

Sponsor Excellence

The full working system for preparing sponsor conversations, building a sponsorship strategy, and running the sponsor-facing kickoff conversation. Two fillable worksheets plus the onboarding talk track — adapt every field to your own organization and initiative.

What's inside

- Worksheet 1 — Sponsor Conversation Prep (use before your first sponsor meeting)
- Worksheet 2 — Sponsorship Strategy Builder (use to finalize your change strategy)
- Talk Track — Sponsor Onboarding Conversation (what to actually say in the room)

WORKSHEET 1

Sponsor Conversation Prep

Complete this before your first sponsor conversation. Treat your notes as working hypotheses, not conclusions.

Initiative basics

Initiative name	
Business area	
Project / program lead	
Named sponsor	
Expected sponsorship status going in (clear / partial / unclear)	

Pre-work checklist

Before meeting the sponsor, confirm you've reviewed or identified each of these:

- Project summary or charter
- Business objective and the case for change
- Impacted groups — who is most affected
- Known leadership context — sensitivity, prior history, competing priorities
- Likely sponsor confirmed
- Known risks or concerns to raise

Prep questions

What does this initiative most need from sponsorship?	
What may already be unclear, risky, or culturally sensitive?	
What needs to be clarified or confirmed in the conversation?	

What to listen for

Signal	What it sounds like	What it means for your approach
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Strong alignment	Clear on their role. Aligned on why it matters. Open about expectations.	Confirm in the strategy. Build on this.
Weak alignment	Confusion about the sponsor role. Assumes you own all people-side leadership.	Correct early. Revisit role clarity before building the strategy.
Coverage concerns	Sponsor not yet confirmed. Too distant from impacted groups.	Flag in the strategy. Plan for additional leader support.
Capacity risks	Competing priorities. Limited availability at key moments.	Be realistic about involvement. Focus on fewer, higher-impact moments.

After the conversation

Sponsor reaction and questions raised	
Concerns or pushback to address	
Constraints on availability or support needed	
Overall sponsorship status following meeting (clear / partial / at risk)	

WORKSHEET 2

Sponsorship Strategy Builder

Use what you learned in Worksheet 1 to build the sponsorship approach. This feeds directly into the sponsorship section of your change strategy.

1 • Sponsorship strategy summary

In 3-5 lines: what kind of sponsorship does this project need, what must the sponsor do most, and what's the overall approach?

2 • Key sponsor moments

Name 3-5 specific moments where sponsor involvement will make the biggest difference — the moment itself, not just the phase. Common ones: kickoff or launch, a leadership alignment session, a key-message reset when confusion surfaces, the major transition or go-live, a post-launch reinforcement check-in, a performance or adoption review.

Sponsor moment	Why this moment needs the sponsor	Prep and support needed

3 • Sponsorship risks

Sponsorship risk or constraint	How it shapes the approach

4 • Sponsorship effectiveness

Rate at delivery and again at close, based on observed behavior at the moments that mattered — not general impressions. 1 = largely absent or misaligned · 2 = some visibility, inconsistent · 3 = consistently present at key moments · 4 = actively sponsoring throughout.

Point in time	Rating (1-4)	Notes
Delivery		
Close		

5 • Sponsor alignment summary

What this initiative most needs from sponsorship	
Key sponsor moments	
How you'll support the sponsor	
Sponsor alignment to strategy (yes / partial / no)	

Sponsor Onboarding Conversation

A ready-to-run conversation for the moment you bring a sponsor into an initiative — adapt the language to your organization, but keep the shape.

Open: why sponsorship matters

“In transformation work, results depend less on the plan and more on how leaders show up. Organizations see roughly 2.4x better results when leaders are aligned and reinforcing the same priorities, and 3.5x higher project success when there's active, visible executive sponsorship. That's what we're asking of you here — not just approval, but visible reinforcement and accountability.”

What effective sponsorship actually means

“Effective sponsorship means being accountable for how the change is experienced and adopted — not just approving that it happens. In practical terms, that means helping shape how people experience the change, what they understand matters most, and whether it's still adopted six months from now.”

How the roles work together

Sponsor	Reinforces priorities.
Project / program manager	Drives delivery.
Change manager	Drives people readiness — and will prepare you before each key moment.

What sponsorship looks like on this initiative

- Visibly support the change
- Reinforce why it matters and what success looks like
- Help make priorities, trade-offs, and expectations clear
- Stay engaged beyond the initial announcement or launch
- Show up at the moments that matter most — not everywhere
- Help resolve barriers, mixed signals, or questions that need leadership authority

“The goal isn't to involve you in everything. It's to focus your time where it has the most impact.”

How we'll work together

- Align early on what matters most — we'll agree upfront on where your visibility and reinforcement have the most impact.
- Keep your time focused — involvement concentrated on the highest-value moments, not every project activity.
- Prepare you before each moment — what to say, who the audience is, what to reinforce.

- Surface issues early — constraints, risks, or support needs flagged before they become bigger problems.

Close with a real question

“What do you need most from this partnership to be effective in your sponsor role?” Listen for the answer. It usually tells you exactly which of the four alignment signals you're dealing with.