

Who, between APMG and Prosci®, understands what really matters to Change Management?

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Executive Summary

The first time when I came across the situation where Prosci® meets APMG Change Management was in the APMG Change Management Foundation and Practitioner course held last year. I was the trainer in that course. I met a gentleman who is a Prosci® certification holder and is a senior manager in one of the Prosci® Authorized Training Providers. He shared me his reasons of attending my course: “I need to get the APMG Change Management Practitioner certification for pitching a project and the official handbook is renowned to be very comprehensive in the field of organisational development”. Since then, I started to feel interested about the key differences between these two certification schemes. Moreover, according to the Google search algorithm, APMG Change Management and Prosci® are the most digitally popular across the globe because they are listed as the first two results, by excluding those paid advertisements, if you type in the phrase “change management certification” and do a search.

In this article, I will offer a detailed analysis of these two renowned certification schemes and provide a brief comparison of them.



Introduction

The comparison and analysis will be carried out in different aspects as listed below:

Availability

- Offerings
- Curriculum Design
- Content and Syllabus Coverage
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Key Differences of APMG Change Management and Prosci®

Availability

Availability means the quality of being able to be accessed, reached or obtained. Physical and virtual presence in a globalised (a combination of words “globalised” and “localised”) fashion can boost popularity and market penetration across the globe. Therefore, I will consider availability in two sub-aspects: physical availability and digital availability

“ Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. ”

-Nelson Mandela

Physical Availability

Physical availability can be understood as physical presence, which can be revealed from the number of organisations authorised to offer training courses and examinations in their registered locations. I know – it is difficult to verify them, so I just referred to their registered addresses according to the register published in the official websites of APMG and Prosci®.

As of June 2017, there are 153 APMG Change Management Accredited Training Organisations (ATOs) and Affiliates in 33 countries whilst there are 34 Prosci® Primary Affiliates and Authorized Training Partners in 25 countries. An organisation is not double-counted if it is registered in one location but offers training courses in multiple locations.

