

"ABC COMPANY" - a model for change management

Overview

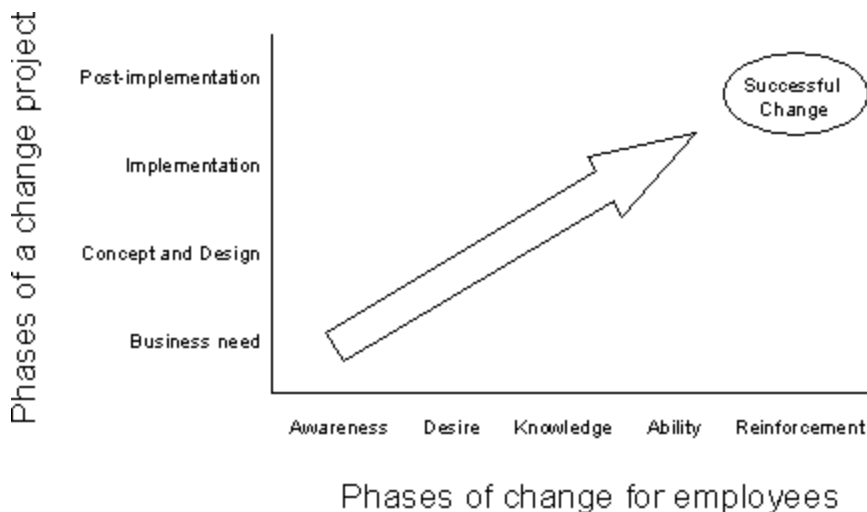
This tutorial presents an overview of the ABC COMPANY model for change management. This diagnostic tool helps employees understand where they are in the change process. As a manager, you can use this tool to identify gaps in your change management process and to provide effective coaching for your employees. The ABC COMPANY model can be used to:

- diagnose employee resistance
- help employees transition through the change process
- create a successful action plan for personal and professional advancement during change
- develop a change management plan for your employees

The ABC COMPANY model has the ability to identify why changes are not working and help you take the necessary steps to make the change successful. You will be able to break down the change into parts, understand where the change is failing and address that impact point.

The ABC COMPANY model is intended to be a coaching tool to help employees through the change process. The ABC COMPANY model is not an organizational change management model or strategy.

To use the ABC COMPANY model effectively, you will need to understand the underlying framework for change initiatives. In the diagram below, change happens on two dimensions: the business dimension (vertical axis) and the people dimension (horizontal axis). Successful change happens when both dimensions of change occur simultaneously.



People dimension of change

The people dimension of change is how employees experience the change process. Research shows that problems with this dimension of change is the most commonly cited reason for project failures. In a study with 248 companies, effective change management with employees was listed as one of the top-three overall success factors for the project. Helping managers be effective sponsors of change was considered the most critical success factor overall.

Effective management of the people dimension of change requires managing five key phases that form the basis of the ABC COMPANY model:

- **Awareness of the need to change**
- **Desire to participate and support the change**
- **Knowledge of how to change (and what the change looks like)**
- **Ability to implement the change on a day-to-day basis**
- **Reinforcement to keep the change in place**

The ABC COMPANY model

In the following scenarios, we look at the ABC COMPANY model with one work example and two personal examples. After reviewing these examples, you can complete an exercise for a change that is personal to you. This exercise is important for building understanding about the model and how it can be applied in different situations. A work scenario

If you are an employee in an organization undergoing change, your reaction to the change and how you are viewed by the organization will be directly affected by each of the five elements in the ABC COMPANY model.

Take for example the implementation of a new software tool. If the change is implemented and you believe it was not needed (i.e., you were not aware that any changes were required), then your reaction might be:

“This is a waste of time.”

“Why change if it was working just fine before?”

“If it ain't broke, don't fix it.”

“They never tell us what's going on!”

Our natural reaction to change, even in the best circumstances, is to resist. Awareness of the business need to change is a critical ingredient of any change and must come first.

If someone had taken the time to explain that the old software would no longer be supported by the vendor, and that new software was necessary to meet the needs of your customers, then your reaction (based on this awareness) would likely be very different:

“How soon will this happen?”

“How will this impact me?”

“Will I receive new training?”

Take this same example one step further. Assume you were made aware that a change was required, but you had no desire to participate or support the change.

“What's in it for me.”

“I doubt they are really serious about this.”

Now the tables are turned, and you may become the target of an emotional response from individuals within the organization. You may be labeled as difficult, inflexible or unsupportive. Some may say you lack initiative or vision. You may be called a cynic or pessimist.

Awareness and desire are two critical components of the change model. In the personal examples that follow, you will see how the other elements of the model play a role in a successful change.

Examples from personal experience

Changing a child's behavior

Changing unwanted behavior in children follows the ABC COMPANY model well. Children first need to know what they are doing is wrong. This awareness often comes when an upset parent tells the child he is doing something wrong. Simply knowing it is wrong, however, will not stop most children. Their natural inclination is to test the boundaries and push the limits.

Consequences, either positive or negative, are usually required. These consequences impact the child's desire to change. However, the process cannot stop here. Given proper motivation to change, children need a role model to understand what the proper behavior looks like. They need examples to give them the knowledge of what the correct behavior is.

Next, they need practice. Few children can change immediately; it is an ongoing process requiring them to develop new skills and habits. They need time to develop the ability to act in a new way.

Finally, children need reinforcement to keep the good behavior going. This may be in the form of positive encouragement or other types of rewards.

