

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Game Changer for Program Management

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

xiii

PART I ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND SETTING EXPECTATIONS DURING PROGRAM DEFINITION

CHAPTER 1	STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	3
1.1	Understanding Strategic Fit	4
1.1.1	Initiative Selection through a Steering Committee	6
1.1.2	Initiative Selection When There Is No Steering Committee	7
1.1.3	Gathering Information—Interviewing Key Stakeholders	7
1.1.4	Pulling It All Together	8
1.2	Providing Input to Stakeholders: Know When and How to Push	9
1.2.1	Creating a Business Case	11
1.2.2	Estimating Cost Information	11
1.2.3	Documenting Assumptions	13
1.2.4	Presenting Cost Estimates: Stakeholder Conversations	15
1.2.5	Presenting the Business Case: Governance	16
1.3	Related Program Methodology	16
1.4	Summary	16

CHAPTER 2	MAKING GOVERNANCE WORK FOR YOU	19
2.1	Preparing for Governance	20
2.1.1	Governance Pre-Meetings	21
2.1.2	Organizational Research—Meet with Other Program Managers	21
2.1.3	Stakeholder Pre-Meetings	22
2.1.4	Meeting with “The Interrogator”	24
2.2	Governance Survival	25
2.2.1	Setting the Tone	25
2.2.2	Getting through Approvals	25
2.2.3	Optimize Governance to Your Advantage	26
2.2.4	Using Soft Skills to Manage Conflict	28
2.3	Related Program Methodology	30
2.4	Summary: A Step-by-Step Guide to Maximize Governance	30
CHAPTER 3	IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS: THE “HIDDEN” ORGANIZATION CHART	33
3.1	Building Your Program “House”	34
3.2	Finding Power Influencers	35
3.2.1	Tapping into the Organization—Coffee Chats	36
3.2.2	More Coffee—Identifying the Next Layer of Stakeholders	38
3.2.3	Social Network Tools	40
3.2.4	Organizational Network Analysis	41
3.2.5	Creating an Organizational Network Analysis	43
3.3	Additional Tools for Synthesizing Stakeholder Data	46
3.3.1	The Power Map	47
3.3.2	Creating a Responsibility Matrix	49
3.4	Related Methodology	50
3.5	Summary	50
CHAPTER 4	IT IS A MATTER OF TRUST: BUILDING STRONG BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS	53
4.1	Setting Expectations with Key Stakeholders	53
4.2	Five Principles of Building Strong Business Relationships	56
4.2.1	Do What You Say You Are Going to Do	56
4.2.2	Try to Make Sure There Are No Surprises	58
4.2.3	Create a Mutually Beneficial Business Relationship	59
4.2.4	Remember That Executives and Customers Are People, Too	61
4.2.5	Always Show Respect	62
4.3	Summary	63

CHAPTER 5	LEVERAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR CHANGE	65
5.1	Change Management Theory—High-Level View	68
5.2	ADAPT—A Simplified Change Management Model for Program Managers	70
5.3	Applying the ADAPT Change Model to Stakeholder Quadrants	73
5.3.1	Power Players	74
5.3.2	Danger Zone	75
5.3.3	Informants	76
5.3.4	Sleepers	78
CHAPTER 6	ENHANCING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	81
6.1	The Difference between Program Management and Project Management Communications	82
6.2	Communication Methods “Menu”	83
6.3	Creating a Communications Strategy and a Communications Plan	85
6.4	Targeted Communication Methods by Stakeholder Quadrant	89
6.4.1	Communicating with Power Players Quadrant (High Interest, High Influence)	89
6.4.2	Communication with the Danger Zone Quadrant (Low Interest, High Influence)	92
6.4.3	Communicating with the Informants Quadrant (High Interest, Low Influence)	93
6.4.4	Communicating with the Sleepers Quadrant (Low Interest, Low Influence)	95
PART II	READY, SET, EXECUTE: DRIVING PROGRAM BENEFITS DELIVERY THROUGH ACTIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	
CHAPTER 7	DEMYSTIFYING METRICS: MEASURING WHAT MATTERS MOST	99
7.1	Measuring Program Performance: Key Performance Indicators	99
7.2	Measuring Performance: Metrics	101
7.2.1	Examples of Metrics	102
7.2.2	Metrics for Measuring Project Components of Your Program	102
7.2.3	Presenting Metrics to Your Stakeholders	103
7.2.4	Metrics: How Much Is Too Much?	104
7.3	Defining Key Performance Indicators for Your Program	105

