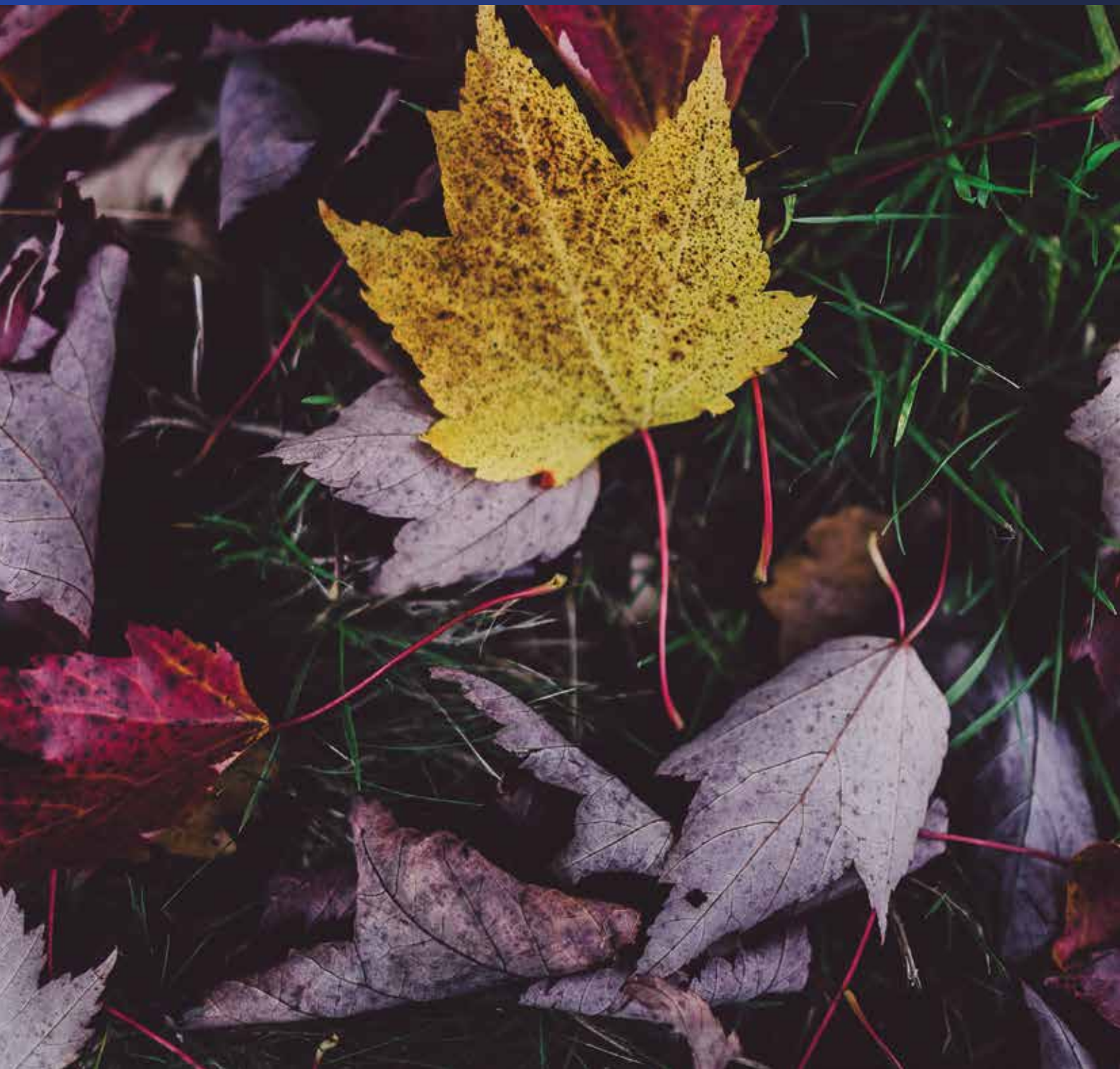# Change management certification courses from APMG and Prosci®.

Which one is right for you?

By Chris Moore, Director for Aspire's consulting services and
Robert Cole Managing Director for the Centre for Change Management (C4CM)

Executive Summary

Both APMG and Prosci offer certification programmes for people seeking to know more about change management. In the recent times, these are increasingly seen as alternatives or competitors and many potential candidates want to know how these offers differ. The APMG course content covers many of the foundation theories that underpin today's change management practice, as well as some practical approaches that candidates can use on change initiatives. The Prosci course offers training on Prosci's research-based methodology and toolkit; which enables candidates to develop their change management plans during their attendance on the course.

