

Kotter Application Guide

Apply the eight-step model to broad organizational change

Before you begin

Complete the Change Approach and Framework Selection Guide first. Confirm why this framework fits the change and what problem it is expected to solve.

Change summary

Change statement

Business or customer outcome

Affected groups

Main type of change

Incremental or transformational

Planned, emergent, dialogic, or hybrid approach

Main implementation risk

Step 1: Establish urgency

Create a shared understanding that action is necessary without creating panic.

- Use customer, market, financial, operational, or employee evidence.
- Explain the risk of inaction and the opportunity created by change.
- Test whether urgency is shared beyond the sponsor.

Action	Audience	Evidence	Owner	Measure
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Step 2: Form a guiding coalition

Build a credible cross-functional group with influence, expertise, authority, and commitment.

- Identify sponsors, decision-makers, respected managers, experts, and informal influencers.
- Clarify decision rights and responsibilities.
- Address visible disagreement inside the coalition.

Coalition member	Contribution	Authority	Responsibility	Commitment

Step 3: Create the vision and direction

Describe the desired future and the strategic choices required to reach it.

- Explain what will be different for customers, employees, and the organization.
- Keep the vision clear enough to guide decisions.
- Connect the vision to purpose and measurable outcomes.

Vision element	Meaning	Measure	Owner	Decision supported

Step 4: Communicate the vision

Repeat the message through credible leaders, relevant channels, and two-way dialogue.

- Tailor messages by stakeholder group.
- Explain what changes, why, how, when, and what stays the same.
- Create feedback loops and respond visibly.

Audience	Message	Messenger	Channel	Feedback method

Step 5: Remove obstacles

Address barriers that prevent people from acting in line with the change.

- Review policies, approvals, systems, incentives, workload, skills, and manager behaviour.
- Escalate cross-functional obstacles through governance.
- Provide resources and authority required for execution.

Obstacle	Impact	Action	Owner	Resolution date

Step 6: Create short-term wins

Generate early, visible, meaningful results that build credibility and momentum.

- Choose wins connected to the final outcome.
- Set a short timeframe and clear measure.
- Recognize contributors and explain what the win proves.

Short-term win	Target date	Measure	Owner	How it builds momentum

Step 7: Sustain momentum

Use early wins to deepen and extend the change rather than declare victory.

- Review remaining barriers and harder workstreams.
- Keep leadership attention and resources in place.
- Adapt tactics based on evidence and feedback.

Next priority	Learning from wins	Action	Owner	Measure

Step 8: Anchor the change in culture

Connect the new way to norms, systems, leadership behaviour, performance, and organizational identity.

- Update hiring, onboarding, recognition, performance measures, and routines.
- Make the link between new behaviour and improved outcomes visible.
- Ensure leaders model and reinforce the change consistently.

Cultural reinforcement	Current gap	Action	Owner	Evidence
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Measurement and review

Measure	Baseline	Target	Frequency	Owner

Final review questions

- ☐ Does the plan address the main reason this framework was selected?
- ☐ Are actions assigned to named owners?
- ☐ Are barriers, resources, and dependencies visible?
- ☐ Do measures focus on adoption and outcomes, not activity alone?
- ☐ Is there a feedback loop for learning and adjustment?
- ☐ Are leadership actions and communication responsibilities clear?

Leadership style affects how the change is understood and experienced. Refer to the related Business Capsule on leadership styles when it becomes available.