

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN

HOW TO LEAD IN CHANGING TIMES

THE LEADERSHIP FIELD GUIDE

Practical strategies for navigating change, supporting people, and leading with clarity.

ADKAR / COMMUNICATION / RESILIENCE / ACTION

POST-PROGRAM COMPANION

1 | The leader’s role during change

Translate enterprise decisions into everyday work. Listen before solving. Remove performance barriers. Reinforce progress after launch. Avoid five common traps: announcing only once, labeling concern as resistance, adding work without tradeoffs, promising certainty and treating launch as completion.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Try this: Ask three people what they think is changing. Compare their answers with the actual decision and identify the missing clarity.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What part of this change is still unclear in your day-to-day work?”

2 | Build a clear change story

Use FROM / TO / WHY / IMPACT / NEXT. State the current practice, the intended new practice, the validated rationale, the effect on specific tasks and the next step. Distinguish confirmed information from hypotheses. Keep the explanation short enough to repeat consistently.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Example: A reporting team moves to a shared platform. Review standards remain in place, but the handoff and exception steps change.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“Here is what is changing, why it matters for our work, and what we will do first.”

3 | Map uncertainty without false reassurance

KNOWN means confirmed facts; UNKNOWN means open questions with an owner and update date; STABLE means commitments and standards that remain; INFLUENCE means the team can shape implementation. Review this map whenever conditions change.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Example: Platform selected (known); final template pending (unknown); accuracy requirements remain (stable); users can suggest exception workflows (influence).

CONVERSATION STARTER

“I do not have that answer yet. I will confirm who owns it and update you by Friday.”

4 | Use ADKAR to select the right response

Prosci ADKAR is an individual change model: Awareness (why), Desire (will I), Knowledge (how), Ability (can I in real conditions) and Reinforcement (will it stick). Ask which need is unmet before prescribing more communication, training or accountability. People may have multiple needs.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

If a person knows the process but lacks permissions, focus on Ability. If they question the business rationale, focus on Awareness. If old spreadsheets remain the default, investigate Reinforcement.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What is getting in the way: the reason, the willingness, the steps, the real-world ability or the follow-through?”

ADKAR AT A GLANCE

Five building blocks of successful individual change

A

AWARENESS

Understand why the change is needed

Explain the purpose and the case for change.

D

DESIRE

Choose to participate and support

Listen to concerns and build meaningful buy-in.

K

KNOWLEDGE

Know what to do and how to do it

Provide learning, examples and job aids.

A

ABILITY

Put new skills into practice

Offer practice, access, coaching and support.

R

REINFORCEMENT

Make the new way of working stick

Recognize progress and remove old workarounds.

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Which ADKAR element needs attention for this person right now?

5 | Awareness and Desire strategies

For Awareness, explain the rationale in plain language, translate it locally and avoid unsupported promises. For Desire, listen for concerns about identity, trust, workload and choice. Invite participation only where there is genuine room to influence. Demonstrate what happened with the feedback.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

An experienced analyst may worry about losing valued expertise. Ask which safeguards and practical knowledge should be preserved.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What do you most want us to protect as we move to the new process?”

6 | Knowledge and Ability strategies

For Knowledge, demonstrate realistic tasks, create concise job aids and document exception paths. For Ability, check access, workflow dependencies and practice time. Observe the work, coach in context and remove friction. Training completion is not the same as performance.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

During a reporting peak, protected practice sessions and an escalation channel may be more useful than another broad webinar.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“Show me where the workflow becomes difficult in the actual task.”

7 | Reinforcement and adoption

Align leader requests, templates, quality checks and recognition with the new process. Check for workarounds and investigate why they persist. Use adoption measures such as successful task completion, exception trends and rework alongside employee feedback.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

If leaders still request the old report, the old behavior will remain attractive even after formal training.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What is making the new process easier to use, and what still pushes you back to the old way?”

