

# ERP Implementation Success Framework: Change Strategy and Communications for deploying Enterprise Resource Planning Tools like Workday

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## Abstract

The implementation of an ERP tool such as Workday which spans critical organizational functions such as human resources, finance, and IT, is a transformative journey for organizations. While ERP systems promise enhanced operational efficiency and data integration, their successful deployment hinges on factors beyond technical implementation. This paper explores the critical role that change strategy and communications planning play in ensuring the seamless adoption and sustained utilization of ERP systems like Workday.

Drawing from real-world project experiences and existing literature, the paper highlights how structured change management frameworks, combined with persona-based communication strategies, mitigate resistance, address stakeholder concerns, and drive engagement. It underscores the importance of readiness assessments, stakeholder alignment, and the creation of change networks to build organizational confidence and support.

The paper also examines the measurable impact of robust change strategies, including increased user adoption rates, reduced implementation risks, and improved operational efficiency post-go-live. Furthermore, it identifies key best practices and insights for leaders to navigate the complexities of ERP transformations, ensuring alignment with organizational goals and cultural nuances. By integrating tailored change and communications strategies, organizations can maximize the benefits of ERP systems like Workday, positioning themselves for long-term success in a competitive and dynamic business environment.

**Keywords:** Organization Transformation

## Introduction

Enterprise-wide Resource Planning (ERP) is a well-known industry term used for integrated application software packages containing multiple modules. These systems are designed to codify and automate workflows, document and create traceability for work and support specific business processes and resources of an organization. ERP systems the working of organizations by integrating some or all departments across an organization onto a single system of information that spans workflows, datasets, automata, and user interfaces. Over the past few years, there has been continued development and multiple cycles of implementation of ERP systems in a diverse set of businesses aiming at the whole organization's processes or select functions within the organization.

One such example of an ERP system that the author has used specifically in this paper as a case is Workday. Workday has emerged as one of the pivotal enablers of operational excellence in modern organizations of today focused on HR and Finance functions. Workday's ERP system integrates finance, human resources, planning, and analytics into a unified cloud-based platform. They offer the potential to enhance data accessibility, drive strategic decision-making and streamline processes by integrating diverse business functions, from finance to human resources.

However, the implementation of ERP systems is a complex and often disruptive endeavor, requiring organizations to align technological advancements with organizational readiness and cultural adaptation. It requires addressing socio-technical issues within the organization such as leadership support, change management, training to upskill, and effective communication.

A critical factor determining the success of ERP deployments is the execution of a comprehensive change management and communications strategy. Without addressing the human and organizational aspects of transformation, even the most sophisticated ERP solutions can face resistance, underutilization, or outright failure. A strongly formulated change program helps stakeholders in all levels get engaged, informed and ready to implement changes; clear communication helps fill in the gaps, eliminates confusion and aligns processes with organization strategy.

This paper delves into the importance of change strategy and communications planning in ERP implementations, specifically focusing on tools like Workday. The Author through her experiences provides actionable insights for leaders to navigate the complexities of change by examining key principles, real-world applications, and measurable outcomes.

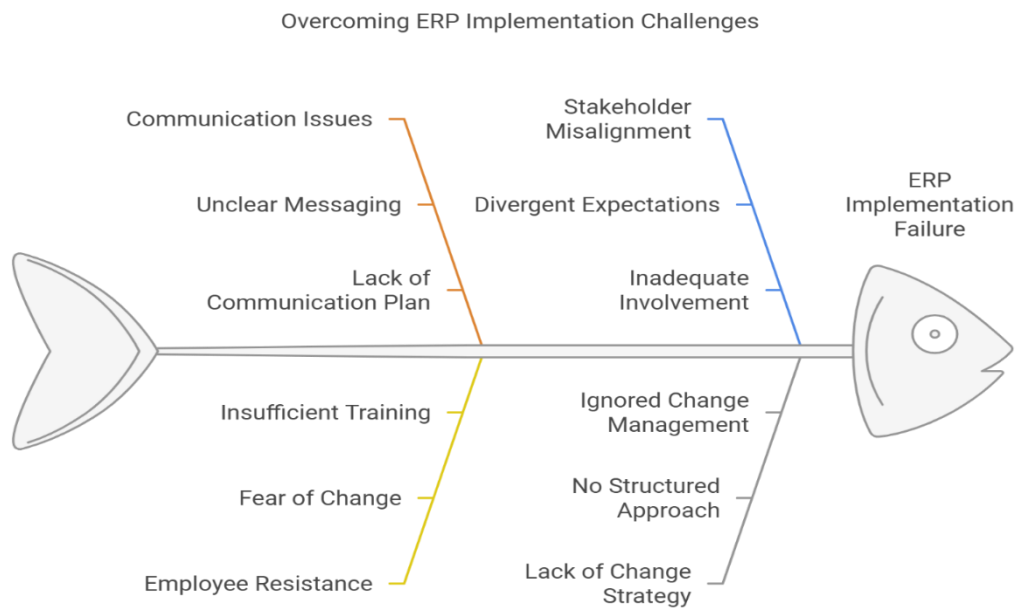
Through robust planning and execution, organizations can maximize ERP benefits, fostering resilience and agility in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