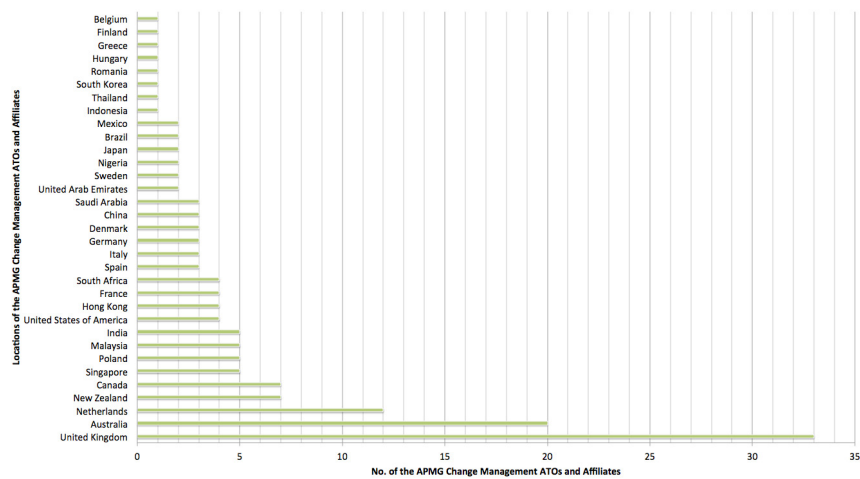


Figure 1: APMG Change Management ATOs and Affiliates

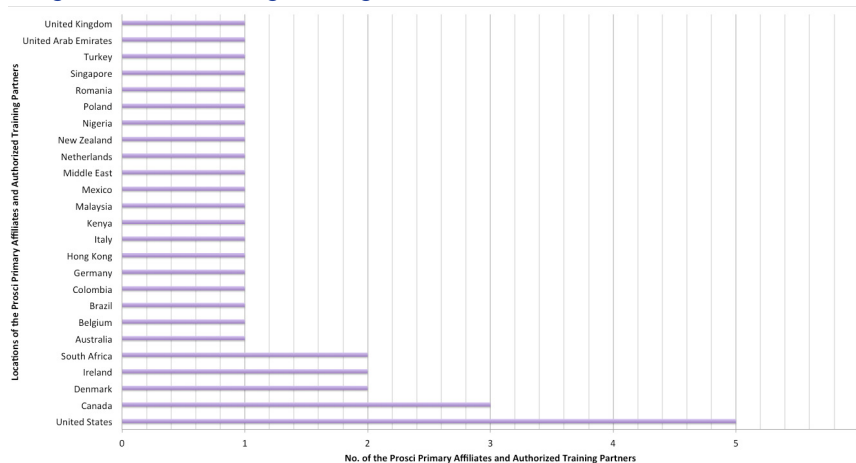




Figure 2: Prosci Primary Affiliates and Authorized Training Providers

Digital Availability

Digital availability is measured based on the figures referring to multiple digital channels as listed below:

Company		
Website	www.apmg-international.com	www.prosci.com
Facebook	www.facebook.com/APMG-International-1375023112557930	www.facebook.com/ProsciExperience
Google+	plus.google.com/+Apmg-international	plus.google.com/+ProSciIncPoway
Linkedin	www.linkedin.com/company-beta/1994898	www.linkedin.com/company-beta/107223
Twitter	@APMG_Inter	@Prosci
YouTube	www.youtube.com/user/APMGInternational	www.youtube.com/channel/UCpROP3F4AOo2ixTuq5KQhBw

In order to make the analysis simpler, only the channels of APMG and Prosci® will be compared although the digital marketing capability of their affiliates, and accredited and authorized partners will also affect the popularity and reachability of the certification programs.

Digital Channel (Data Collected as of 9th June 2017)		
Alexa Web Traffic global rank	149,249	204,362
No. of followers on Facebook page	19	1,347
No of likes on Facebook page	17	1,360
No. of Followers Google+ Page	332	9
No. of Search results in Google	About 724,000	About 486,000
No. of Followers in LinkedIn Page	10,300	10,790
No. of Followers in Twitter	6,788	2,564
No. of Tweets in Twitter	10.5K	1,078
Last update in YouTube channel	4 months ago	2 years ago

According to the Google Scholar, it is found that the official handbook of APMG Change Management was cited 4 times by other publications whilst the books written by the founder of Prosci®, Jeff Hiatt, regarding the people side of change and the ADKAR Model were respectively cited 202 times and 252 times.

Offerings

APMG Change Management certification scheme has two levels: Foundation and Practitioner where the Foundation credential is the prerequisite for participants to sit for the Practitioner examination. The Foundation course typically takes 3 days and the Practitioner course takes 2 days. APMG does not organise nor sell APMG Change Management certification programs directly to end customers, but only relies on the ATOs and affiliates to offer certification programs to the public and any organisation.

Prosci® has done a great job in service and product differentiation and launched varieties of courses including the 3-day Prosci® Change Management certification program, the experienced practitioner program, the train-the-trainer program, the enterprise change management boot camp, and advanced certification tracks such as Advanced Change Practitioner, Advanced Deployment Leader, and Advanced Instructor. However, according to Prosci®, only Prosci® and Primary Affiliates can offer open enrolment public programs whilst Authorized Training Providers can only provide on-site programs to specific clients, not for the public.

Curriculum Design

APMG Change Management is a two-tiered scheme of qualifications fully aligned with the Change Management Body of Knowledge (CMBOK) that is developed in a top-down design model for providing fully comprehensive contents to those who seek for knowledge required to understand and interpret a wide range of situations. Such a two-tiered scheme design gives participants a clear roadmap from acquiring knowledge to building skills in applying the knowledge in a given case study. Leader, and Advanced Instructor. However, according to Prosci®, only Prosci® and Primary Affiliates can offer open enrolment public programs whilst Authorized Training Providers can only provide on-site programs to specific clients, not for the public.



People don't resist change.
They resist being changed!



