

What *Effective* Sponsorship Actually Means

A sponsor is not the person who approves the change. A sponsor is the person the organization watches to find out whether the change is real.



Be visible, the whole way

Participate actively and publicly from kickoff through adoption. Sponsors who launch and leave signal that the change was an announcement, not a priority.



Build the coalition

Bring your peer leaders with you so the change is not one person's initiative. This is the role sponsors most often skip, and the one teams notice most.



Say why, in your own words

Communicate directly with the people affected, repeatedly, in language that fits their work. Not a forwarded email. Not a slide someone else wrote.

79%
vs **27%**

Projects with extremely effective sponsors meet or exceed objectives 79% of the time. With extremely ineffective sponsors, 27%. Active and visible sponsorship has ranked as the top contributor to change success in every benchmarking study since 1998.

Source: Prosci Best Practices in Change Management



A quick self-check

When did you last bring up this change without being asked? Who else is visibly carrying it besides you? And whose words were you using, yours or someone else's?

when to Coach

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when to Direct

*They have what they need to get there.
Your job is to help them find it.*

They're capable but stuck or hesitant

What's making this hard? What have you already tried? What strengths do you bring? How will you know you are making progress

More than one reasonable path exists

What options do you see? What would you do if it were entirely your call? Who else is in your thinking?

You're seeing resistance you don't understand

What are you worried about losing here? What risk do you see that I might not? What makes this important now?

Ownership needs to grow

What would you need to feel ready to own this? What's your first step, and by when?

Something went wrong and learning matters more than fixing

What would you do differently next time? What resources are needed?

*Some situations require the sponsor to be clear in order
to achieve the desired outcome.*

Safety, legal, regulatory, or compliance is at stake

State the requirement plainly. It isn't open for exploration.

A genuine emergency or time-critical call

Decide, act, then explain your reasoning afterward.

They're missing information or a skill they can't derive

Teach it. Asking questions about a knowledge gap is just a quiz.

The decision is already made above you

Say so honestly. Never run a coaching conversation about a settled question.

Performance is below a clear standard

Name the standard and the gap directly. Then coach on how to close it.

The test: does this person need to **find the answer**, or **receive it**?