Key distinctions of APMG

- Broader learning of background and theories supporting the discipline of change management based on a Body of Knowledge

- Rigorous exam and certification process

- Greater emphasis on passing the exam

- Alignment of content to a professional body

- Authorised Training Providers (ATP) may use their own training material, accredited by APMG

- The course may be offered as an eLearning option, including an on-line exam

Key distinctions of Prosci

- Learning is focussed on the Prosci proprietary methodology and supporting tools

- Attendees develop their change management plan on the course

- Prosci method is research-based and internally consistent

- Training fee includes a lifetime licence to use the Prosci eToolkit

- ATPs use Prosci training material and hand-outs

- The course and exam are face-to-face only

- Prosci can be used in teams and facilitates teams to deal with challenging situations

It is the view of the authors that these two courses are more complementary than competitors. APMG is strong on theory and the body of knowledge; the "why" and "what". Prosci is strong on practice and application; the "how". If both courses are taken they would offer valuable, additive learning for the change management professional.

The APMG course is a broad high-level introduction of theory and ideas about change management; suitable for someone starting in the field or a self-taught manager looking for some new ideas and thinking tools to improve their approach to the complex problems in change. The Change Management course comprises of two levels; Foundation for those who are starting in the role as change managers or are involved in implementing change in organisations. The practitioner level is for experienced change managers involved in initiating change and executing it across programs and projects. The Prosci course is ideal for someone who is facing a change situation and wants to know what to do and when; it is about the process of change in the organisation and for individuals.

Introduction

This paper has been produced in response to a request from APMG for a white paper that would help potential customers understand how the two certifications compare.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an objective comparison of the change management certifications offered by APMG and Prosci. It has been co-authored by Chris Moore, an Advanced Prosci Instructor at Aspire Europe, and Robert Cole who is Aspire's Lead APMG Change Management Trainer and contributor to the APMG course text (see Annex B).

Background to APMG Change Management course

The APMG Change Management course is offered as a 3-day Foundation and 5 day Practitioner course. The current course content (a formal syllabus) is selected from the *Effective Change Manager's Handbook*[1], which covers the scope of the Change Management Institute's (CMI) Body of Knowledge. Originally the course was developed around the content of the book by Esther Cameron and Mike Green; *Making Sense of Change Management*.

The Effective Change Manager's Handbook, summarises a range of well- established change management theories and combines them with best-practice approaches and techniques that offer the practitioner some practical tools-for-the-job. The course syllabus selects a small subset of these theories and best-practice for examination.

Background to Prosci Change Management courses

Prosci is a research tool and methodology development, advisory services and training organisation based in Fort Collins, Colorado, established by Jeff Hiatt 22 years ago to undertake research into change management practices. They offer a range of role-based change management courses, using similar core material which is drawn from their own research-based methodology and content.

- 3-day Change Management Certification programme*
- ½ day Sponsor briefing
- 1 day Manager programme
- 1 day Project Managers programme
- ½ day Employee orientation programme
- 1 day Enterprise Change Management boot camp
- 3-day Experienced Practitioner programme
- 2-day Advanced Immersion Workshop
- 4 day Train the Trainer programme

For the purposes of this paper a comparison is drawn between Prosci's 3 day Change Management certification programme* and the APMG 5 day Practitioner course. However, it is worth noting that Prosci's Experienced Practitioner Programme for advanced practitioners is probably more closely aligned with APMG's course content, but this programme is rarely available in the UK.

Prosci have developed their own proprietary methodology; a structured, tailorable model for managing change at the organisational level. This is supported by ADKAR®, a well-known model for managing individual change that is also covered in the *Change Manager's Handbook*. Prosci's methodology is based upon the same well-known theories that are presented on the APMG course and in addition they have drawn from their own research; a biennial, method-agnostic study which is published as *Best Practices in Change Management*[2]. The Prosci methodology is supported by an on-line eToolkit, which contains the diagnostic and assessment tools, plus templates and guidance, for use by change practitioners on actual projects. The course fee includes an individual, lifetime licence to use the eToolkit.

Comparing APMG and Prosci

Comparing course design

These courses have some significant differences:

- Candidates on the Prosci course will submit pre-work based upon an actual change project they are working on and they will be taught to apply Prosci's change management tools to that project. During the course, they will develop their change management plans, culminating in a presentation to the other candidates or their sponsor. The Prosci course is very practical and specific to Prosci's methodology.