7.3.1	SMART Key Performance Indicators	105
7.3.2	KPIs: A SMART Example	106
7.4	Driving Stakeholder Engagement through Performance Management	107
7.5	Summary	107
CHAPTER 8	MAKING MEETINGS COUNT: DRIVING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DISCIPLINED MEETING MANAGEMENT	109
8.1	How to Run Effective Meetings	110
8.1.1	Top Five Rules for Running Effective Meetings	110
8.1.1.1	Rule 1: Always Pre-Send an Agenda, with Times and Owners Associated with Each Topic	110
8.1.1.2	Rule 2: Stick to the Agenda	111
8.1.1.3	Rule 3: Establish and Share Ground Rules (Then Enforce Them)	112
8.1.1.4	Rule 4: Assign a Scribe to Document All Key Decisions and Action Items, with Owners and Due Dates	113
8.1.1.5	Rule 5: Send Meeting Notes with Key Decisions and Action Items, Then Monitor to Follow-Up on Due Dates	114
8.1.2	Tips to Create a Positive Meeting Environment	114
8.1.3	Meeting Variations	115
8.1.3.1	Large Group Virtual Meetings	115
8.1.3.2	Small Group or One-on-One Meetings	118
8.2	Types of Meetings, When to Have Them, and Who Should Attend	119
8.2.1	Meeting Type: Planning Meetings	119
8.2.2	Meeting Type: Program Status Meetings	121
8.2.3	Meeting Type: Governance Meetings	121
8.2.4	One-on-One Meetings	123
8.3	Common Pitfalls of Ineffective Meetings	124
8.4	Summary	125
CHAPTER 9	WHERE THE REAL WORK GETS DONE: ISSUE RESOLUTION THROUGH INFORMAL GOVERNANCE	127
9.1	Monthly Program Status Updates	128
9.2	Weekly Program Status Updates	130
9.3	Using Project Health Stoplights Effectively	132

9.4	Caution: Yellow Light—Four Steps to Effectively Manage Risks and Issues	135
9.4.1	Step 1: Identify the Issue or Risk	135
9.4.2	Step 2: Assess the Issue or Risk	136
9.4.3	Step 3: Present Options for Issue/Risk Resolution	137
9.4.4	Step 4: Take Action	137
9.5	Practicing the Four-Step Issue Resolution: An Example	138
9.5.1	Step 1: Identify the Issue	138
9.5.2	Step 2: Assess the Issue	139
9.5.3	Step 3: Present the Options	139
9.5.4	Step 4: Take Action	140
9.6	Summary	140
CHAPTER 10	OFFICE POLITICS: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING	141
10.1	Managing Up and Managing Down	142
10.2	Your Informal Network and Influence on Office Politics	143
10.3	Addressing Whispering Campaigns	146
10.4	Handling Cross-Departmental Negotiations	147
10.5	Summary	151
PART III	KEEPING STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED: PROGRAM CLOSURE	
CHAPTER 11	MAKING A STRONG FINISH: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PROGRAM CLOSURE	155
11.1	People	156
11.2	Process	159
11.3	Technology	161
11.4	Culture	162
11.5	Preparing for the Operational Readiness Meeting	163
11.6	Summary	164
CHAPTER 12	POST-LAUNCH: EVERY END IS A NEW BEGINNING	167
12.1	Post-Launch Review	167
12.2	Lessons Learned	169
12.2.1	Characteristics of a Lessons Learned Meeting	169
12.2.2	How to Run a Lessons Learned Meeting	170
12.2.3	Documentation and Repository	173
12.3	Celebrate Success	173
12.4	Summary	175
REFERENCES		177

APPENDIX A: CASE STUDY AND STUDY QUESTIONS	179
with Stephanie Gambro, PMP	
APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY	195
APPENDIX C: ACRONYM LIST	199
INDEX	201

LEVERAGING STAKEHOLDERS TO PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR CHANGE

Picture this: Program Manager Paul has been asked to oversee the implementation of a software suite that encompasses multiple functional areas and is expected to change the way his organization does business. Both time and money are short, so Paul works with his program team to put together an aggressive plan. He drives his team hard, hits all of the milestone dates, and miraculously stays within budget. The system works per the requirements set forth at the beginning of the program. All seems rosy, but is it? A month after go-live, Paul's boss checks in with the executive team to see how things are going, expecting to hear positive things. Instead he gets blasted with negative feedback; although the system works fine, operationally things are falling apart. What went wrong?

