The Change Operating Model

Build Transformational Infrastructure

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Executive Summary

## ↗ The Future is a Change Operating Model

For decades, change management has insisted that applying a structured methodology leads to better adoption. But the industry still anchors its case on a 70% failure rate cited in a McKinsey white paper from the Reagan era. **When the evidence of failure remains constant, it's fair to question whether the proposed fix is addressing the real issue.**

Consider how we got here. In 1995, Kotter gave us eight steps. Prosci gave us an acronym. The industry gave us certifications, slide decks, and billable hours. We've spent 30 years redesigning the same wheel—and calling it progress. If we want different outcomes, **we need to think about change, differently.**

The future lies in our ability to imagine and execute beyond what we can do today. That doesn't mean abandoning change methodologies; rather, it means shifting our efforts to strengthening how they perform in today's dynamic ecosystem. **It's time to start creating change-operating models (COM).**

A Change Operating Model is the structural backbone that allows organizations to manage transformation at scale without exhausting their workforce.

Client Maturity Growth
Adoptlab's 7 Design Elements
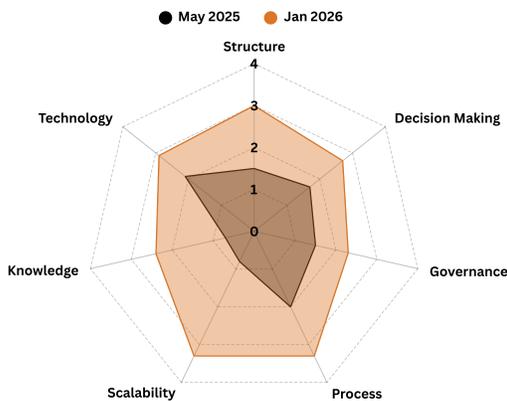
● May 2025   ● Jan 2026

It brings clarity to roles, decision-making, sequencing, knowledge sharing, and technology enablement—turning fragmented change activity into a disciplined enterprise capability.

By shifting from fragmented efforts to a coordinated system, organizations accelerate adoption, reduce change saturation, and improve financial performance. **Companies that remain in the status quo—resourcing change initiative by initiative—will continue to face rising costs, inconsistent execution, and unrealized transformation value.**

30%

Improvement in change operational performance*

5-10x

Increase in speed for change related decision making

45%

Increase in employee engagement

Client COM outomes
Case study on page 08

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*Measured by process improvements & removing hand-overs while driving continious improvement

An Inflection Point

↗ The Need To Evolve

Organizational change management stands at an inflection point. The discipline must evolve beyond its current obsession with methodologies — or risk continuing to be seen as a "nice-to-have" only on the biggest projects rather than a strategic capability.

We believe there are four reasons why OCM must evolve:

First, change is no longer episodic. Businesses operate in a state of permanent transformation. OCM must shift from supporting projects to enabling enterprise agility.

Second, decision-making is the fulcrum of transformation success. It determines whether change gains traction or dissolves into debate. In today's fast-moving ecosystem, delayed or fragmented decisions amplify risk and fatigue.

Third, organizations are in desperate need of scalability. The traditional model — building a team for each initiative — is financially unsustainable in a multi-project environment.

Fourth, employees' expectations have evolved to now demand better experiences. Without portfolio-level coordination, overlapping change activities and competing priorities erode trust.

For >30 years, study after study has shown that major transformations struggle to achieve sustained adoption and promised returns. Yet organizations continue applying largely unchanged change management approaches. The results speak for themselves: strong frameworks, inconsistent execution, and unrealized value.

The future of OCM isn't in methodologies or in recreating them. Organizations that treat change as infrastructure will outperform those that treat it as support. Because transformation is no longer something companies do. It is something they live inside.

The discipline must evolve accordingly.

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What's Needed

Enable enterprise agility

Streamline decision making

Capacity to scale

Portfolio level coordination

Organizations that treat change as infrastructure will outperform those that treat it as support.

From OCM to COM

↗ What is an Operating Model

An operating model (OM) is the backbone of how a company, or a function within, delivers value to its customers, operates day-to-day, and achieves its strategic objectives. In today's dynamic business landscape, having an effective, well-defined OM is crucial for achieving long-term success. A healthy OM serves as a guiding framework for decision-making, prioritization, resourcing, innovation, and many other critical activities—all in the service of improving efficiency and generating sustainable value.

The use of operating models to guide businesses has expanded from the enterprise level to departments. It's now common for IT, HR, and Supply Chain functions to have developed OMs for their own operations. Each is designed to elevate and strengthen the delivery of specific activities that contribute to the greater good.

