



The Cost of Launching Prematurely

Why Strategic Initiatives
Are Delayed and What Readiness
Assessments Show

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- The Problem No One Wants to Name..... 1
- The Two-Legged Stool 2
- What Readiness Actually Means 3
- The Gap That Kills Initiatives 5
- What We Actually Measure 6
- Timing Matters 8
- Why Projects Finish While People Are Still Stuck..... 9
- What the Scores Mean 10
- The Cost Of Not Knowing..... 12
- What You Get From A Readiness Assessment 13
- FIND OUT WHERE YOU STAND..... 14

The Problem No One Wants to Name

Here's what we see over and over again:

A strategic initiative launches with fanfare. The project plan is solid. Milestones are mapped. Leadership is aligned, so everyone assumes. Six months later, the timeline has slipped. Twice.

The budget has expanded 30–50%. Staff is frustrated, confused, or quietly resistant. And somewhere in a conference room, executives are asking: What went wrong.

WHAT WENT WRONG IS PREDICTABLE. AND PREVENTABLE.

Seventy percent of organizational transformations fail to achieve their intended outcomes. They do not fail because of flawed strategy or poor project management, but because the people side of change was treated as an afterthought or ignored entirely.

Avo knows this based upon decades of research from McKinsey, Prosci, and Dr. John Kotter's foundational work on leading change. The data is unambiguous: projects with excellent, people-focused change management are seven times more likely to meet their objectives than those with poor change management. Organizations that measure readiness and performance see 76% of projects meet or exceed objectives, compared to just 24% for those that don't measure.

Yet most organizations skip it.

The Two-Legged Stool

Think about how your organization manages strategic initiatives today.

You probably have project management disciplines in place; timelines, milestones, resource allocation, status reporting. Good. That's one leg of the stool.

You probably have a strategy; a clear vision of what you're trying to accomplish and why it matters. That's the second leg.

But what about the third leg? What about the people who must change their way of working?

Do people understand the change? Do they want to participate? Do they know what's expected of them? Do they have the support to succeed?

If you do not answer these questions, you will be left wondering why adoption stalls, why timelines slip, why you're still "rolling out" the same initiative after eighteen months, burning budget when it should have been complete months ago.

Change Management
is the third leg. A readiness
assessment is how you know
whether that leg is sturdy
enough to hold weight,
before you try to sit down.

What Readiness Actually Means

Readiness isn't a feeling. It's not whether people seem positive in meetings or nod along during town halls.

Readiness is measurable and specific. It follows a predictable pattern that's been validated across thousands of organizational transformations.

AWARENESS

Do people understand why this change is happening? This does not mean the corporate talking points, but the real business case that connects to problems they recognize.

DESIRE

Do people want to participate? Understanding why change is necessary doesn't automatically create willingness to act. People who understand the "why" but don't want to participate become skilled resisters.

KNOWLEDGE

Do people know what's required of them? People must be able to articulate what will be different about their work, their processes, and their daily responsibilities.

ABILITY

Can people actually execute what they've learned? Knowledge doesn't equal capability. This is where training meets reality.

REINFORCEMENT

Will the change stick or will people slowly drift back to old patterns? Make sure people are confident in training and support resources.

Avo's readiness assessment is built on Prosci's **ADKAR® model**, the gold standard for measuring whether people can successfully navigate change. ADKAR identifies five sequential dimensions that determine transformation success:

These five dimensions build on each other. Skip one, and the dimensions above it collapse.

Awareness and Desire are foundational; they must be solid *before* you launch. Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement can be built during implementation, but only if the foundation is there.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

“Avo’s gap assessment revealed blind spots we hadn’t considered. Their process didn’t just diagnose issues; it gave us a roadmap our team could actually use.”

Laura Flournoy, Program Manager

The Gap That Kills Initiatives

Here's what we find in almost every organization we assess:

Leadership thinks the organization is more ready than it actually is.

Leaders have been living with the strategy for months. They've debated it, refined it, bought into it. By the time they announce the initiative, they've forgotten that everyone else is just hearing about it for the first time.

Leaders project their own readiness onto the organization. They assume that because the strategy makes sense to them, it will make sense to everyone. They interpret silence as agreement, and mistake compliance for

Meanwhile, employees are wondering:

- What does this actually mean for my job?
- Is my role going to exist in six months?
- Why is this happening now?
- Has anyone asked what we think?

