

# Capability for Change Survey results: Core elements of capability for change

Melanie Franklin 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023



## Survey results context

Note: the webinar covered **highlights only** of the survey results, full results including the geographic/by country results, also by industry sector, will be shared in January – more time is needed to go through the analysis with a fine tooth comb.

## Colour key

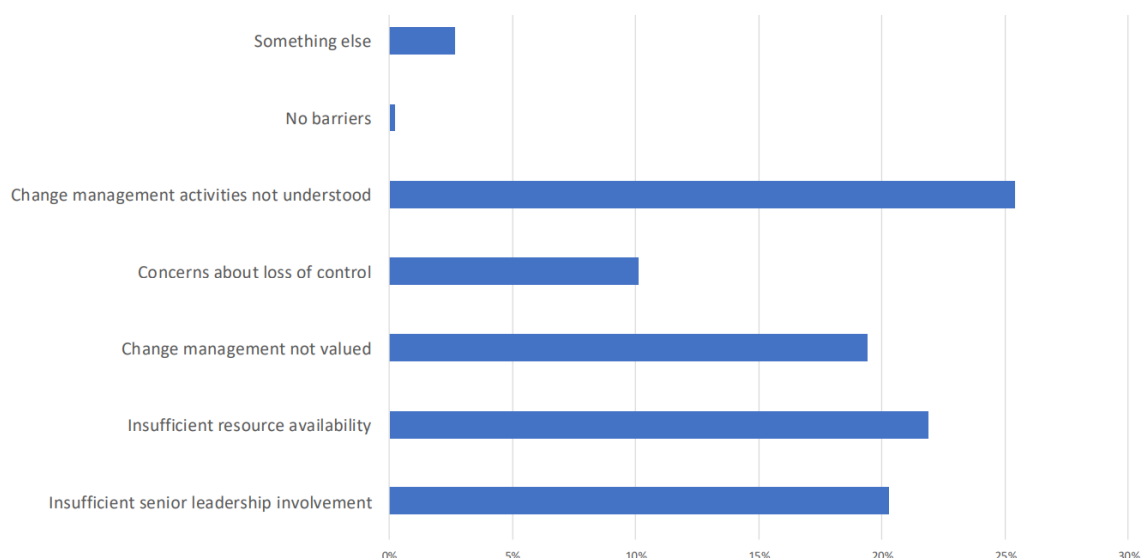
**Red text** indicates negatives

**Green text** indicates positives

**Blue text** indicates suggestions arising from the webinar

## RESULT HIGHLIGHTS: Barriers to effective change in our organisations

We started this session with a review of the responses to the question ***What is stopping change from being effective in your organisation?*** noting that the most common barrier is **CM activities not being understood**. Surely a consequence of that is the **CM not valued** barrier, since valuing requires understanding.



Mel suggested that we still have a very long way to go in getting understanding of what it is that 'change people' do, as evidenced by a question posed to her recently by some management consultants: "How do we make the case for change management to senior

managers?” Her response was that we have to **stop talking about or explaining what we do – our activities – and focus on what value we create.**

E.g. value in terms of risk reduction – operational and reputational risk, financial risk in terms of not getting the return on investment if people fail to adopt.

If we only explain WHAT we do rather than WHY we do it, we end up talking about communications or training or other events that may be too easily seen as ‘nice to have’s.

We also noted the other two main barriers, i.e. **insufficient resource availability**, so we don’t have enough people getting involved in change, as well as **insufficient senior leadership involvement** – no doubt related to the lack of understanding.

## RESULT HIGHLIGHTS: Elements of best practice in our organisations

Almost neck and neck in these results are the two items **We know CM is a skill** and **We have a set of tools for people to use.**



Could we perhaps help solve our barrier around not enough people being involved in change by **putting CM on the organisation’s skills agenda**? E.g. skills based hiring is becoming ‘a thing’.

We noted also the higher results: **We have a change management process/framework**; **We train people in change management** and **We have a central change management office/function**. Talking to many of you, in the many cases where there isn’t a central office – and arguably it’s not essential - should we be doing more to **coach people on HOW to do change management rather than giving them the WHAT**? Without a central office, who’s owning CM – the survey tells us that hardly any of us are on the Board or report to someone on the C suite; even with a central office, are there enough people in it? Ownership includes sponsorship and the championing role, making sure CM is rolled out well.

Overall, does it still feel that we're in our infancy as a profession? Unlike other roles like project managers or scrum masters or business analysts, change manager roles are still not understood consistently across the wider work population, interpretations vary widely!

## RESULT HIGHLIGHTS: Skills, Resources and Volume statements

We then moved to the **Feel/Think results**, which should be read with these distinctions in mind:

### Feel

When we find out what you feel about a subject the emotions, feelings, attitudes towards the subject. Deeper than what you think and often in your unconscious.

### Think

When we ask you the question you tell us what you feel you should say. It is a considered and conscious reply.