-Peter Senge

As emerged from 8 change management research studies from 1998 and 2013, Prosci® is an outcome-oriented suite of change management methodologies and tools developed in a bottom-up design model, featuring the ADKAR Model, the 3-Phase Process, and Enterprise Change Management suite. Therefore, its approaches are very pragmatic in managing changes at an individual level by measuring change effectiveness and gauging the levels of readiness and commitment. Many a little makes a mickle, so Prosci® gives change managers a lens through which to focus on details to examine sources of resistance so as to enable changes at an individual level.

Content and Syllabus Coverage

The syllabus of APMG Change Management certification focuses on the understanding of theories and principles rather than a suite of instant toolkits. It covers 12 chapters in the official handbook where the topics include, but are not limited to, changes and change management from individual and organisational perspectives, why change management is important, why people embrace or resist change, drivers of change, models of the change process, roles and responsibilities of a change sponsor and change agents, stakeholder strategy, communication and engagement, facilitation, team building, assessment of change impact, change readiness and relationship with project management.

Prosci®'s 3-day Change Management certification program primarily focuses on their research findings, the calculation of Return on Investment (ROI), the instant toolkits such as the ADKAR Model and assessment checklists, and how to apply the model and tools in the 3-Phase Process for managing changes. Prosci® also covers some of the topics in APMG Change Management, but only in other experienced practitioner program, enterprise change management boot camp, and the advanced certification tracks.



Every position in life is balanced by creating a harmony
between the inner self and the surrounding world



-Hellmut Wilhelm

Strengths and Weaknesses

APMG Change Management

The key strengths of APMG Change Management include, but are not limited to, its comprehensive contents and the suitability of a wide range of people with different background and levels of experience and expertise. Moreover, diversity of the contents can drive diversity of participants' thoughts and ideas so more innovation can be generated and exchanged in the course of learning.

In some sense, being over-comprehensive may easily lead inexperienced change managers to getting lost in a maze of theories and principles because it is challenging for both trainers and learners to go through so many theories, principles and scholars' names in depth within just a few days. Therefore, a competent and experienced trainer with consultancy capabilities is a must to guide the participants to go along a right track and apply the knowledge in real situations. Besides that, the official handbook indeed addresses many tools, models and checklists, including the tools for analysing capabilities (Section D in the Chapter 2), the AKDAR Model for measuring engagement in a change journey (Section D in the Chapter 7), checklists and the tools for planning to sustain change and managing the transition (Section B in the Chapter 7), but they are not included in the syllabus.

Prosci®

The key strengths of Prosci® include, but are not limited to, the research findings. Prosci® is a fantastic suite developed based on reflective practice that is essential to practice-based professional learning. In addition, Prosci® is very pragmatic, process-oriented and tool-driven, offering learners a clear direction that humans are key and only drivers to everything from both the psychological and physiological perspectives and establishing a change management framework with very clear boundary where the ADKAR Model is for individual change management, the 3-Phase Process is for organisational change management, and the

Maturity Model is for enterprise-level assessment.

Nevertheless, researches may lead to stereotypes. Besides that, we are in a complex world, but Prosci® does not expressly address emergent changes and systems thinking in their certification course. Moreover, when the Prosci® ADKAR Model is applied to changes in both individual and organisational dimensions, the changes at both levels are assumed to be linear that awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement take place sequentially. This seems to have over-simplified organisational changes, especially systemic changes in organisations.

Key Differences of APMG Change Management and Prosci

All-Round vs Unified

Having said for a couple of times, the official handbook of APMG Change Management covers multi-disciplinary domains, not only change management but also learning and development, organisational development, training planning and support, behavioural psychology, cognitive science, complexity theory, chaos theory, cybernetics, systems thinking, project and programme management, communications planning, stakeholder strategy, and change readiness, planning, assessment and measurement.