- The APMG course is wide-ranging and more theoretical, drawing material from notable change management writers and teaching candidates to consider a variety of techniques and tools through exercises and a case study. APMG's course is not method-specific.

- In many markets, the Prosci public courses are residential with evening activities designed to get to know the candidates as well as to continue with project work and presentations. (On-site, client specific courses do not require the residential approach.) It is worth noting, that when the course is run as a client specific course, project sponsors are invited to attend evening presentations of their team's change management plans.

- The APMG course focusses on the exam and examinable material; exercises and use of a case studies vary between different ATPs.

1 The Effective Change Manager's Handbook ©The APM Group Limited 2014
2 Best Practices in Change Management ©2016 Prosci Inc.

Comparing content

A detailed comparison of the content of both courses is provided at Annex A. This shows that there are many similarities in the content covered, although in some cases the underlying approach and content is quite different.

The APMG content differs from Prosci in the following key areas:

a) Theories and models that underpin change management best practice such as Kotter, Lewin, Bridges, Herzberg, Maslow, etc. The break-out exercises encourage participants to consider this learning and apply it in practice to the development of their change management interventions.

b) Topics which are not explicitly covered by Prosci include;

   1. motivation,

   2. learning styles,

   3. culture,

   4. change definition,

   5. vision,

   6. the change agent network.

c) Stakeholder mapping and analysis techniques. (Prosci focusses on the sponsor coalition and middle managers.)
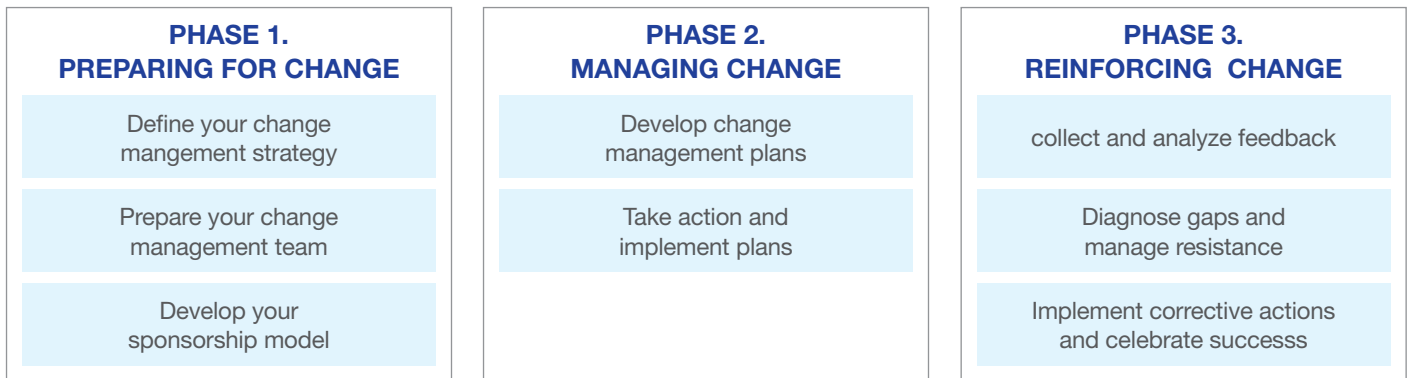
The Prosci course draws a lot from Prosci's own research; this data and the associated insights distinguish Prosci's approach. It takes a much lighter approach to the development of change management thinking and supporting theories.

The Prosci content differs from APMG in the following key areas:

a) Prosci's research on change management and the lessons that can be learned

b) The course covers in more detail the engagement of sponsors and middle-managers, how to assess the sponsorship coalition, including competency assessments for key change management roles.

c) Training to use ADKAR® is a significant module

d) The course is structured around the five CM plans (sponsorship, line manager coaching, resistance, training and communications) which candidates build during their attendance.

e) The eToolkit includes risk assessment, readiness assessment and a comprehensive impact assessment, as well as AKDAR® results. The use of and licence for this toolkit is another distinguishing feature.