8 | Support team emotions respectfully

Acknowledge feelings without diagnosing anyone. Ask what feels difficult and what practical support would help. Avoid dismissive phrases such as “just be positive.” Make it safe to raise defects and questions while preserving accountability and essential standards. Respect privacy and use appropriate organizational support channels when needed.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

An employee says the rollout feels overwhelming. Explore which deadlines, handoffs or expectations are colliding before interpreting the reaction as unwillingness.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“I can see this has been frustrating. Which part should we address first?”

9 | Reduce change-related strain on the team

Use STOP / PAUSE / SIMPLIFY / SUPPORT. Identify work that can end, move later, become lighter or receive resources. Protect time to learn. Establish short check-ins and a clear escalation path. During high-demand cycles, make explicit tradeoffs rather than silently adding new work.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

A team preparing for a close may need fewer optional meetings, phased training or temporary office hours.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“To make room for this change, what should we stop, delay, simplify or support?”

10 | Manage your own stress as a leader

Use NOTICE / PAUSE / NAME / CHOOSE. Identify your early warning signs; take a short reset; separate facts from assumptions; choose one constructive action. Sort issues into control, influence and outside control. Escalate competing priorities and set reasonable boundaries. Seek appropriate support when stress is persistent or impairing.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Before announcing a revised timeline, write down confirmed facts, your concerns and the next decision needed. Avoid transmitting unprocessed anxiety to the team.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“I have concerns about the timing too. Here is what is confirmed, what I am raising and what we can do next.”

11 | Communicate with clarity and cadence

Use WHAT / WHY / IMPACT / NEXT / VOICE. Make the impact local to specific tasks, handoffs and deadlines. A short five-minute huddle can cover updates, barriers, one priority and ownership. Follow through on open questions even when the answer remains pending.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Use the same concise structure in a team meeting, email and one-on-one; adjust detail to the audience.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“Here is what we know today, what remains open, and when you will hear from me next.”

12 | Navigate difficult conversations

ACKNOWLEDGE the concern; EXPLORE the task and evidence; ALIGN on requirements; AGREE on help, owner and follow-up. Empathy does not require removing accountability. Ask for specific examples rather than debating whether a person should feel concerned.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

When someone says “This cannot work,” ask which transaction, exception or deadline is failing, then solve or escalate the barrier.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“Help me understand exactly where the process breaks down so we can agree on the next step.”

13 | Coordinate across departments

Map upstream and downstream handoffs, identify owners and escalation routes, and surface conflicting schedules early. Avoid blaming another department when the issue is a dependency. Agree on the quality and timing of inputs and on how exceptions will be handled.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

A revised reporting workflow may require changes in data delivery, review timing and approval responsibility across multiple teams.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“Which handoff is most at risk, and who needs to be involved to resolve it?”

14 | Reinforce over the next 30 days

Week 1: listen and map. Week 2: demonstrate and practice. Week 3: observe real use and remove barriers. Week 4: review adoption, recognize progress and adjust. Use the cadence flexibly; complex changes may require longer.

APPLICATION / EXAMPLE

Track successful use, exception handling and recurring workarounds, not only training attendance.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“What is easier than last week, and what is still making this harder than it needs to be?”

YOUR FOUR-STEP CHANGE LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

REFLECTION 1 | Clarify and map

Change story: FROM / TO / WHY / IMPACT / NEXT. Known / Unknown / Stable / Influence.

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REFLECTION 2 | Diagnose needs

Two stakeholder groups; what they are saying; likely ADKAR barrier; matching response.

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REFLECTION 3 | Support and protect capacity

Two team stressors; stop/pause/simplify/support actions; personal reset and escalation boundary.

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REFLECTION 4 | Commit and follow through

Change message; three actions and owners; one adoption measure; 30-day review date.

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Model attribution

ADKAR is a change management model developed by Prosci. The examples and application tools in this booklet are educational adaptations for the workshop.