### **Problem Statement**

Implementing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tools like Workday is a complex endeavor that extends beyond technical deployment. While these systems promise operational efficiency and data integration, their success heavily relies on the organization's ability to manage change effectively. There are challenges that can derail the adoption of new systems and processes, for example unclear communication, employee resistance to a new system as well as misaligned stakeholder expectations.

Traditional approaches to ERP implementation frequently underestimate the importance of a structured change strategy and communications plan. Without these, organizations risk low adoption rates, disrupted workflows, and diminished return on investment. The absence of targeted and tailored change and communication strategies leads to reduced employee morale, confusion of how to use a new system and overall ineffective utilization of a newly launched ERP system.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that integrates change management with communication planning, ensuring all stakeholders are aligned and equipped to transition smoothly. This paper explores strategies to overcome these obstacles, driving successful ERP adoption and sustained organizational impact.



**Figure 1: Overcoming ERP Implementation Challenges**

## Literature Review

### Understanding ERP Implementation Challenges

ERP systems like Workday are complex in their nature and development as they aggregate both the non-technical (process and people) and technical (workflow design and automation with technology). An ERP implementation brings about disruption to the organization at multiple levels introducing these new aspects to an already-established operating model.

A typical case of implementation of Workday, a comprehensive ERP system, encounters several challenges, including inadequate organizational preparation, insufficient end-user training, and inconsistent data management. These issues lead to disruptions in business processes and highlight the complexities of integrating new systems into established workflows. Despite these obstacles, organizations go ahead with the investment and overcome the challenges as the payback is worth it. Typical reported improvements in areas such as streamlined onboarding, effective travel management, and user-friendly talent management make it worthwhile for organizations to disrupt operations, design the Workday ERP system for their organization and implement the change. This typical experience underscores the critical importance of thorough change management and communication strategies in ERP deployments to ensure organizational readiness and stakeholder alignment.

Employee and stakeholder resistance to ERP tools is both anticipated and welcome in the sense that their work in its entirety is going to be transferred to an altogether new way and mode of doing things - this has to be fraught with risk and approached with utmost care challenging every nuance of the future operations.

### Change Management in ERP Deployments

Key principles of organizational change management and their relevance to ERP adoption. Effective change management is crucial for the successful implementation of ERP systems. Key principles include proactive management of resistance, a phased approach, and user-centric strategies. Frameworks like the Innovation Process Theory and Aladwani's model provide structured approaches to managing change. Successful examples from government and public organizations highlight the importance of tailored strategies to meet specific organizational needs.

### Key Principles of Change Management in ERP Adoption

- **Proactive Management of Resistance:** Addressing user resistance proactively is essential. This involves understanding the reasons behind resistance and implementing strategies to mitigate it (Aladwani, 2001), (Kapupu & Mignerat, 2015).
- **Phased Approach:** Successful change management strategies often involve three phases: preparing for change, implementing change, and measuring the impact on users. This structured approach helps in managing organizational culture and structure changes effectively (Altamony, 2016).
- **User-Centric Strategies:** Involving users in the implementation process, providing training, and establishing support systems like helpdesks are critical for reducing resistance and ensuring smooth transitions (Sasidharan, 2012).

### Frameworks or models for change management specific to technology implementation

- **Innovation Process Theory Framework:** This framework helps delineate the ERP adoption process by focusing on motivations, concerns, and strategies across organizations (Kumar et al., 2002).
- **Think-Feel-Do Framework:** Aladwani's model, which categorizes activities into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, is effective in managing change during ERP implementations (Kapupu & Mignerat, 2015).
- **Revised Innovation Implementation Model:** This model incorporates change management to enhance the effectiveness of ERP implementations by focusing on specific activities that influence the implementation climate (Kemp & Low, 2008).