In contrast, the world of Prosci® is simpler. Regardless of the nature and levels of the Prosci® courses, the key focus is always on the understanding and application of the ADKAR Model, the Prosci® 3-Phase Process, the Prosci® PCT Model, the Prosci® 5 Tenets of Change Management, the Prosci® 5 organisational change management levers, the calculation of ROI, and the Prosci® Change Management Maturity Model in different situations.

Tools and Templates

Both APMG Change Management and Prosci® recognise tools and templates as an important resource for change managers; however, no specific toolsets or methodologies are endorsed in APMG Change Management whilst Prosci® itself is a brand of the suite of change management models, process and tools with documentations (known as 'levers' in the world of Prosci®) and checklists.

Loosely Coupled vs Tightly Coupled

APMG Change Management fully aligns with the CMBok that is generic and very comprehensive across multidisciplinary domains whilst Prosci® invented their proprietary methodologies, tools, documentations, process, checklists, assumptions, and best practices, together with the maturity model and a set of beliefs in change management, and envisages that the suite of all these proprietary products is considered as a leading way to resolving everything in the field of change management. In adopting Prosci® in a particular organisation, I wonder if the organisation is required to accommodate itself to the Prosci® framework of everything and the Prosci®'s belief system.

Integration with Project Management

APMG Change Management covers the considerations of project management with an emphasis that change management and project management are distinct disciplines. In contrast, Prosci® emphasises the importance of the integration with project management. In Prosci® PCT Model, project management is one of the three key elements. In Prosci® Change Management Maturity Model, the highest level, Level 5, is to achieve project management and change management integration.

Tone

The tone used in the official handbook of APMG Change Management stay neutral and unbiased by offering various theories, principles, models and case studies from different points of view, even in the chapters about why people resist change and why change failed. In contrast, Prosci® directly stimulates humans' emotions by defining the theme that employees' resistance and the ineffective management of the people side of change is the key obstacle to success for major change projects and then offering a suite of models and toolkits for managing employees and keeping track of their engagement and progress. However, I personally believe that people are strategic assets to organisational development and that negative stereotype is contagious. In educating people and leading changes, I wonder: should it be better to stay neutral and appreciative of everything happened and happening, because all these are part of lessons learnt in our life?

Conclusion

No one size fits all. Some may say that we study because we need to work. Some may even say that we can prove our capability and competence by recognition through references, recommendations and endorsements from clients, former supervisors, team members or people alike, so certifications are not needed. However, I'd rather say that learning is a lifelong mission, but learning outcomes depend on learning styles (Honey and Mumford, 1992). My motto is always that, "if you do not change yourself, how could you change others?" In order to help people adjust attitudes to change and embrace changes, it is better to expose them to a wide range of different views (Smith et. al., 2014). APMG Change Management is good at widening one's 'zone of tolerance' whilst Prosci® is good at tracking peoples' attitudes to change. Which certification is better depends on your experience and objectives; how change is managed depends on the metaphor (Morgan, 2006), cultures (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012) and cultural forces (Taylor, 2005) of your organisation, but not on which methodologies to be adopted. Therefore, apart from acquiring and accumulating recognition through my professional connections, I will also keep learning and widening my 'zone of tolerance'. How about you?



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Zenith Law is the sole Founder, Managing Director and Lead Trainer of Zenospace International Limited in the United Kingdom and Zenospace Limited in Hong Kong, focusing on education, consulting and research for personal learning and organisational development. He is an accredited and certified trainer approved by APMG International, PECB, and PEOPLECERT in multi-disciplinary professional areas, including but not limited to, change management, project, programme and portfolio management, risk management, information security management, front-to-back technology, quality management, asset management,

IT service management, and governance, audit and compliance. He is a holder of several bachelor and master degrees in computer engineering, telecommunications, and international corporate and financial law. Recently, he became an OISC-accredited immigration adviser for enabling Zenospace to be a knowledge and talent hub to acquire, bridge and develop talents from outside the UK for the sustainable development of our society and country. For more details about Zenospace and Zenith, please refer to the corporate website at <http://zenospace.com> and his LinkedIn profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/zenithlaw>.

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