PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

The Finish Line of a Project Is the Intended Benefits

Interview with Mark Dorsett [1],[2]

Executive Vice President
Prosci

Interviewed by Yu Yanjuan
Journalist, Project Management Review: PMR (China)
International Correspondent, PM World Journal

Introduction to the interviewee

Mark Dorsett, Executive Vice President of Prosci, is responsible for global business strategy and results through direct business and strategic partnerships / channel sales to extend Prosci's ability to have successful clients across geographic markets and vertical industries. He grew revenue by over 300% in the first four years with a combination of organic expansion and acquisition. His demonstrated capabilities include setting strategy for client and business success, frequent international event speaking, business development & sales, partner strategy and management & strategic alliances, portfolio management and best practices, customer success and value realization, growth through acquisition and organic approaches, client management and governance and services delivery. He has demonstrated experience and success in working with people and organizations in countries throughout the globe with extensive time spent in China, Japan, India, Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe. He holds the following certificates:

---

[1] This interview was first published in PMR, Project Management Review magazine earlier this year. It is republished here with the permission of PMR. The PM World Journal maintains a cooperative relationship with PMR, periodically republishing works from each other's publications. To see the original interview with Chinese introduction, visit PMR at http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english/

[2] How to cite this interview: Yanjuan, Y. (2020). The Finish Line of a Project Is the Intended Benefits: Interview with Mark Dorsett; *Project Management Review*; republished in the *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue I, January.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)

Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020

www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett

by Yu Yanjuan, PMR

Interview

Prosci's Train-the-Trainer, Prosci's Change Management Certification and Prosci's Change Practitioner.

At the 2019 PMI (China) Congress, Mark Dorsett made a keynote speech titled "How to Use Change Management to Achieve Project Success", which was well-received among participants. After the presentation, we were so honored to do this interview with him.

Interview

Part 1: "I'm always involved in projects."

Q1. As a PM professional, how do you describe yourself to readers? Would you please explain your life motto "To enjoy life to the fullest and help others to do the same"?

Mark Dorsett (Dorsett): I describe myself as someone who helps organizations achieve greater results. I have been in the professional services industry throughout my career; initially, I worked as a computer engineer, but I always had a focus on interacting directly with customers, getting to know them and what their goals and needs are. Coming back to the question, why projects? What I have found is that almost all changes are introduced in organizations in the form of projects. So, in that respect I am always involved in projects; sometimes as a sponsor and leader, sometimes in more of a PM role and sometimes as a participant.

My life's motto is "To Enjoy life to the fullest and help others to do the same". Perhaps at first glance that appears to be too inward focused, but I have found that as I develop myself, seek to always improve and enjoy what I do, I am then able to help others do the same. I get great satisfaction from coaching others and watching them develop and become successful and enjoy what they do.

Q2. I noticed that you majored in Chemistry at University. So why did you turn to project management as your career?

Dorsett: I chose Chemistry because I loved science and wanted to focus on a career in Medicine. However, after being accepted to Medical School, I discovered that it really wasn't my calling. So, I took the technical skills and aptitude that I had and began working in the professional services area. Even now, I still find that obtaining a Chemistry degree really helped me develop the analytical thinking and problem-solving skills which are important in any discipline and any situation in life.

Part 2: "A project is successful when the intended goal is achieved."

Q3. You've worked across the globe. In terms of measuring project success, have you met differences in different countries?

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Dorsett: The answer is both "yes" and "no". For example, there are geographies that frequently focus more on technical projects such as software development and implementation. Whether I am in China, India, Eastern Europe or anywhere else, I see that managing these projects is done quite similarly and the focus tends to mostly be on meeting requirements and completing work on time and within scope. But there are definitely some markets that incorporate how people will adopt and use the new ways of working more into their project plans and management approach. In these markets, project success tends to be measured on whether the business objectives were met as opposed to how tightly the scope, budget and schedule were managed.