### Examples of successful ERP rollouts with robust change management strategies

- Example 1: Canadian government organizations adopt ERP systems for integrated real-time information, better administration, and result-based management, facing unique challenges and implementing best practices (Kumar et al., 2002).
- Example 2: The change management activities employed by a public organization in implementing its SAP ERP system fit the think-feel-do framework proposed by Aladwani's model (Kapupu & Mignerat, 2015).

### Role of Communication Planning in ERP Success

Effective communication planning is a cornerstone of successful ERP implementations. It involves engaging stakeholders, ensuring enterprise-wide communication, and integrating change management strategies. Utilizing appropriate tools and channels can enhance communication effectiveness, while poor communication can hinder ERP adoption and lower employee morale. By prioritizing communication, organizations can improve the likelihood of ERP success and foster a positive work environment.

### Best practices for communication strategies in large-scale technology implementations

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Different stakeholder groups have varying perspectives on communication effectiveness. Tailoring communication strategies to meet these diverse needs is essential for successful ERP implementation (Finney, 2011).
- **Enterprise-wide Communication:** Consistent and clear communication across the organization is a key factor influencing ERP success. It helps in aligning all departments and ensuring everyone is on the same page (Nah et al., 2007), (Dezdar & Ainin, 2011).

### Examples of communication tools and channels for ERP implementation

- **Change Ambassadors:** Employing ‘Change Ambassadors’ within the organization can help break down communication barriers and facilitate smoother transitions during ERP implementation.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Collecting data through surveys and interviews can help in understanding employee concerns and improving communication strategies in all stages of implementation - pre, during, and post (Kim et al., 2016).

### Measurement of Success in ERP Adoption

The success of ERP implementation is multifaceted, involving performance improvements, strategic alignment, and readiness for adoption. Employee feedback and stakeholder alignment play crucial roles in ensuring that the system meets organizational needs and objectives. By focusing on these areas, organizations can better measure and achieve ERP success (Law & Ngai, 2007), (Al-Mashari et al., 2003).

### Proposed Approach: ERP Implementation Success Framework

1. **Conduct a Comprehensive Stakeholder and Current-State Assessment:** Begin by identifying all key stakeholders and mapping their roles, concerns, and expectations. Conduct workshops, interviews, and surveys to understand the current organizational structure, resistance points, and communication needs.  
*Example:* Engaging department leads through focus groups to identify potential resistance to new Workday processes.
2. **Develop Persona-Driven Communication Plans:** Create detailed personas to tailor messages and engagement strategies for different stakeholder groups. Align communication channels and styles with the preferences of each persona.  
*Example:* Sending detailed role-specific guides to HR managers while providing simplified FAQs to frontline staff.
3. **Define and Align Change Strategy Objectives:** Set clear goals for change management, such as increasing adoption rates, reducing resistance, and enhancing user proficiency. Ensure alignment with the organization’s strategic goals and Workday’s envisioned outcomes.  
*Example:* Aligning change objectives with organizational goals like improving employee self-service capabilities.
4. **Establish Leadership Roles and Sponsorship:** Secure commitment from senior leaders to actively champion the change. Define their roles in driving the transformation and create an engagement plan to keep them involved throughout the process.  
*Example:* Leadership-led town halls to explain the strategic importance of Workday adoption.
5. **Build and Empower Change Networks:** Create a network of change champions and super users across departments to act as liaisons and provide localized support. These individuals help amplify communication and provide feedback from their teams.  
*Example:* Designating super users to conduct peer training sessions and provide on-the-ground support during the rollout.
6. **Craft a Multi-Channel Communications Plan:** Develop a robust communications plan that includes a mix of channels like email updates, intranet announcements, town halls, and virtual Q&A sessions. Align messages to the implementation timeline and user needs.  
*Example:* Launching a countdown campaign through newsletters and intranet banners to build awareness before the go-live date.
7. **Design and Execute Targeted Training Programs:** Develop tiered learning programs tailored to different roles and levels of familiarity with the system. Incorporate a mix of self-paced modules, instructor-led sessions, and in-app guidance.

*Example:* Offering foundational training for all employees and advanced Workday analytics training for finance teams.