Comparing lifecycles

Prosci 3-Phase project lifecycle

PHASE 1. PREPARING FOR CHANGE	PHASE 2. MANAGING CHANGE	PHASE 3. REINFORCING CHANGE
Define your change mangement strategy	Develop change management plans	collect and analyze feedback
Prepare your change management team	Take action and implement plans	Diagnose gaps and manage resistance
Develop your sponsorship model		Implement corrective actions and celebrate successs

Main Activities

- Conduct readiness assessments
- Reform risk analysis
- Anticipate resistance areas
- Design special tactics
- Develop overall strategy
- Architect team structure
- Prepare your team
- Assess sponsorship

Main Activities

- Create plans for
  - Communications
  - Sponsorship
  - Coaching
  - Training
  - Resistance management
- Integrate into project plan
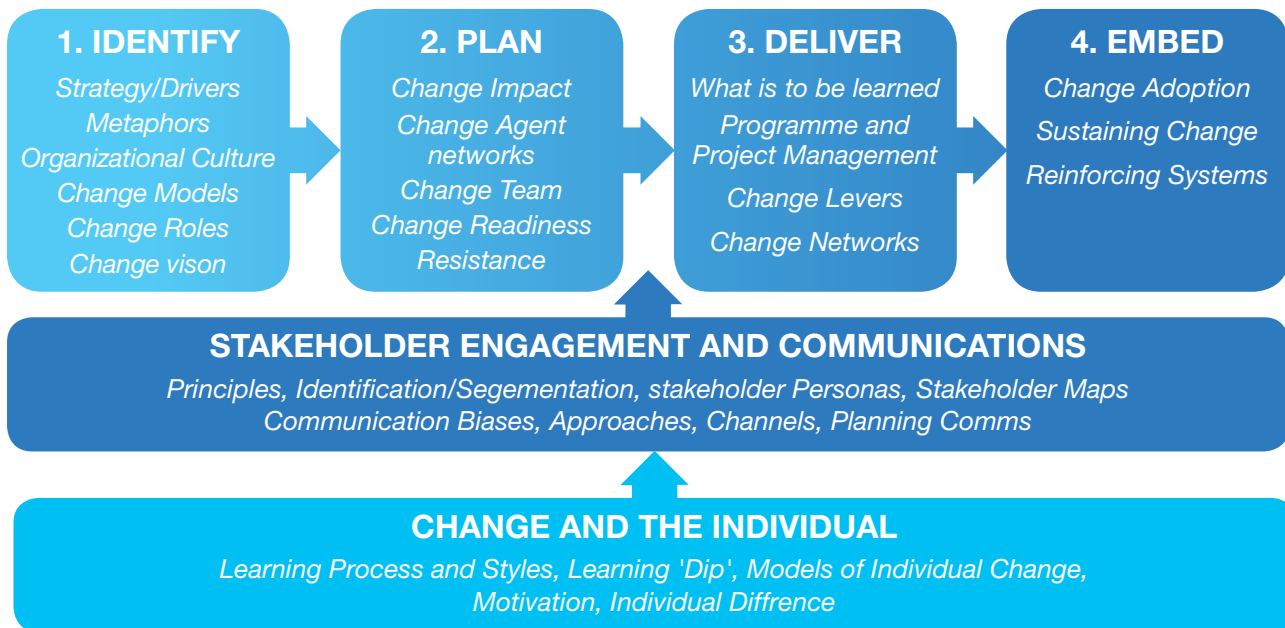- Execute plans

Main Activities

- Proactively collect feedback and listen to employees
- Audit compliance with "new way of doing things"
- Identify gaps and areas or resistance
- Implement corrective action
- Celebrate successes
- Move to "new" business as usual

At the top level these lifecycles look very similar, but there are two key differences:

1. APMG stage one, relating to change drivers and vision, is not included in the Prosci lifecycle, which assumes that the change has already been defined. In practice, of course, change is often weakly defined and justified.

2. The Prosci course uses the lifecycle as its agenda, with the attendees completing each step and sub-step for their own project, using Prosci's assessment tools and the eToolkit.

APMG lifecycle

Generic Change Process

1. IDENTIFY	2. PLAN	3. DELIVER	4. EMBED
Strategy/Drivers *Metaphors* *Organizational Culture* *Change Models* *Change Roles* *Change vison*	*Change Impact* *Change Agent networks* *Change Team* *Change Readiness* *Resistance*	*What is to be learned* *Programme and Project Management* *Change Levers* *Change Networks*	*Change Adoption* *Sustaining Change* *Reinforcing Systems*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Principles, Identification/Segementation, stakeholder Personas, Stakeholder Maps Communication Biases, Approaches, Channels, Planning Comms

CHANGE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Learning Process and Styles, Learning 'Dip', Models of Individual Change, Motivation, Individual Diffrence

Comparing certification and operating arrangements

With respect to practitioner certification:

1. The APMG course has a more rigorous approach to certification. It includes over 3 hours of exam time to achieve Practitioner certification using objective testing. A primary objective of the course is to achieve certification, with the option to stop at the Foundation level (40 minutes exam time). If both Foundation and Practitioner Exams are passed then the candidate will automatically pass the Knowledge component of CMI's Foundation level accreditation.

