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5 Strategies for Selling Change to Attorneys

Legal management professionals are uniquely positioned to own the skillset of selling change inside their law firms. Simply having a good idea isn't enough. Good ideas die out early every day thanks to common law firm change busters like time, money and fear. Leaders must not only have the good idea, but also a solid plan for selling it to people at every stage of the change process.

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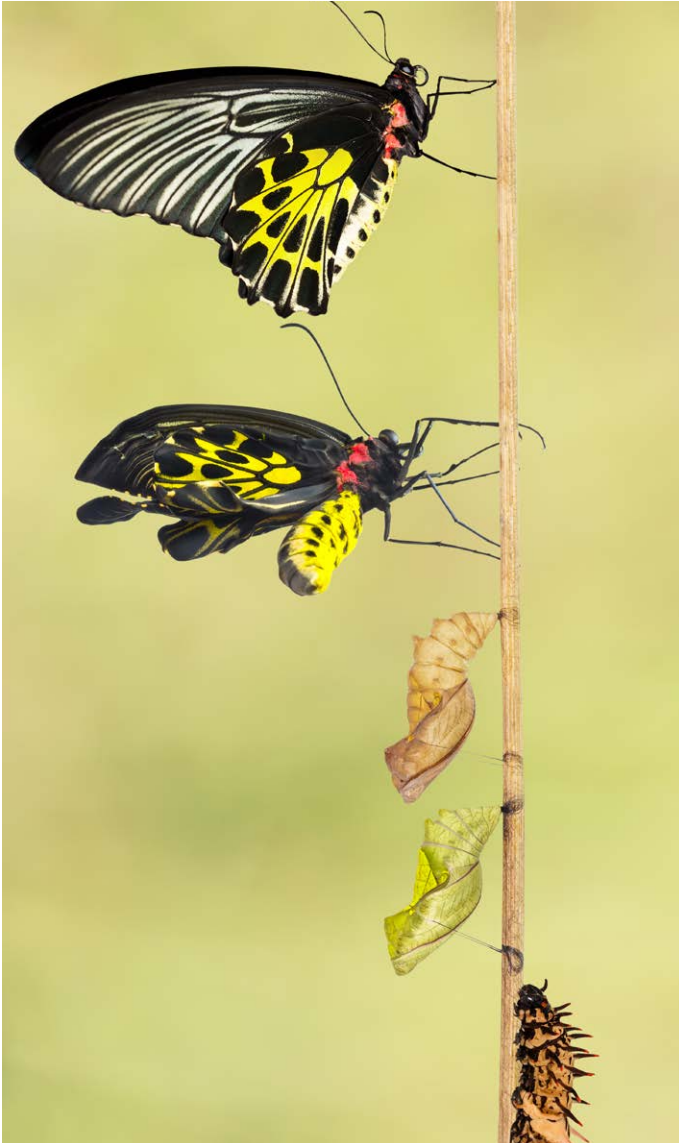
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Traditional change management theory tells us there are unique change stages that a person must traverse to be able to accept, embrace and implement change. The Prosci ADKAR® Model specifies that an individual must experience each of these five stages in this order:

1. **Awareness** for why the change is happening
2. **Desire** to participate in the change
3. **Knowledge** for how to change
4. **Ability** to make the change
5. **Reinforcement** to sustain the change

For the change leader, stages one through three are entirely about getting people's hearts and minds aligned with the change. When legal management professionals can create conditions for people to buy into the change, more than half of the work is done. Let us explore five “selling change” roles leaders can play to create conditions for attorneys and staff to buy into the change at each of the five change stages.

1. **Awareness** is created by **The Lead Generator** role. When it comes to building awareness around why the change is needed, the messenger should have charisma, confidence and influence when communicating to others about the change. And when those traits are combined with relationship-building strengths, you have the hallmarks of a Lead Generator.



As a *Lead Generator for Change*, your role is to create a positive buzz around the change, build a coalition of key influencers and maintain an active and visible presence while carrying the change banner.

2. Desire is built through **The Account Manager** role. Desire is created at an individual level. In order to gain someone’s desire to change, you must invest in getting to know them, understand what motivates them, and learn what is important to them both personally and professionally. Leaders with strengths in these areas tend to play the Account Manager role well. As an *Account Manager for Change*, your priority is to explain the WIIFM (what’s in it for me) in a way that demonstrates your understanding and empathy for the other person and appeals to their specific needs and goals.

3. Knowledge is imparted by **The Educator** role. Once people understand why the change is needed and they have the desire to do what is required for the change to happen, they will often require some education around where to start and how to keep it going. And because lack of know-how is often a reason for people to give up, the role of Educator becomes key to continuing to sell the change. As an *Educator of Change*, you are focused on removing barriers to success and being a source of valid, factual and unbiased information for those during the change process. You instill a sense of comfort and confidence in people, encouraging them that they can do what is being asked of them.

4. Ability is instituted by **The Architect** role. As the cliché says, “knowing is half the battle,” and the other half is doing. Until someone is “doing,” the change does not become effect. The *Architect for Change* helps people connect dots, find new ways of accomplishing things, and be successful by using the resources available to them.

5. Change is reinforced and sustained by **The Inventor** role. Finally, the change may be in place and people may be doing the right things, yet rarely does that mark the end of the process. It is too easy to slip back into old habits when work gets busier or the new way becomes too difficult. The *Inventor for Change* is always seeking ways to help people realize new benefits, improve their skills and experience improved outcomes.

With coaching and training, you can build skills in all five of the “selling change” roles. You may also wish to team and collaborate with other leaders who have complementary strengths to your own. The most important thing to know is that you are uniquely positioned as a leader in your firm to make change happen. Lean into your strengths to create buy-in and support for your good ideas. The firm can’t do it without you. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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