

The summer AI change plan

Bringing your team with you. AI and Change, session 4

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One idea: having AI tools is not a strategy. Adoption is a change problem. The tool is the easy part. The work, and the reward, is redesigning the process around it and bringing your people with you.

Are you stuck? Score yourself

Tick any that are true of you right now. Two or more means a change-leadership problem, not a technology one, and that is cheaper to fix than another tool.

- ☐ AI lives with two or three enthusiasts and nowhere else.
- ☐ You bought the licences, but no one's actual job has changed.
- ☐ Your only AI guidance is a list of things staff must not do.
- ☐ People quietly use personal accounts, because nothing official was offered.
- ☐ You expected the tool to fix the problem on its own.
- ☐ If your one champion left tomorrow, it would all stop.

It is not magic

Like any technology, AI needs work to deliver. The difference is that the reward is higher, not that the effort is lower. Do not hand AI today's process. Redesign the process, then decide where AI fits.

The honest bit, about jobs

AI will not take your job. A person who gets good at AI might. In our sector there is no slack, so the near-term reward is productivity, more delivered with the people you have, not a smaller team. Say so plainly.

Overleaf: ADKAR, the model that turns all of this into a change you can actually lead, and a one-page plan you can run over the summer.

The model: ADKAR

The five things that have to happen for your people to come with you



ADKAR comes from the change-management world and has been used for over twenty years. It is the most widely adopted people-change model there is, because it describes change one person at a time. The five stages happen in order: skip one and the change stalls there. Read them as a sequence, not a menu.

A

Awareness: *"What is changing, and why now?"*

People understand the reason, in plain terms, before a tool ever appears. Not a launch email. A reason.

Good: they can say why in a sentence. Fails when: the first they hear of it is a licence and a lunch-and-learn.

D

Desire: *"What does this mean for me?"*

The honest conversation about value and jobs. People decide whether to come with you, and that decision is emotional before it is rational.

Good: the fear is named, not dodged. Fails when: it is managed with a euphemism, which your team can always tell. This is the most common barrier point.

K

Knowledge: *"Do we know how?"*

The practical know-how: the redesigned steps, the prompts, what good looks like in the new way of working.

Good: people know what to do differently on Monday. Fails when: the training is a single webinar nobody revisits.

A

Ability: *"Can we actually do it, in the real job?"*

Knowing is not doing. People need real time and support to use it for the work, proven on something small first.

Good: a redesigned process people can work, tested by one narrow pilot. Fails when: the licence is funded but the time is not.

R

Reinforcement: *"How does it become normal?"*

Embed it in your CPD, governance and quality cycles, and recognise the people who lean in, so it outlasts any one person.

Good: it survives the champion leaving. Fails when: it was a project, and the project ended.

Find your barrier point

Change does not fail evenly. It fails at the **first of the five stages you skipped**. If your people are anxious, you have a Desire problem, and more training will not touch it. If they are willing but floundering, it is Knowledge or Ability, and another rousing email will not fix that either. Find the earliest letter you are weak on. That is where the work goes, and usually where the money should.

Underneath all five: a sponsor who owns the why, and two or three champions who carry the how (borrowed from Kotter). That small coalition is the single biggest predictor of whether the change survives past the summer.

Your canvas: run one change through ADKAR



By September: your barrier point named, one proven win, an honest team, a date in the diary

Do this over the summer

- 1 Awareness.** Name the change, not the tool. Pick one boring, recurring task worth fixing, and say why now.
- 2 Desire.** Have the honest conversation about what changes and what it means for people. Often the barrier point.
- 3 Knowledge.** Redesign the process before you automate it, and capture what people need to learn.
- 4 Ability.** Fund the time and the training, and run one narrow pilot with a human reviewer.
- 5 Reinforcement.** Name your sponsor and champions, and book the autumn development time now.

The plan, on a page

Your barrier point (the first ADKAR stage you are weakest on, and why)

Awareness: the change and the outcome (efficiency or scale, and why now)

Desire: the honest message to the team (one line you will actually say)

Knowledge: what people need to learn

Ability: the pilot (one task, one team, one reviewer, one metric)

Reinforcement: sponsor (owns the why)

Champions (carry the how)

Autumn date in the diary

Find your barrier point. Be honest. Redesign the process. Prove one win.

Created by Aptem for the AI and Change series. Next: session 5, from pilot to practice, making AI stick and proving it worked. Rewatch sessions 1 to 3 and register via the follow-up.