Closing the Change-Readiness Gap

What Gets Lost Between Strategy and Execution

PMI REPORT

Leaders believe their organizations have conditions for success, while teams experience friction & uncertainty.

Leaders often believe they have established the vision, priorities and conditions needed to respond to change, while the people closest to the work experience something very different: uncertainty and friction that makes it difficult to respond confidently when circumstances change. This disconnect represents a “change-readiness gap:” the distance between an organization’s aspiration to adapt & its capability to realign people, decisions, structures and work as conditions change.

What the data shows

72%

Executives believe their purpose is clear and support the organization’s agility. Practitioners see a different picture.

41%

Less than half of executives believe their operating model supports rapid allocation of capital and talent.

93%

Most executives believe they must challenge the assumptions of their operating models or business approaches at least every five years.

Key Challenges

1. **Signal Loss:** Strategic intent loses clarity as it moves through the organization, making it harder for people to adapt confidently.
2. **Decision Rights:** Authority is far removed from where value is created and adaptation needs to occur.
3. **Structural Barrier:** Work stalls as operating models designed for stability struggle to absorb and respond to continuous change.
4. **Psychological Safety:** Teams lack the trust needed to surface risks, challenge assumptions and adapt effectively.

Closing the Gap

1. **Establish clear goals:** Strategy succeeds when intent travels with the work.
2. **Empower teams:** Moving authority closer to the work accelerates value.
3. **Remove Bottle necks:** Organizations move at the speed of their slowest dependency.
4. **Open Dialogue:** Psychological safety is an operational issue, not a cultural one.

Connection to Manifesto for Enterprise Agility:

The Manifesto for Enterprise Agility defines the values and principles that enable enterprise agility. This research, drawn from the same evidence base—including surveys of more than 700 executives, and insights from more than 30 C-suite leaders—shows where those conditions break down in practice and how the gap can be closed.

The encouraging reality is that the change-readiness gap can be narrowed.
Every clear conversation about purpose reduces signal loss. Every decision moved closer to the work accelerates value. Every structural barrier removed decreases friction. Every act of trust expands the organizational capacity to learn and adapt.

Read the full report on PMI.org