This framework is designed to help you develop a comprehensive implementation strategy for your next organizational change. Rather than a fixed, step-by-step process or method, this framework reflects that successful change is both an art and a science. It clarifies the key elements all change efforts should include, understanding that how you execute them will depend on the type and scale of your change and your organizational context.

The framework is composed of four parts:

- **Components** are the tools and techniques that you use to implement.
- **Roles** refer to the people involved in driving and adopting the change you are implementing.
- **Phases** reflect that change is a multi-stage and iterative process.
- **Context** refers to the internal and external factors that can impact the implementation — and which make every change effort unique.

To explore the framework further and learn how to apply it, buy the book — *The Implementer’s Starter Kit*.

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Components are the tools and techniques involved in change implementation. In this framework, components refer to six things: desired outcomes, the innovation, training and coaching, measurement and monitoring, infrastructure, and communications.

**Desired outcomes** clarify the vision for the change — what will the change achieve and why is it necessary? Change efforts that lack direction and a clear rationale will struggle.

The **innovation** is the change you are implementing. It should be selected based on its fit to your need as well as the capacity of your organization to implement it. The innovation should be defined with sufficient specificity to clarify what you are not implementing.

**Communication** involves both formal and informal efforts to exchange information between all stakeholders involved in the change. It is both “push and pull” and includes not only words but also actions and behaviors. Communication can be both a stand alone effort, as well as an integral part of effectively delivering all other components.

**Roles**

People play various roles to “make the change happen” in an organization, including as end users, leadership, stakeholders, or part of an implementation team.

Although there is an “I” in implementation, it is never a solo affair. Creating an **implementation team** is critical. This is a team of doers — it often plans and executes most of the enabling activities related to the implementation. It is primarily, but not solely, responsible for establishing and using many of the components discussed previously.

**Performance** measurement and monitoring involve setting both process and progress goals and collecting, reviewing, and responding to feedback. This allows you to identify what’s going well, what’s not, what you need to do to improve — and ultimately, assess if you’ve been successful.

In all efforts, **training and coaching** provide essential support to help leaders and end users develop the knowledge, perspectives, and behaviors they’ll need to effectively play their roles in the change.
The implementation team interacts with all other roles in the effort, with a keen focus on end users, who are the people that will use the innovation or adopt the change you are implementing.

The implementation team also engages with other stakeholders, such as those who will benefit from the implementation, as well as those who may want to influence it. Gathering input and feedback from these groups, and transforming it into decisions, plans, and actions are central activities of the implementation team and leadership.

Everyone involved in an organizational change is required to exhibit a degree of leadership. There are also distinct leadership roles, such as the executive sponsor and governance body, which have a unique function in implementation. They are often best positioned to amplify the vision for the change, create an enabling environment, and reinforce commitment during challenging times.

**PHASES**

Five phases highlight the stages you will move through in any change journey. Phases reflect the reality that rather than a simple progression from start to finish, effective change implementation is a multi-phased and iterative process.

During the Decide phase, relevant decision-makers establish the purpose of the effort, select the innovation that will be implemented, and agree on the resources that will be invested. It’s wise to ensure these early decisions account for significant contextual factors. Rather than aiming to eliminate all uncertainty about the change, decisions made at this stage clarify what’s most important and signal how the effort will play out (e.g., planned or agile, participatory or top-down.)

The Prepare phase often includes designing and documenting the innovation, assembling the implementation team, creating a clear plan (or parameters for an iterative planning process), and designing the approach for measurement, training, and communications.

All of this is done before the roll-out of the innovation during the Execute phase. Monitoring the implementation during execution is essential to provide data and feedback for the Improve phase, during which adjustments are made to enhance results.

Only after improvements are made, sometimes requiring multiple execution cycles, can the organization move to the Maintain phase, transitioning responsibility for the innovation into steady state operations.

**CONTEXT**

No two implementations are the same and context is often the reason why. Your implementation can be affected by all kinds of internal factors, such as whether or not other organizational changes are being implemented concurrently, shifts in executive leadership, failure of past change efforts, or current performance or trust levels in the organization.

Your implementation can also be shaped by external factors, such as changes in the regulatory or economic climate, actions taken by competitors or partners, or even popular opinion about the change you are implementing.

Contextual factors inform key decisions made in all other aspects of the framework and are relevant throughout all phases of the implementation.
IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST
This checklist can help jump start preparations for your next change implementation. Treat it as a first draft and adjust it to meet the specific needs of your effort.

DECIDE
The purpose, need, and key outcomes of the implementation are clarified and approved by relevant decision-makers.

The innovation (change) is selected based on its fit to needs, desired outcomes, available resources, and capabilities.

- Critical contextual factors are identified and used to inform decisions.
- Essential adaptations are identified with input from relevant stakeholders.
- The process for further designing the innovation is clarified — Pilot? Participatory? Planned? Iterative?

High-level infrastructure and resourcing requirements are estimated and agreed to.

- Not to exceed monetary and staffing budget is set.
- The executive sponsor is identified.
- The implementation lead is identified, if possible.
- The expectations for end-to-end time frame are agreed to.
- Critical infrastructure requirements are identified.

PREPARE
The implementation team is assembled.

- The structure of the team is clarified; all key roles are filled.
- Norms and team processes are developed.

The innovation is documented.

- Relevant stakeholders are engaged in design or input sessions.
- Core components/effectiveness factors of the innovation are clear.

The implementation plan is developed.

- A master task list is created and aligned with a schedule and budget or an agile process is instituted. Responsibilities are assigned to key roles.
- Governance is clarified, governance body members appointed, and a schedule of meetings developed.
- The measurement system is developed, including clarification of what will be measured, how it will be measured, how related work will be organized, and how findings will be used.
- The communication and engagement plan is in place.
- Key stakeholders and end user groups are identified.
- Training and coaching approaches are developed.

EXECUTE
The implementation plan is executed.

- Training and coaching are provided.
- Data collection and analysis are undertaken.
- Debriefs identify learning and log potential adaptations to be made in future phases.
- Two-way communication with end users and stakeholders is ongoing.
- Progress information is shared on a regular basis.

The implementation team actively assists end users in adoption, providing real-time support and troubleshooting issues as they arise.

Progress is regularly reviewed by the implementation team and governance body.

IMPROVE
Improvements are recommended, prioritized, and approved by relevant groups, per the governance framework.

- Quantitative and qualitative progress data are analyzed and potential improvements identified. Implications, including resourcing, are estimated.
- Improvements are prioritized and approved by relevant decision-makers.
- End users and key stakeholders are informed of improvements that will be made.

Updates to plans are made to incorporate improvements and other necessary adjustments to guide additional Execute phases.

(At the conclusion of this phase, loop back to previous phases as necessary. If you haven’t done so already, celebrate successes!)

MAINTAIN
The transition plan and schedule are finalized.

- An owner and resourcing for the innovation under steady state operations is confirmed.
- Time frame and scope of transition activities are agreed to by all parties.

Key learnings are identified and documented.

- Debriefs are held.
- Major findings from the measurement program are identified and communicated.

Key documents are archived or transitioned to support learning.

Key parties agree the transition to steady state is complete. (Those using “responsive change” or agile methods may undertake this phase periodically to ensure iterative changes are appropriately institutionalized.)

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