The majority of the time with a scenario like this one, the downfall is due to lack of organizational change readiness. You may deliver a new system as in Paul's case that meets every requirement, and yet the program is still considered a failure because of poor user adoption. If your extended stakeholder group does not understand or buy into how business process changes, it does not matter how pretty or robust a system is in place, no one will use it, resulting in a major impact to business critical processes and a failure to realize program benefits.

Change is all around us and influences every business. There are both internal and external forces of change. External forces include things such as changes in the economy, environment, legislation, and globalization. One prime example is the recent economic recession; almost every business is impacted in the case of such extreme economic change and pressure, which is due to many related variables, such as increased scrutiny on spending and a pullback in investing in new products or technology. Another example is a natural disaster; such an



Figure 5.1 Factors Influencing Organizational Change

event could drive different demands in some cases, or may drive supply shortages in others, for example. Internal forces come from within a company and also have an impact on organizational change. Internal factors include corporate mission and strategy, mergers and acquisitions, and organizational structure. If two companies merge together, for example, the strategies and cultures of the companies become entwined, and the combined priorities are almost certainly different than when the companies were separate entities. These are just a few examples of the many factors that drive change. There are forces everywhere, both internal and external, that drive change in organizations. Figure 5.1 illustrates some of these factors, with external factors on the left half of the diagram with darker boxes, and internal factors are illustrated on the right half of the diagram in the lighter boxes.

Prosci, a leader in the change management space, defines *change management* as

the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the people side of change to achieve a desired outcome. Change management emphasizes the “people side” of change and targets leadership within all levels of an organization including executives, senior leaders, middle managers and line supervisors. When change management is done well, people feel engaged in the change process and work collectively towards a common objective, realizing benefits and delivering results. (Prosci 2014, <http://www.prosci.com/change-management/definition/>)

Every program is born out of the need to respond to change. Further, every program has a human change component to it. People are naturally resistant to change; therefore, as a program manager you need to understand the relevant forces of change on your program, and how your program will impact both internal and external stakeholders. A successful program manager understands and plans for elements of change in his or her program and ensures program success by guiding stakeholders to understand and help drive positive change. In particular, three areas of change need to be carefully managed throughout any program: people, process, and technology (Figure 5.2).

The importance of change management is often misunderstood. There are usually not enough resources allocated for change management to begin with, and when budgets start to get cut, change management elements are often the first to go. As a rough guideline, at least 10% of your resources should be allocated for change management. The time spent in this area should be focused on engaging your key stakeholders so that they are part of the change process. Are you not sure how to do this? This chapter focuses first on change management theory to help drive in change management concepts and the importance of change management. The second part introduces

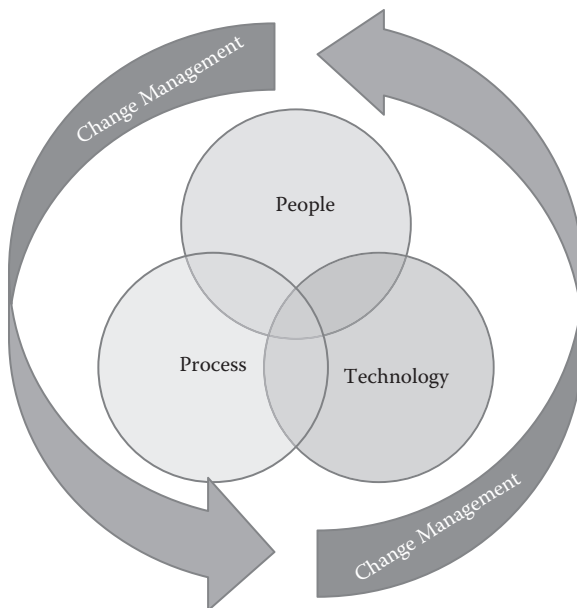


Figure 5.2 Primary Areas of Change to Be Managed

a simple change management model that you may use as a guide to incorporate change management activities into your program plans. After learning the foundational elements of change management and reviewing a change management model, the focus shifts to how to implement the change management elements for each of the four stakeholder quadrants. Focused change management efforts by quadrant help drive engagement and therefore adoption of program-associated changes across the organization.