This perception gap between what leaders believe and what employees experience is where initiatives stall.

Stalled initiatives don't just sit there quietly. They actively drain the organization:

- **Leadership attention stays stuck** on a struggling initiative instead of moving to the next strategic priority.
- **Employees divide their focus** between the old way, the new way, and trying to figure out which one actually matters.
- **Middle managers burn hours** explaining, re-explaining, and managing confusion that shouldn't exist.
- **Projects that should launch** next quarter wait in line behind one that should have been done six months ago.

In Avo's experience, when the gap between leadership and employee readiness exceeds 15%, implementation risks increase dramatically, even in well-planned transformations.

A readiness assessment surfaces this gap before it becomes a crisis. It shows you exactly where the disconnects are, and what to do about them

What We Actually Measure

Avo's comprehensive readiness assessment measures readiness across five critical areas, capturing both leadership and employee perspectives:

1. Understanding the Reasons Behind the Change

Can people articulate *why* this initiative matters, not in corporate-speak, but in terms of real problems it solves? When people understand the "why," they move from passive observers to active participants.

2. Perceptions of the Change's Impact

Do people see this as an opportunity or a threat? Do they understand how their specific role will change? Clarity here reduces anxiety and enables preparation. Ambiguity triggers fear and resistance.

3. Communication Effectiveness

Has leadership painted a clear picture of the future state? Have concerns been heard and addressed, or just acknowledged and dismissed? Unresolved concerns don't disappear; they go underground.

4. Resource Allocation and Capability Building

Do people believe the organization can actually pull this off? Do they feel confident about their own ability to develop new skills? Low confidence creates hedging, workarounds, and contingency plans that undermine the initiative.

5. Support Systems and Infrastructure

Are there training and support systems in place? Do people know where to get help when they're stuck? Resources that exist but aren't known might as well not exist.

For each area, we establish quantitative scores using a validated 5-point scale. This enables statistical analysis, gap identification between leadership and employees, and progress tracking over time.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

“Avo’s recommendations sparked real conversations among leadership. We aligned our resources with gaps we hadn’t seen before.”

*Monica Alvarez, Organizational Change
Management Project Lead*

Timing Matters

When you conduct a readiness assessment determines what you can do with the results.

Phase	Timing	What It Tells You
Pre-Implementation	3-6 months before launch	Baseline measurement of current state. Identifies gaps while there's still time to address them. Informs communication strategy, training design, and stakeholder engagement approach.
Mid-Implementation	3-6 months after launch	Measures actual adoption versus intended adoption. Identifies emerging resistance. Validates whether interventions are working, while there's still time to adjust.
Post-Implementation	12-18 months after launch	Measures sustained change adoption. Determines whether change has become "how we work" or is slowly reverting. Provides data for future initiatives.

Why Projects Finish While People Are Still Stuck

Your project plan and your people move on different timelines. Most organizations follow their project plan religiously while ignoring whether their people are actually ready for each phase. They execute technical milestones perfectly, close out project tasks on schedule, then wonder why adoption never happens.

The project team celebrates completion while the organization struggles through an endless loop of retraining, resistance, and non-adoption. The technical solution is live, but nobody's using it properly. The process is implemented, but people work around it.

This happens when organizations execute the project plan but skip the human readiness work.

You end up with a technically complete project that never delivers its promised value because people were left behind in the readiness phase while the project marched forward without them.

THE READINESS GATES

Transformation success requires hitting specific readiness thresholds at each phase, not just completing project tasks.

Project Phase	Readiness Gate	What's Required
Planning	Readiness	Leadership $\geq 85\%$ on Awareness + Desire. Employees $\geq 70\%$. This is your foundation, without it, you're building on sand.
Execution	Adoption	Knowledge + Ability matter now. People need to know how to perform in the new world, not just understand why it's changing. Reinforcement activities start.
Monitoring & Controlling	Sustainment	All ADKAR dimensions strong ($\geq 90\%$). This is where change becomes "how we work."

You can complete every line of your project plan and still fail if your people aren't brought along.

What the Scores Mean

Readiness isn't pass/fail. It's a diagnostic that tells you where to focus and what intervention is needed.