↗ The Change Operating Model (COM)

Measurable Outcomes

Alignment - resources, activities, and accountabilities are aligned to strategy

Delivery excellence - accelerated workflows, tech-enabled, & frictionless to provide a consistent experience

Adaptability - a change-ready workforce that's equipped to rapidly adopt new behaviors and perform through uncertainty

Improved financial performance - Employee adoption leads to greater value-realization and long-term success

A change operating model is the enterprise blueprint that outlines how an organization manages transformation at scale by building the infrastructure required to support today's velocity. It clarifies roles, governance, tools, and performance measures so multiple initiatives can drive adoption without overwhelming the workforce or duplicating effort.

The COM is not just about structure, the boxes and lines of a traditional org chart; it encompasses a broader set of elements that work together as a system to build efficiency.

Performance is improved by integrating decision rights, standardized processes, scalable capacity, and data-driven adoption metrics. The COM reduces friction, lowers marginal cost per initiative, and accelerates time-to-value.

The result is not just better organization—it is stronger, more predictable performance.

Design Elements

Adoptlab's approach to effective change operating model design focuses on 7 specific elements. When aligned, they have a significant effect on employee experience, adoption, and financial performance, regardless of the change's size or impact. A well-designed change operating model can transform a set of fractured activities into a strategic business capability.

Structure

Structure determines how change is organized & embedded across the enterprise. Without it, initiatives remain fragmented, creating inconsistency & duplicated efforts.

Decision Making

Clear decision-making authority accelerates adoption and protects transformation momentum. Visible, decisive leadership increases employee confidence and reduces uncertainty.

Governance

Defines reporting cadences, risk thresholds, sponsorship expectations, and adoption KPIs. This alignment reduces change saturation and ensures initiatives are sequenced intentionally.

Processes & Policies

Standardized processes & policies create repeatability in how change is planned and executed. Predictability improves employee adoption and builds confidence across the workforce.

Scalability

Provides shared capacity, coordinated change activities, and intentional sequencing across the portfolio. Financially, scalability lowers the marginal cost per initiative by leveraging shared infrastructure.
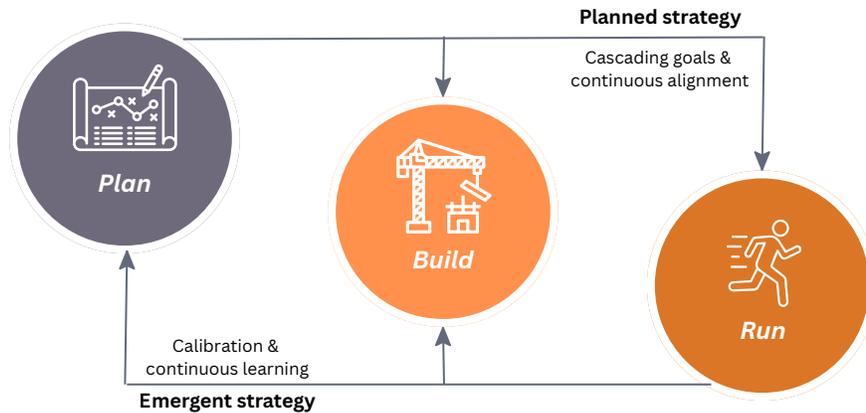
Knowledge

Reduces ramp time for new initiatives & lowers reliance on external consultants. Accumulated experience builds maturity, enabling more predictable adoption outcomes and strengthening long-term transformation capability.

Technology

Integrated into the operating model, technology transforms change management into a data-driven, scalable capability that supports sustained transformation success.

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Our Advantage

Planned strategy

Cascading goals & continuous alignment

Plan

Build

Run

Calibration & continuous learning

Emergent strategy

Establishing a change operating model is not a workshop exercise – it is an infrastructure decision. That is why Adoptlab's approach to the Plan–Build–Run model is uniquely effective.

During Plan, Adoptlab works with executive stakeholders to design the structural backbone: governance standards, decision rights, capacity model, success metrics, and integration with transformation portfolios. This phase ensures the model reflects business reality rather than theory.

In Build, infrastructure is created. The change methodology is standardized, leader roles are defined, knowledge is disseminated, portfolio-level governance is instituted, and change capacity is aligned to priority initiatives. The COM becomes tangible and repeatable.

In Run, Adoptlab operates alongside the organization, flexing managed change resources across programs. Lessons aren't just captured; they are implemented. Change maturity increases, and the COM evolves based on live performance data and stakeholder feedback.