5.1 Change Management Theory—High-Level View

Change management theory is by no means a new concept. This section provides a brief overview of the predominant change management theories of Deming, Kubler-Ross, and Kotter. W. Edwards Deming introduced his change model in the 1950s. His model is commonly known as the *Deming cycle*, also sometimes referred to as PDCA, an acronym for the four steps of plan, do, check, and act. The four steps stand for

Plan: Determine objectives and identify related processes to achieve targeted results based on those objectives.

Do: Execute the processes identified in the *plan* step, and collect related data.

Check: Analyze the results, and compare against expected outcomes. Look for any trends or deviations.

Act: Based on the identified deviations, determine the appropriate corrective actions to be taken to attempt to improve the process in question. Put those actions in place, then start the cycle again, planning for expected results using the new “improved” process, executing the improved process, analyzing the results of the improved process, and revising the process further based on collected data.

These four steps create a never-ending cycle, intended to drive continuous process improvement. Where Deming’s model heavily focuses on the process side of change, it does not address the human element. This is where the next important change theory comes in—Kubler-Ross’ *change curve*.

If you have ever taken a psychology course, you may have learned about the five stages of grieving. The five stages of grieving were

defined by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 publication, *On Death and Dying*. The five stages are as follows:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

You may be asking what the five stages of grieving have to do with program management. The connection is this: people are greatly impacted by change, and even in the business world, change is ever present and in some cases can be traumatic. The impact of change varies in intensity depending on the situation, but there is always a human element. Driving human acceptance of change is an essential element to successful business transformation.

Kubler-Ross' concepts as applied to the business world define four stages in the journey of human acceptance of change. These steps make up what is commonly known as the *change curve*. The four stages are

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Exploration
4. Acceptance

As a program manager, you should take actions to attempt to reduce the feelings of uncertainty and anger and help people along to the stages of exploration and acceptance. Communications should be tailored according to where stakeholders are relative to the stages within the change curve. Later in the chapter, tips are provided on which communication methods work best based on the needs of each group of stakeholders.

Where Deming focuses heavily on the process side of change, and Kubler-Ross focuses on the human side of change, Kotter takes a different tactic with his *eight-step change model*, outlined in his 1996 book, *Leading Change*. In Kotter's model, the emphasis is on creating urgency and putting together a team of power players to drive change (Kotter 2008). The eight steps identified in his top-down approach are as follows:

1. Create urgency
2. Form a powerful coalition
3. Create a vision for change
4. Communicate the vision
5. Remove obstacles
6. Create short-term wins
7. Build on the change
8. Anchor the changes in corporate culture

Even though there are a lot of good aspects to Kotter's model, especially on ensuring that there is leadership and change acceptance at the top, one common criticism is that because it is a top-down model, it may limit participation at lower levels of the organization. In really large organizations in particular, top-down communications may not make it down more than a level or two, resulting in a large percentage of employees not receiving the key change messages. Another criticism is that it does not take the human grieving stages into account as defined in the Kubler-Ross model. Having said that, many organizations successfully follow Kotter's process, and it is highly regarded as a relevant change model in the business world.

Where does this leave us? With the background on three key change models, it is evident that the need for change management has been around for a long time, and that there is no perfect way to deal with it. There are elements in each of these models that are useful. I have merged pieces together into my own simplified change management approach that I use when planning for change as a program manager. In the next section I provide this program-management-focused approach.

5.2 ADAPT—A Simplified Change Management Model for Program Managers

I always appreciate a good mnemonic. To help remember the necessary steps for managing change in a program, think ADAPT (Figure 5.3):

A—Articulate and communicate the vision of the program. What is the desired end state from a business outcomes perspective? What are the program benefits?