This example highlighted all five elements of the ABC COMPANY model.

Coaching a sport

In this case study example, a parent was attempting to improve the batting style and skill of his son playing baseball. Dad was concerned that his son's batting was not up to the level of the other boys on the team. He searched the Internet for batting videos and purchased a tape for his son. For weeks he tried to get his son to watch the video on batting mechanics. With some parental persuasion, Dad was able to get his son to watch part of the tape. After that, the video was left untouched.

The father's attempt to educate his son failed and resulted only in a frustrated parent. He finally sat down with his son and asked him why he would not watch the tape and use it to improve his batting. His son replied that he just enjoyed playing baseball with his friends, and it did not matter to him if his batting was as good as some of the other boys.

In this example the father skipped steps in the ABC COMPANY model (from awareness to knowledge). His son had no desire to change and was content just to be out there playing the game. Dad's efforts to build knowledge failed because his son lacked the desire to change.

The power of the ABC COMPANY model is that it creates focus on the first element that is the root cause of failure. When you approach change using this model, you can immediately identify where the process is breaking down and which elements are being overlooked. This avoids generic conversations about the change that rarely produce actionable steps.

ABC COMPANY can help you plan effectively for a new change or diagnose why a current change is failing. In some cases, corrective action can be taken and the change successfully implemented. Here are the five steps again.

1. Awareness of the need for change.
2. Desire to make the change happen.
3. Knowledge about how to change.
4. Ability to implement new skills and behaviors.
5. Reinforcement to retain the change once it has been made.

Now it's your turn.

The best way to understand the usefulness of this type of model for business change management is to apply the model to a personal situation. Using a situation you are personally close to will help separate the key elements of the ABC COMPANY model.

Begin by identifying a change you are having difficulty making in another person (a friend, family member or work associate). Complete the worksheets to the best of your ability, rating each area on a scale of 0% to 100%.

Be sure you select a change you have been trying to make happen in a friend, colleague or family member that is not working regardless of your continued efforts. Answer and assign a score for the following questions.

Exercise

The change. Briefly describe the personal change you are trying to implement with a friend, family member or work associate:

1. **Awareness.** List the reasons you believe the change is necessary. Review these reasons and rate the degree to which the person you are trying to change is aware of the reasons or need to change (0% - 100%).

2. **Desire.** List the factors or consequences (good and bad) for this person that create a desire to change. Consider these motivating factors, including the person's conviction in these factors and the associated consequences. Rate his/her desire to change (0% - 100%).

3. **Knowledge.** List the skills and knowledge needed to support the change, including if the person has a clear picture of what the change looks like. Rate this person's knowledge or level of training in these areas (0% - 100%).

4. **Ability.** Considering the skills and knowledge identified in the previous question, evaluate the person's ability to perform these skills or act on this knowledge. To what percent do you rate this person's ability to implement the new skills, knowledge and behaviors to support the change (0% - 100%)?

5. **Reinforcement.** List the reinforcements that will help to retain the change. Are incentives in place to reinforce the change and make it stick? To what percent do you rate the reinforcements as helping support the change (0% - 100%)?

Now transfer your scores from each worksheet to the table shown in Figure 1. Take a moment to review your scores. Highlight those areas that scored a 50% or below, and identify (using the order listed on the score sheet) which was the first area to score less than 50%.

Brief description of the change: _____	Percent true or complete
1. <i>Awareness</i> of the need to change? Notes: _____	
2. <i>Desire</i> to make the change happen? Notes: _____	
3. <i>Knowledge</i> about how to change? Notes: _____	
4. <i>Ability</i> to change? Notes: _____	
5. <i>Reinforcement</i> to retain the change? Notes: _____	

Now consider the first area in which your score was 50% or below. You must address this area before anything else is done. For example, if you identified awareness as the area with a low score, then working on desire, knowledge or skill development will not help you make the change happen.

On the other hand, if you identified desire, then continually repeating your reasons for change is not adequate to move this person forward. Once they know these reasons, you must address their inherent desire to change. Desire may stem from negative or positive consequences. The negative consequences have to be great enough to overcome their personal threshold to resist change (same for the positive consequences).

If knowledge was the area you identified, then you want to be careful not to dwell on the reasons for change and the motivating factors. This could be discouraging for someone already at this phase. What is needed is education and training for the skills and behaviors that are needed for change.

If ability was the area selected with the low score, then several steps are required to move forward.

- The person will need time to develop new skills and behaviors. Just like learning a new sport or any new skill, time is required to develop new abilities.

- The person will need ongoing coaching and support. No one-time training event or educational program will substitute for ongoing coaching and mentoring.

- Outside intervention or support may be required.

Finally, if reinforcement was the area identified, then you will need to investigate if the necessary elements are present to keep the person from reverting to old behaviors. Address the incentives or consequences for not continuing to act in the new way.

Now that you have completed the ABC COMPANY model for a personal change, you can follow the same process for the change happening at work. This process should give you insight as to where you are in the change process,

and what steps you can take to not only survive change, but advance professionally in a changing business environment.

You can think of organizational and personal change in the context of the ABC COMPANY model. If you are deploying a major change in your organization, then a critical step in change management is organizational **awareness** of the reasons for change. **Desire** to change at the employee level must be addressed as resistance will be a natural reaction to change. As the change moves into implementation, you will need to develop **knowledge** about the change and the **ability** to implement new skills and behaviors. Once the change is in place, you will need to **reinforce** the change to avoid moving backwards to old behaviors.