a merger, new leadership, adoption of a web-based process, etc. Organizational reorganizations also result in a need for CM. Each transition goal requires its own approach or change model to be successful.

## CHANGE MODELS

Many change models exist for organizations developing CM approaches. Sometimes the best model is a customized model of selected resources from a variety of CM models. Leveraging a [“change toolbox”](#) can help an organization create the right CM approach that will work for them. This Tech Insight explores a few of the most popular models and the benefits of each.

**Kotter’s Eight Steps of Change:** John Kotter, a prominent leader in change management, introduced an [eight-step change](#) process in his 1995 book “Leading Change.” This eight-step change model consists of the following: Create a Sense of Urgency; Form a Powerful Coalition; Create a Vision and Strategy for Change; Communicate the Vision; Remove Obstacles and Empower Employees; Create Short-Term Wins; Build on Change and Produce More Change; and Anchor Change in Corporate Culture.

This model is beneficial because it focuses on employee buy-in. It requires an organization to articulate a vision to engage leaders and employees, while creating a sense of urgency. All of these elements help people to adapt to change, a major success factor when it comes to CM. The steps in this model are clear, give guidance for success, and fit well into classical organizational hierarchies.

**Prosci’s ADKAR Model:** [Prosci](#) developed [a goal-oriented CM model](#) that allows CM teams to focus activities on specific business results. The ADKAR model includes: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. The benefit of this model is that it encapsulates the business dimension of change and the individual dimension of change. It provides a clear checklist for managing change.

**Lewin’s Unfreeze, Change, Freeze Model:** Though this theory has been criticized as too simplistic, it is popular because it is easy to understand. It refers to CM as a journey with a beginning, middle, and end. Many modern change models are based on [the three-stage Kurt Lewin model](#). The first stage is “unfreezing,” of which means getting ready for the change, understanding it, and preparing everyone for the change. The second stage is “change,” or the inner movement or journey of the change. Lewin referred often to this process as “transition.” The final stage is “freezing,” meaning establishing stability once the changes have been made.

Though models are the core of CM, management of the process is essential to the success of organizational change. This is where leadership and communication is imperative.

## **MANAGING THE CHANGE PROCESS AND RESISTANCE**

The most critical part of the CM process is gaining buy-in from the organization's employees. It is important for leadership to recognize the changes in a broader environment, develop adjustments for the company's needs, train their employees on changes, and win support.

There are many reasons employees may resist change and it is important that leadership is aware of these factors and understands how to approach them. Resistance may come out of uncertainty, unfamiliarity, concerns about competence, disruption of daily work, job security, insufficient communication, bad experiences, etc.

Frederick Herzberg developed a two-factor theory called [the Motivation-Hygiene Theory](#). It states that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction, while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction; they act independently of each other. Herzberg found that motivators include achievement, recognition, growth or advancement, and interest in the job. Additionally, [LaMarsh](#), a leading CM firm, has conducted research on why people resist change and what motivates them.

Harvard Business Review's article ["Choosing Strategies for Change"](#) identifies several methods for managing resistance, participation, facilitation, negotiation, and coercion. Employees must be communicated to about desired changes and reasons for them, first and foremost. If resistance continues, leadership should move through the methods to solve the issues at hand.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT AT VA**

In 2010, VA undertook major transformation efforts with congressional support, via an initiative called ["Transformation 21"](#). The significant goals of the change dealt with technology improvements for Veterans. The CM elements included integrating technology staff, investing in information technology (IT), working with vendors to improve business, training personnel on project management and leadership, and overhauling contract vehicles. All in an effort to better Veteran service.

In 2016, VA set out to modernize the Department through [MyVA](#). This initiative was a framework to transform all of VA "by combining functions, simplifying operations, and providing Veterans care and services so that they see VA as MyVA, a world-class, customer-focused, Veteran-centered service organization." A top goal is to "transform OI&T," acknowledged in the critical enablers of the plan's priorities.

"In 2015, OI&T was at a crossroads. The rapid expansion of IT in our modern world created paradigm shifts in how individuals, commercial entities, academia, non-profits, and

governments interact, and the pace of change and tectonic shifts in the global economy found VA OI&T wholly unprepared to meet the changing needs of its business partners and the Veterans we serve.” The OI&T strategy was disconnected from the needs of their employees, business partners, and the Veterans served.

During this transition, OI&T focused on providing employees with a training curriculum to help facilitate organizational change. Detailed CM approaches and transition details can be found in the [OI&T’s Year of Transformation](#).

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the benefits of CM is that it minimizes resistance to change because organizations that implement CM plans are better prepared for resistance with a clear vision and strategy for the change. CM continues to benefit organizations, like VA, especially as leadership and technology evolves. There is no better way for VA to plan for change than to have leadership provide a clear vision and strategy for how to get through the change.

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