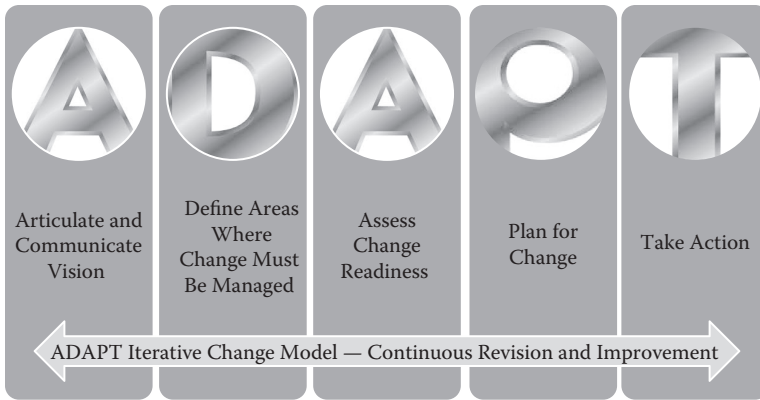


Figure 5.3 ADAPT Iterative Change Management Model

- D—Define* areas where change needs to be managed. What is the scope of change management for the program? Where possible, tie identified change areas to major program deliverables.
- A—Assess* change readiness across all areas and levels of the organization. Consider process and structure as well as the human element. The primary focus should be on understanding the human impact—understand where there is resistance and where there is support. Identify change champions and change resisters, and identify motivations and barriers to change.
- P—Plan* for the change, based on the inputs from your assessment. Create an integration plan, considering how you may achieve the maximum level of acceptance with minimal disruption to those affected.
- T—Take action.* Execute the integration plan with focused communications based on stakeholder needs. Throughout the program, to the degree possible, monitor change readiness improvements and measure success as actions are taken to help drive change. Continually assess change readiness to identify any additional needed actions. This is an iterative process.

In order to successfully implement the ADAPT change model for a program, several key supporting roles related to change management are needed, at a minimum: a change sponsor, change champions, and a change integrator (Figure 5.4):

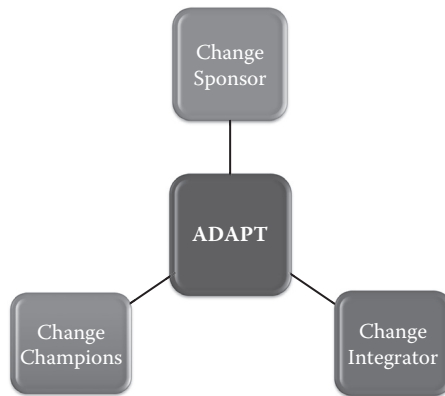


Figure 5.4 ADAPT—Supporting Roles

Change Sponsor: A change sponsor is an executive-level leader who takes accountability for driving the change brought about by the program. This leader is responsible for staying actively and visibly engaged in the program. Additionally, this individual should communicate key change messages to employees and take steps to help manage resistance. It is also the responsibility of the change sponsor to garner support for the program from management across the organization. This is a critical role. Without a strong leader taking on this role, it is extremely difficult to gain the momentum needed to drive change to achieve desired program outcomes.

Change Champions: Change champions are individuals who help initiate and facilitate change. Change champions can be found at any level of the organization. You should have multiple change champions for your program. Ideally, where you identify resistance you are also able to counteract that resistance with the help of these individuals. Change champions may come in the form of early adopters or may just be general supporters. It is good to get them involved from the beginning. You cannot drive change activities alone; leveraging this group of people helps you infiltrate the organization with carefully crafted, positive messaging at the outset.

Change Integrator: The change integrator is responsible for the overall change management process and for the

implementation of change management actions. This is your role to fill as a program manager. Additionally, part of this role is identifying and addressing change-related risks. Again, change management activities tend to get glossed over. Hopefully you have a new appreciation for taking the time to carefully plan for and work through program-driven change and may use this information to your benefit in future programs to elevate your success as a program manager through successful end-to-end program delivery.

By ensuring that you have all of these roles covered in your program, you set yourself up for success. In this change-role trifecta, you cover the power aspect through visible executive sponsorship, the people aspect through change champions, and the process aspect through the change integration role of the program manager. This is a winning combination and the key to successful program change management.