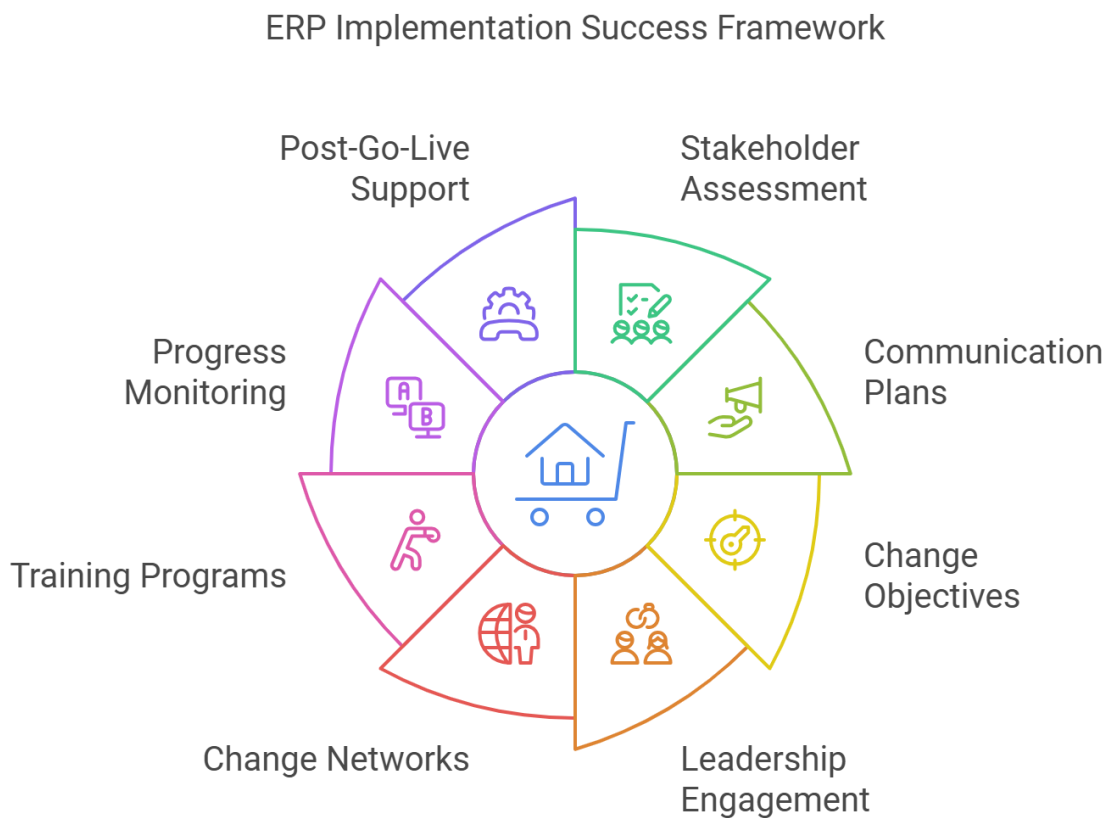
- Monitor Progress and Adapt Strategy Using Metrics:** Track change adoption and communication effectiveness through metrics like training completion rates, feedback surveys, and user proficiency assessments. Use this data to refine strategies and address gaps proactively.

*Example:* Monitoring Help Desk tickets post-rollout to identify areas requiring additional support.

- Sustain Engagement Post-Go-Live:** Maintain momentum by implementing a post-go-live support plan, including continuous education, ongoing communications, and recognition programs for successful adoption.

*Example:* Hosting monthly webinars for super users to share best practices and address evolving needs.

By following these steps, organizations can ensure a smooth ERP deployment, minimize disruption, and maximize the benefits of systems like Workday.