READINESS SCORE (AWARENESS + DESIRE) DETERMINES YOUR GO-LIEVE DECISION

Score	Leadership	Employees	What It Means
GREEN (≥85% / ≥70%)	Ready	Ready	Proceed with confidence. Foundation is solid.
YELLOW (70-84% / 55-69%)	Developing	Developing	Address specific gaps before launch or accept elevated risk.
RED (<70% / <55%)	Not Ready	Not Ready	Stop. Launching without this foundation leads to the 70% failure rate.

Leadership thresholds are higher because leaders must be further along to effectively bring their teams with them.

ADOPTION SCORE (KNOWLEDGE + ABILITY) DETERMINES ADOPTION SUCCESS

Before launch, these scores are diagnostic. They tell you how much training and support infrastructure you'll need.

After launch, gaps in Knowledge and Ability become active barriers. People who don't know how to perform in the new environment create workarounds and errors, or give up and revert to old behaviors.

Training and support resources are key to Reinforcement to ensure people know where to go when they need help, and to solidify their confidence in the organization's new environment

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

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The Cost Of Not Knowing

Organizations that skip readiness assessment pay for it in ways that don't always show up in project budgets:

- **Extended timelines.** The time "saved" by skipping readiness work gets repaid with interest during a prolonged, painful adoption phase. Teams spend months retraining people who learned wrong the first time.
- **Duplicated effort.** When people don't understand what's changing or why, they create workarounds. They maintain shadow processes. They do things twice, the old way and the new way, because no one's confident the new way will stick.
- **Talent flight.** When employees feel uncertain about their future, top performers leave for stability elsewhere. The people you most need for successful transformation walk out the door.
- **Morale costs.** Failed or struggling initiatives breed cynicism. The next transformation becomes harder because people remember the last one that "didn't work." Organizational scar tissue builds up.
- **Leadership credibility.** Managers who force adoption of systems people have already decided don't work burn their credibility. Trust erodes. Future initiatives face steeper resistance.
- **The real cost:** Not just the initiative that fails, but the organizational capacity for change that gets damaged in the process.

THE MATH IS SIMPLE

Every month your initiative stalls costs you:

- Extended project team salaries and contractor fees
- Delayed ROI from the change you're trying to implement
- Productivity lost to confusion, workarounds, and rework
- Opportunity cost of leadership attention stuck on a struggling initiative

A readiness assessment costs a fraction of one month's delay. The question isn't whether you can afford to assess, it's whether you can afford not to.

What You Get From A Readiness Assessment

Avo's comprehensive readiness assessment enables you to:

Measure Readiness

Quantitatively:

Get specific scores across each dimension, broken out by leadership versus employees and by department.

Pinpoint Perception Gaps:

See exactly where leadership beliefs diverge from employee experience, and use that data to change conversations before breakdowns occur.

Surface Risks Early:

Identify specific barriers and concerns before they become implementation crises, giving you time to course-correct while it's still affordable.

Target Your Interventions:

Receive specific actions tied to specific gaps, not generic "communicate more" advice, tailored to what different stakeholder groups actually need.

Prioritize A Change Management Plan:

Know what must happen before launch versus what can be built during rollout, and how you'll measure progress along the way.

Your Readiness Assessment generates an **Adoption Risk Index**, a quantitative score that shows exactly where your people are versus where your project needs them to be. This score can be tracked over time and compared across departments, giving you an objective measure of people risk throughout your transformation.

THE BOTTOM LINE

You wouldn't build a house without checking the foundation first. You wouldn't launch a product without market research. You wouldn't make a major investment without due diligence.

So why do organizations launch strategic initiatives without measuring whether their people are ready to adopt them?

Readiness assessment transforms change management from guesswork into a data-driven discipline.

Instead of assuming your people are ready, you know exactly where gaps exist and what to do about them.

The investment in measurement pays dividends throughout the transformation:

- Fewer surprises
- Faster adoption
- Sustainable results

Change is hard. We make it worth it. Avo Solutions helps organizations evolve and scale by making change more strategic, more sustainable, and more human.

We don't disappear after the plan is delivered, we stay until adoption is real.

FIND OUT WHERE YOU STAND

Every data point in this paper leads to the same conclusion; what leaders believe about readiness and what employees experience are rarely the same story. The question is whether that gap exists in your organization, and how wide it is.