5.3 Applying the ADAPT Change Model to Stakeholder Quadrants

You now have the foundational principles of change management, as well as a program management–specific change model to follow (ADAPT). In this section, the focus shifts to practical application. What does all of this really mean to you as a program manager? How can you apply it? As has been done in previous chapters, it again makes sense to think of this topic in terms of the four stakeholder quadrants. In this section, we look at each of the quadrants, how and when to get the various groups of stakeholders involved from a change management perspective, and what related tools and methods there are to best manage change based on the involvement and power levels of each of the stakeholder quadrants.

As a reminder, here are the four quadrants as identified in the power map (Figure 5.5) presented in Chapter 4:

Power players—High power/high interest

Danger zone—High power/low interest

Informants—Low power/high interest

Sleepers—Low power/low interest



Figure 5.5 Stakeholder Power Map

5.3.1 Power Players

The first quadrant to address is the power players quadrant. This is a critical group to have on your side, as they drive the change messages down through the organization. Again, these are the stakeholders that have both high interest and high influence. These people really care about what you are trying to accomplish and want to see the program be successful. In addition, these people have the power to influence others. Strong leaders understand the goals and benefits of the program and what the change components are. They also help drive messaging down through the organization. You need to use this group to your advantage. The program vision is likely to come either directly from these stakeholders or at a minimum with input from these stakeholders. This is the quadrant where you find the individual who plays the critical role of *change sponsor* as defined in Section 5.2. Returning to Kotter's model, Kotter places a strong emphasis on the need for top-down support. If you have grassroots support that is a start, but without this top layer to punch it through, it is difficult to accomplish and sustain a significant change initiative. There are varying opinions about the scientific validity of the statistic, but based on Kotter's extensive observations over 30 years and in looking at over 100 companies, he estimates that about 70% of major change initiatives fail, and most fail in the early stages by not establishing a clear vision and not acting with the appropriate sense of urgency (Kotter 2008).

What do you need to do with this group, then, to make sure your program is in the 30% that is successful? Going back to the roles defined earlier, one of the most important drivers of success is to have a dedicated, actively participating change sponsor at the executive level. This person should

- Help craft the vision and then clearly articulate that vision to the rest of senior management. This vision should include what is changing as well as why it is important. What are the anticipated organizational benefits?
- Solicit feedback on the vision. With the input of team members, look to understand where there may be resistance, and what the root cause is of anticipated resistance.
- Provide talking points with responses to anticipated resistance points to all managers, and requiring that managers have sessions to review the program benefits and their impact. Employees want to know not just how it affects the business, but how it affects them personally.
- Stay actively engaged in the change process. Monitor progress, talk to managers who are communicating the change messages, and make adjustments to messaging based on feedback.
- Lead by example. If there are new behaviors required by a change initiative, model the new behavior.

Employees look to senior leadership for guidance on how to behave or react to change. If leaders are embracing the change, a large majority of the affected population will follow their lead and move toward accepting the change. This momentum helps move the organization to the desired end state where the change is fully adopted and sustained.

5.3.2 *Danger Zone*

The next quadrant consists of stakeholders in the *danger zone*. As a reminder, this quadrant consists of those who have high power but low interest. This group can de-rail your change effort in an instant because of the influence they have in the organization. Because of their influence, it is important to have focused communications with this group. You are not necessarily going to get regular attention from this group, so consider what the most important messages are for them.

With this group, communications are taken from more of a defensive approach. From your stakeholder analysis you should have some idea of these individuals' views and focus. Take the time to review your stakeholder interview notes and consider where there are potential areas of discontent. For example, if John Smart is the son of the chief executive officer (CEO) (making him high power purely since he has the "ear" of the CEO) and is a vice president (VP) of marketing, he may have very little interest in being involved in a program that is focused on finance and human resources. Where he may start to care is if there is some sort of intersection between your program and his own goals or programs, for example, if there were some sort of organizational change that impacted his group as a result of the program. This is not the group you should go to for really pushing change, but this is a group that could throw up roadblocks or bad publicity related to your program if they perceive they may be impacted in a negative way. The best way to deal with this group as it pertains to change management is as follows:

- Review your stakeholder interview notes. Take note of any areas of concern related to your program.
- Proactively address the areas identified in your review, with targeted discussions or communications.
- Periodically touch base with this group. Remind them of the benefits that the organization will see as a result of your program, and give them an opportunity to raise their concerns with you.