**Figure 2: ERP Implementation Success Framework**

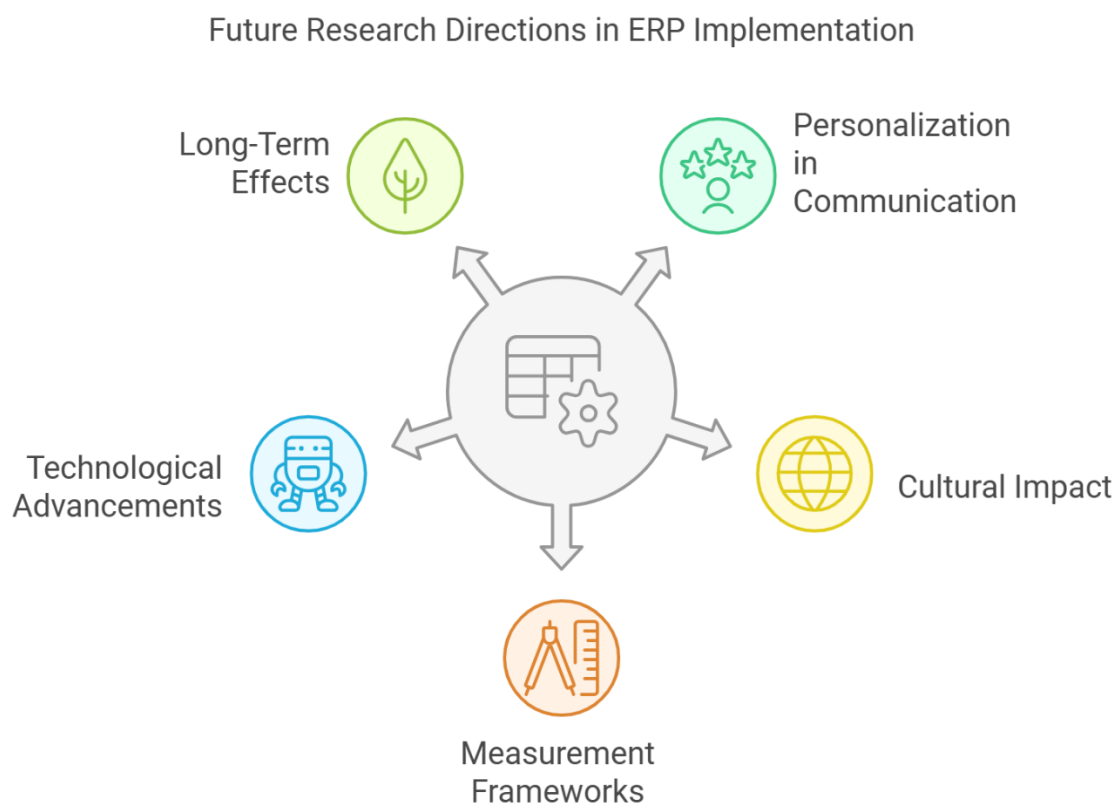
Future Research Areas on Importance of Change Strategy and Communications Planning when deploying Enterprise Resource Planning Tools

The importance of change strategy and communications planning in ERP deployments, such as Workday, provides fertile ground for further exploration. While existing studies have highlighted the role of structured approaches in driving successful implementations, several gaps remain that future research can address:

- Personalization in Communication Strategies:** Investigating the impact of hyper-personalized communication plans tailored to individual roles, departments, or personas could provide insights into optimizing message delivery and engagement during ERP transitions.

2. **Cultural Impact on Change Management:** Exploring how organizational culture influences the adoption of change strategies during ERP deployments. This includes examining cultural readiness and its correlation with successful ERP implementations across industries and regions.
3. **Measurement Frameworks for Change Success:** Developing standardized metrics to quantify the effectiveness of change management and communication strategies. Research can focus on linking these metrics to measurable outcomes like adoption rates, ROI, and operational efficiency.
4. **Technological Advancements in Change Management:** Analyzing how AI, machine learning, and predictive analytics can be integrated into change and communications strategies to anticipate resistance, tailor interventions, and monitor progress in real-time.
5. **Long-Term Effects of Change Strategies:** Evaluating the long-term impact of change management and communications planning post-ERP implementation. This includes studying sustained adoption, knowledge retention, and adaptability to subsequent updates.

These research areas will not only deepen understanding but also provide actionable insights to refine practices and improve ERP deployment outcomes.



**Figure 3: Future Research Direction in ERP Implementation**

### Conclusion

With their ability to streamline operations, integrate processes, and enhance decision-making, ERP tools like Workday represent a transformative opportunity for organizations. However, the technical deployment of such tools is only part of the journey. The success of ERP implementations hinges on a well-crafted change strategy and communications plan that engages stakeholders, aligns objectives, and fosters seamless adoption. This paper has emphasized the critical role of change management in overcoming resistance, building organizational readiness, and enabling workforce proficiency. It has also highlighted how tailored, persona-

driven communications can enhance engagement and clarity, ensuring that all stakeholders understand and embrace the transformation. By embedding structured strategies into ERP rollouts, organizations can mitigate risks, minimize disruptions, and achieve measurable outcomes, such as improved adoption rates, operational efficiency, and ROI.

Looking ahead, businesses must prioritize continuous improvement by evaluating the long-term effectiveness of change strategies and leveraging advanced project and program management tools like Jira, Atlassian, Confluence etc. towards managing complex implementations. The integration of cultural considerations and real-time feedback mechanisms will further strengthen the impact of change initiatives.

Ultimately, an integrated change strategy and communications planning is not a mere means to ERP implementation but an organizational growth enabler for future organization development in an evolving business environment.

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