This progression ensures scalability. Instead of resourcing change project by project, we reduce risk by helping the organization establish a shared enterprise capability with capacity that compounds over time. Plan–Build–Run transforms change from reactive support into a durable, measurable operating function powered by Adoptlab.

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COM Case Study
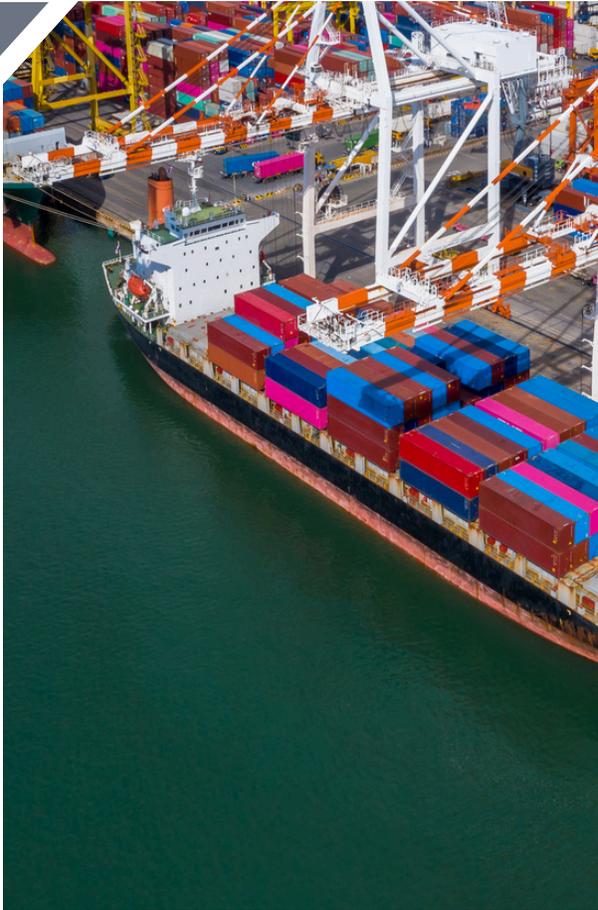
↗ Challenge

Our client, a growing international consumer goods company, approached us with several pressing challenges:

Inconsistent Change Performance

Frustrated with OCM results on a CRM transformation & concerned that current partner lacked a plan to recover

Varible Costs

OCM investment spiked to >$2m in 2024 (200% increase vs. PY) & was trending to exceed $3m in 2025.

Congested Roadmap

Client's "Vision 2028" roadmap included the modernization of critical IT applications & a business reorganization.

↗ Solution

Adoptlab's team immediately began OCM work on 6 enterprise projects (including re-adoption activities for their CRM). In parallel, we conducted a comprehensive audit and developed a roadmap to build a change operating model that overlaid operations, HR, and IT functions. To reduce risk to Vision 2028, we prioritized 3 of the 7 design elements: Decision Making, Scalability, & Knowledge.

↗ Outcomes

Within 3 months, OCM costs had stabilized & a clear Vision 2028 roadmap with key adoption OKRs & change resource plan was approved. A 65% reduction in decision latency accelerated execution across the organization. CRM adoption increased by 160%. In addition, 80+ people managers completed Adoptlab's Change Coach training. With another 50 planned to complete it in early 2026.

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A Word on Culture

Adoptlab does not include "culture" as a discrete element of the change operating model because culture is not an input — it is an outcome.

Culture reflects repeated behaviors, reinforced decisions, leadership norms, and operating discipline over time. It cannot be designed directly. It is shaped indirectly through structure, governance, decision-making, and reinforcement mechanisms.

Furthermore, elevating culture as a standalone pillar often distracts from the systems that actually drive behavioral change. Organizations say they want a "culture of accountability" or a "culture of innovation," yet fail to align incentives, decision rights, or performance metrics accordingly. Too often, organizations chase "culture change" as though it were a deliverable — a future-state ideal that can be declared once achieved.

> Elevating culture as a standalone pillar often distracts from the systems that actually drive behavioral change.

We believe culture is a mirage on the change journey for 3 reasons:
1. It is abstract — difficult to measure and easy to debate.
2. It is lagging — it follows behavior; it does not precede it.
3. It is aspirational — often defined by values statements rather than operational discipline.

Instead of targeting culture directly, Adoptlab embeds change into structure, governance, processes, and technology. These levers produce observable behavioral shifts. Over time, those reinforced behaviors reshape norms. Culture is the shadow cast by operating discipline — not a lever in itself.