5.3.3 *Informants*

The quadrant that really drives the overall change message and pushes the organization to accepting and sustaining the desired change is the *informants* quadrant. This group contains those who have low power but high interest. You can really use this group to your advantage and should do so from early on in the program. This group is largely made up of "the doers" in the organization. These are the people who gather around the water cooler, and yes, there are even some gossipers. Use the gossipers to your advantage; give them positive messaging to spread. When considering what is important to this group, think back

to Kubler-Ross and the human-need side as it relates to change. The first thing that the individuals in this group ask is, “What is in it for me?” You should anticipate this question and be prepared to answer it for various factions in the organization from the beginning. Provide a consistent answer to this question, and this group in turn, will spread the word, whether they intend to or not.

A good method to use with this group is to hold focus groups. Because they have a high interest, there is usually good attendance. A focus group/open-forum-type of a meeting gives these stakeholders a chance to be heard. This quadrant typically consists of the group facing the biggest change. Talk to them frequently and actively listen. They tend to openly share both good and bad feedback. Different viewpoints may come up in these meetings that may impact how and what you communicate, or may even have an impact on how or what is delivered in the program. While it is important to have executive support, to be honest, those at the top usually know enough to be dangerous, but they are not “in the trenches” and may not know or understand all of the impacts and intersections. The groups most involved in impacted processes or systems are able to identify potential issues or areas of concern fairly quickly and often provide insight on potential improvements. By listening to them and addressing their concerns head on, you gain their trust, and over time, support for the program.

If there are individuals who seem especially vocal in a focus group, or if you are hearing about someone who is spreading negative press about your program, address it with them directly. Give them the opportunity to be heard through a one-on-one. (It is time to go out for coffee again.) If you begin to hear people really speaking up on behalf of the program and showing support, you may want to use that person as a “change champion.” As discussed in Section 5.2, a change champion is frequently an early adopter and is someone who can help drive the desired messaging through the organization, with a focus on informal communication. These individuals tend to emerge organically. If they do not, you may want to select and focus extra communications with a handful of people to bring them into this role. Whether it is positive or negative feedback, one of the best tools you have as a program manager to help manage stakeholder expectations and to drive change is to listen, and then take action on what you hear

to help drive program change. That is your main job with this quadrant. The best way to deal with the informants as it pertains to change management is as follows:

- Involve this group of stakeholders from the beginning. Immediately start communicating not just the organization-level benefits, but what is “in it for them” as individuals.
- Take time to listen and understand the concerns of individuals in situations where the change is one that will make them feel negatively impacted. Adapt messaging appropriately.
- Have a regular feedback loop with this group. Focus groups are one good venue to solicit feedback and understand not just who is supporting your cause but who the naysayers are and their concerns.
- Engage in an open dialogue with any resistors you are able to identify. Grab a coffee and prepare to listen, and then to respond. If you do not have a response, let them know you value their input, and that you will think through everything they have shared and circle back around with them (just make sure you really do it—again, working on building rapport and trust).

If you follow these steps, you may use this quadrant of stakeholders to your advantage. Getting this group engaged in the change process from the beginning allows for a grassroots effort, pushing the program change while simultaneously working on the messaging from the top. Both components are necessary for effective change management.

5.3.4 Sleepers

There is not as much to say about the last quadrant, the sleepers. This group has little power, and they also have little interest. This group likely neither hurts nor helps your change effort. As such, you should still do basic communications to share the organizational and individual benefits related to your program, but you are best served to focus on the other quadrants.

In summary, the change management process as it relates to program management is a big deal. Its importance is often undervalued given the impact change management has on the overall success of

realizing sustained program benefits. It is important to understand some of the theory behind change management in considering what actions to take as a program manager, and why. To do this in an effective way, try following the ADAPT change model introduced in this chapter. As you articulate vision, define success, assess change readiness, plan for change, and take action, the common theme throughout should be to think about your stakeholders—where they fit in the quadrants and where the resistance points are located. Actively listen, and continually refine your change management plan accordingly. People drive change. To be a top program manager you need to listen to the people in your organization and “ADAPT.”