Mel reminded us the survey gets us to think about what we think is actually happening but also about what we feel, almost whether we believe it's what's happening; there is a % result for each.

- When the scores are more or less aligned it's a convincing result, it's just a matter of seeing whether the score is high enough;
- if there's a significant gap between them – cognitive dissonance - it's an indication of a problem, some uncertainty about whether something's real or not.

## Skills

The activities to manage change are known

 **53%** Implicit  **48%** Explicit

Senior leaders are held accountable for building change management skills

 **40%** Implicit  **35%** Explicit

We develop change management skills in our people

 **54%** Implicit  **53%** Explicit

Senior leaders know how to sponsor change

 **39%** Implicit  **38%** Explicit

So about half of us think the activities to manage change are known; and about half of us are developing CM skills in our people. **However about 60% of us think senior managers are not being held accountable for building those skills and indeed 60% of us have senior leaders who don't know how to sponsor change.** (And bear in mind the respondents to this survey are already those with quite an awareness of change, the results across ALL organisations might have been even worse).

How could we lift these percentages for the positive statements, how could we raise the importance but also the visibility of the CM skills built? How do we build the skills and therefore the change capability across our organisations?

## Resources

We have sufficient people to manage the volume of change

♥ 40% Implicit    🧠 32% Explicit

We must rely on help from external parties to manage the change

♥ 27% Implicit    🧠 52% Explicit

Our people understand what is involved in behaviour change

♥ 49% Implicit    🧠 41% Explicit

Note the dissonance around **relying on external parties**; we may not feel it's right to be hiring in externals who won't be impacted by the changes, who are not part of the culture of the organisation and whose expertise will be lost. And yet we are hiring externals. (Conversely, Julie pointed out that preferring inhouse change managers can also bring the risk of being biased and partial; 3<sup>rd</sup> parties come with their own experiences/learnings and no attachment per se to the organisation).

Note also that **we don't have enough people understanding that actually what we're doing is nudging people towards a behaviour change**, a new habit or routine.

## Volume

The cumulative workload of multiple changes is tracked

♥ 39% Implicit    🧠 38% Explicit

People always know change is coming

♥ 40% Implicit    🧠 45% Explicit

People have time to adopt new ways of working

♥ 60% Implicit    🧠 42% Explicit

Our level of change is manageable

♥ 20% Implicit    🧠 42% Explicit

Notice the last item **Our level of change is manageable** – this says that **only 20% of us truly believe that our current level of change volume is manageable** – the explicit score says we have some framework to manage it, some evidence of structure, but is it managing??

Mel noted that every bit of anecdotal evidence she can find is saying that

- people have never been busier
- “How can we make the change smaller so that its impact is lower?”
- “Please don't ask me to go to a half day workshop/sit in several hours of meetings on trying to rework our processes, I just don't have the time”

And **The cumulative workload of multiple changes is tracked – the result says it isn't**. Some impact assessment is happening but are they being rolled up to a portfolio level complete picture?

Less than half say **People always know change is coming** – we're pushing people into being very reactive resources.

Final note before the breakout discussion was from a recent Gartner article – see links below. It includes these shocking numbers:

“According to a recent Gartner survey, 74% of employees were willing to support organizational change in 2016; today, only 38% say the same. This correlates with a lower intent to stay with the organization: Only 43% of employees who experience above-average change fatigue intend to stay with their organization, compared with 74% of employees with low levels of fatigue.” Enterprise-level changes per employee have jumped from 2 a year to 10 since 2016.

We then took the Volume, Resources and Skills topics to the breakout rooms for further discussion.

## Breakout discussion

Breakout points made:

- Change saturation and change fatigue – the recognition that change takes time and the need to ensure senior leaders are coached in their sponsorship responsibilities – so they dedicate the time they need for this role
- One of the roles of change managers is to play that coaching role, so many senior managers will not admit that they do not know how to manage change, but we can provide on the ground, in the moment guidance
- Why has the sponsor been appointed – job title so they have to do, rather than want to do it
- Prioritisation – people do not want to say no – and it is difficult to stop doing something – we could ‘sell’ this as risk mitigation
- There is a view in Covid that things stopped, but there was a lot that happened at speed and there is still a residual exhaustion
- And we are still adjusting to the new work culture – hybrid is the new norm – the support, the human contact of others going through stress is not with us, we are at home, alone experiencing stress
- Lack of understanding change is partly from changes not being connected with one another, no visibility of how changes join up
- Question – are we clear on what the skills are for change – cannot ask to develop them if we are not clearly stating what they are

## Links

<https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/this-new-strategy-could-be-your-ticket-to-change-management-success>

[Tim Talks \(Prosci\) – Back to the Basics](#) – “getting past the head nod” with true investment in change management

[Eisenhower matrix](#) for prioritisation

## Next Event

24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – see new website for all event details: [Events - Capability for Change](#)