2. The Prosci course is focussed on the learning experience and the exam is less rigorous, with other factors being relevant to the certification, including the quality of project work and the presentation. The exam is 20 minutes multiple choice; perhaps best seen as a reinforcement device, although Prosci have strengthened the questions and marking process in recent years. Certification entitles candidates to credits with the Project Management Institute, the Association of Change Management Professionals and the HR Certification Institute. Certified candidates will also automatically pass the Knowledge component of CMI's Foundation level accreditation.

Although Prosci's certification process is less rigorous it is worth noting that Prosci apply tight control on the quality of the learning experience with less delegation to the ATPs than that allowed by APMG.

With respect to instructor certification:

1. The Prosci instructor qualification process requires a 4 day train-the-trainer course (mostly only available in the USA), followed by an audit which involves a Prosci auditor sitting in the training room for the full 3 days.

2. An APMG trainer must pass the practitioner exam with a higher pass mark as well as pass a product knowledge test and is observed by an APMG assessor delivering part of a course.

With respect to course material:

1. For Prosci courses this is provided by Prosci, not by the ATP as in the APMG model. Many affiliates ship the material from the USA and others print the material locally, particularly when using translated material which includes: Arabic, French, French Canadian, German, Portuguese, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

2. For the APMG course the slide set design and exercises are undertaken by the individual ATP; to encourage competition amongst ATPs. APMG sets the syllabus that must be covered by ATPs and then certifies the APT material.

Both APMG and Prosci have a network of ATPs and apply rigour to the qualification and appointment of these providers. Prosci also appoints regional Primary Affiliates, only one per region/ nation. Primary Affiliates are the only providers authorised to run open-enrolment courses, which limits the public availability of Prosci courses.

Annex A: course syllabus comparison

APMG Change Management Syllabus

The Change Management Perspective	✔
Learning and the individual	
- Learning process and styles	✘
- Learning Dip	✘
Change and the Individual	
- Models	✔
- Motivation	✘
- Individual differences	✘
Change and the organization	
- Metaphors	✘
- Culture	✘
- Models of change	✘
- Emergent change	✘
Key roles *Change Agents not in Prosci*	✔
Drivers of change	✘
Developing vision	✘
Stakeholder strategy	✘
Communication and engagement	✔
Change Impact	✔
Change readiness	✔
Preparing for resistance	✔
Training planning	✔
Project management	✔
Sustaining change	✔

Key:

✔ Topic covered in both, content may vary
✘ Topic not covered in both

Annex A: course syllabus comparison

Prosci Change Management Syllabus

Prosci Project Change Triangle (health check)	✔
Why is Change Management important *mostly* ✔	
- Connecting change to business results	✘
- Mitigating negative consequences	✔
- Speed of adoption, utilization and proficiency	✔
Prosci Change Management research	✘
ADKAR – model for individual change	✘
Prosci Change Management methodology	✘
Change concepts	✘
Change Management & Project Management	✘
Preparing for Change	
- Readiness assessments	✔
- Risk analysis	✔
- Group Impact assessments	✔
- Change team	✔
- Governance/sponsor model	✘
- Change Management Strategy	✘
- Sponsorship coalition assessment	✘
Managing Change	
- Comms plan	✔
- Sponsor Roadmap	✘
- Manager coaching plan	✘
- Resistance Management plan	✔
- Training plan	✔
Evening presentation of CM plans to sponsor	✘
Reinforcing change	

Annex B: about the authors

Chris Moore

A Director for Aspire's consulting services, Chris is a practising programme manager and an Advanced Prosci Instructor who has been delivering Prosci courses for over 5 years. He has run over 20 public and private 3-day certification programmes, as well as numerous Sponsor Briefings and Manager programmes. In addition to teaching the Prosci methodology, Chris has extensive experience of the practical application of Prosci to manage change on major transformation programmes.

Robert Cole

Managing Director for the Centre for Change Management (C4CM) and Aspire's Lead Trainer for the APMG Change Management course. Rob was also a contributing author for The Effective Change Manager's Handbook and lead author of the course content for Aspire's APMG accredited course material. As well as training, Rob has extensive experience of managing information technology, business strategy and innovation.

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