Company Overview

↗ About Us

Adoptlab was founded to move beyond the constraints of traditional organizational change management thinking to deliver greater value to you —our partners.

Today, we are the first (& only) OCM-managed services provider. Our unique delivery model puts client adoption needs first by eliminating scale and costs as blockers to success. Unbound by these controls, we have the freedom of choice to act in your best interest as a true change partner.

↗ Mission

Our mission is to accelerate employee adoption across your transformation portfolio — delivering measurable results while lowering the cost and complexity of scaling organizational change management.

↗ Approach

Our operating model gives you the expertise you need when you need it most, all without the cost and hassle of building an in-house OCM team or using pricey consultants on a project-by-project basis.

Adoptlab's managed capability model establishes a "Change Lab" that works alongside your team to empower your organization and drive mission-critical adoption — and it's transforming outcomes.

2023
Founded

20+
Change Practitioners

110+
Successful Projects

1
Change partner for all your needs

Service Offering

Change Operating Model

Long-term strategic capability is built through a fit-for-purpose change operating model that leverages the scalability of our Enterprise Change Lab to run. Unbound capacity & capability stand atop infrastructure that ensures enterprise agility to achieve transformational objectives.

- Everything in the Enterprise Change Lab, plus the COM audit, roadmap, and required activities to build the infrastructure
- Bi-annual COM executive performance report

Requires a minimum 2-year Service Level Agreement

Enterprise Change Lab

The Enterprise Change Lab is for organizations transforming at scale — many overlapping initiatives, high regulatory or risk exposure, commonly resistant user populations, or when change is coming from multiple departments.

- Everything in the Department Change Lab expanded across your enterprise
- Change Coach training to up-skill people managers
- Adoption platform (WalkMe / WhatFix) management, if applicable

Department Change Lab

The Change Lab partners directly with your leadership and project teams to improve adoption and related business outcomes. This provides you with a solid core of change management capabilities to ensure employees are prepared, trained, and supported across your entire portfolio of department projects.

- Fixed OCM Investment for department's entire change portfolio
- On-demand Prosci® ADKAR-trained change talent that scales
- Re-adoption activities on past initiatives that could use support

Unmatched Value

When you're on a mission to help clients build organizational change management capabilities by making it scalable & more affordable, your value proposition has to be the best on the market.

Mission accomplished!

Fixed Investment

We eliminate the guesswork from change funding. A fixed investment replaces variable consulting spend, while our managed services model removes the endless churn of SOW negotiations and RFP cycles. The result: faster mobilization, cleaner governance, and clearer ROI.

The Change Lab

The right talent at the right scale drives results. Our on-demand Lab of Prosci® ADKAR-trained change experts adjusts to match evolving project risk and workload—without adding fixed headcount or consulting premiums. You gain flexibility and expertise without the long-term cost burden.

Change Coach Training

Through our Change Coach training, executives and people leaders build the skills required to guide teams through the chaos of continuous transformation. The program sharpens strategic judgment, strengthens influence, and equips leaders to drive adoption even amid rapid disruption.

Adoption Planform Management

Technology is a critical element of a Change Operating Model, particularly as digital adoption platforms continue to expand. Whether you use WalkMe or Whatfix today—or are evaluating them—Adoptlab's team can plan, implement, and manage the platform on your behalf, saving you time, cost, and operational complexity.

Success Stories

↗ Enterprise Change Lab

A multi-site manufacturer navigating a merger needed more than communications support — it required coordinated execution across ERP consolidation, supply chain redesign, and organizational restructuring.

↗ Challenge

Minimize risk as the client navigated overlapping systems, duplicated roles, and cultural uncertainty across 4,000 employees.

↗ Outcomes

Adoptlab implemented an Enterprise Change Lab, establishing enterprise-level governance and flexing change capacity across >10 initiatives. Instead of experiencing attrition spikes common in mergers, the company maintained workforce stability. Production continuity remained intact, and cross-site collaboration improved.

↗ IT Change Lab

When a global pharmaceutical company modernized its digital ecosystem — including cloud platforms, data integration, and AI-enabled analytics — it faced change fatigue across research, manufacturing, and commercial teams.

↗ Challenge

Minimize operational disruption while ensuring adoption across 6 critical projects under high regulatory scrutiny.

↗ Outcomes

Adoptlab implemented an IT Change Lab to sequence initiatives and flex change resources to high-priority projects. Portfolio-level coordination reduced overlapping communications and impact to operations. Adoption metrics tied directly to productivity and the cycle times demonstrated measurable performance gains within the first six months.

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