Take the Assessment

Avo's introductory readiness assessment captures your leadership perspective across the five dimensions we've outlined here. In under three minutes, you'll answer five strategic questions. Within 24 hours, you'll receive a personalized report showing your readiness baseline and the blind spots that could impact implementation success.

Launch Assessment [Avo-inc.com/readiness-survey](https://avo-inc.com/readiness-survey)

Prefer to talk first?

Whether you've already taken the assessment and want to discuss your results, or you'd rather start with a conversation about what you're seeing in your organization, we're here.

Contact Avo 916-409-6001 | sales@avo-inc.com | avo-inc.com

AVO CASE STUDY: 450% FASTER PLATFORM ADOPTION IN 60 DAYS

How we turned 18 months of resistance into bottom-up advocacy

The Challenge: A multinational tech company with 150,000+ employees across 100 countries was stuck after 18 months of failed communication platform rollout. Traditional top-down deployment tactics weren't working; people were clinging to outdated systems.

Our Approach: We shifted from corporate mandates to peer influence. We identified natural influencers within the organization and equipped them with behavior-focused tools to create sustainable bottom-up adoption momentum.

The Result: 450% increase in adoption rate within 60 days.



**FEEDBACK GOAL
ACHEIVED**

(1 month vs.
3 months planned)



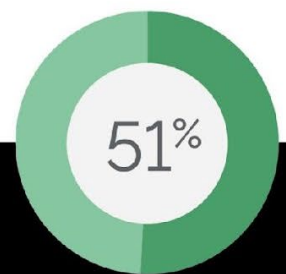
**USAGE GOAL
ACHIEVED**

(2 months vs.
3 months planned)



**USE CASE STUDIES
COMPLETED**

(2 months vs.
12 months planned)



**ANNUAL USAGE
TARGET**

hit in just
60 days

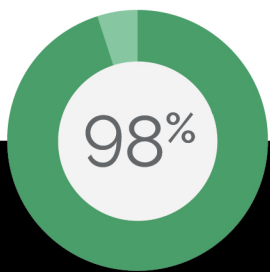
AVO CASE STUDY: \$5M Safety Program Achieves 98% Executive Buy-In

How we turned bureaucratic compliance into employee empowerment

The Challenge: A \$5 million safety program for 5,000 employees across 100+ locations needed executive support while navigating organizational politics. The new safety office had to secure buy-in from management and executive leadership.

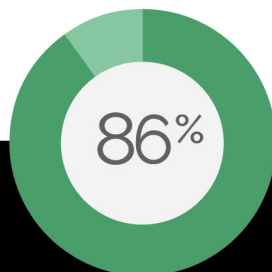
Our Approach: We developed a six-hour executive workshop focusing on leadership behaviors rather than program information. We aligned executives around program commitment, strategy application, and barrier removal.

The Result: 98% executive buy-in and sustained program support



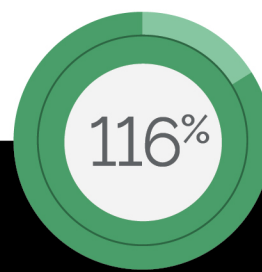
**BUY
IN**

by executive leadership
(vs. 75% industry
standard)



**MANAGEMENT
BUY IN**

up from 36% in
six months
post-training



**GOAL
UNDERSTANDING**

by participants
understood safety
program objectives



**INCREASED
ABILITY**

to track and
report performance
across divisions

AVO CASE STUDY: Reset Expectations, Rebuilt Confidence

How we turned a struggling sales team's crisis into sustainable success

The Challenge: A global sales team of 100 professionals was caught between unrealistic expectations and unclear processes. Schedule delays and disruptive implementations left clients dissatisfied.

Our Approach: We educated the client on implementation reality and complexity. Our assessment revealed gaps in organizational culture and change management practices. We focused on collaborative readiness and realistic goal-setting.

The Result: Rebuilt team confidence and sustainable performance improvement



SHORTENED

sales cycle through better expectation management



INCREASED

customer satisfaction scores



REALISTIC

implementation expectations aligned with business impact



IMPROVED

client stakeholder engagement and project ownership



Avo is a boutique firm focused on reshaping how organizations adopt change, making it more strategic, more sustainable, and more human since 2011.