Q4. In your opinion, what is the finish line of a project? Would you please make distinctions between Requirements and Results, Outputs and Outcomes, Specifications and Sustainment, Installation and Realization, Solution and Benefits?

Dorsett: I love the question. First, I want to come back to the question why we have projects. The reason why we initiate and sponsor projects is to attain organizational or business benefits. The reasons might be financial such as increased revenue or decreased cost, they might be to meet a new regulatory requirement, they might be to improve customer success or employee engagement or many other reasons. So, the finish line of a project is to achieve the intended benefit. With that in mind, I challenge people to look at what is being measured: is it that we meet functional and nonfunctional "Requirements" or that we actually attain the desired "Results"? Obviously, the "Results" matter more. Similarly, are we looking at the quality of the things we create, the "Outputs" or actually measuring the "Outcomes"? Definitely, the organizational "Outcomes" are what we are after. A similar concept applies to the differences between Specifications and Sustainment, Installation and Realization, Solution and Benefits in that if we only focus on the first word in the pair, we miss the greater benefits.

I am not saying that things like Requirements, Outputs, Specifications and Installation are not important; they are very critical. But they are not the "Finish Line" because we don't declare a project successful unless we are able to say the intended goal has been achieved.

Q5. Talking about benefits realization, would you please go further to explain value realization?

Dorsett: Value realization techniques, methods and tools are helping organizations understand the benefits a project actually provided as well as when and how this occurred. I sometimes make the analogy to a basic principle of physics. A rock which is stationary on top of a hill has "potential energy". Once it is pushed and starts gaining momentum as it goes downhill, we call that "kinetic energy". If it is a large rock going down a steep hill, it is very hard to stop. Similarly, our projects have potential value when they are initiated and as the solution is being developed. It is only when people use the new way of working that "kinetic" or realized value is attained. When using value realization techniques, we should be better able to understand when the momentum begins and when results are being attained.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Q6. Based on your research, what are the top contributors to project success?

Dorsett: We have a database with over 7,000 projects from 6 continents and over a 20-year period of time, which gives us a lot of data to analyze. As I answer this question, I want to remind everyone of the previous question "What is the finish line and how do we declare a project successful?" With this in mind, my response is far greater than how we stay on time, on scope and on budget; it is how we obtain the intended business or organizational benefits. We have found that the top contributors to success are:

- Effective Sponsorship. Effective sponsorship is much more than approving budgets and assigning people. It includes being Active throughout the project, Building coalitions of sponsors throughout the impacted organization and Communicating directly with impacted groups, which we call "the ABC's of sponsorship".

- Focusing on how people will adopt and use the solution by having dedicated and trained change management professionals assigned.

- Using a structured approach for applying change management.

- Focusing on the impacted groups and seeking their engagement and participation early.

- Frequent and open communication on why the project is being undertaken as well as what it means to those who are impacted.

- An integrated technical and people side of managing the project.

- Early and effective engagement with middle managers.

Part 3: "Successful change requires both the technical and people side."

Q7. In VUCA era, how do you understand the importance of change management? Do you think it's necessary to establish a CMO (Change Management Office) in organizations?

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Dorsett: VUCA is a fascinating concept that generates a lot of dialogue and discussion. Whatever your view of each of the components (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity), the reality is that organizations initiate and go through change much more rapidly and frequently than they did in the past. That being the case, more and more organizations are establishing a CMO to develop this capability across the organization for the same reasons that PMO's have been put in place over the past 20 years or so. Do I think it is necessary? I have to say "yes". However, the more important question is for organizational leaders: with the increasing frequency of change, do you think you can prepare and support your people without a core capability to focus on adoption and usage? Can it be done without some form of organizing structure? Our experience and research show that it is much more effective with a CMO.

Q8. Since CMO's are so important, what do you suggest are the steps of building a CMO?

Dorsett: There are many similarities to establishing a Project Management Office (PMO) in the organization. The first step is to decide who is the sponsor and where in the organization is the best fit. The reality is that there is no one answer as to who is the best sponsor. I have seen it be the COO, the head of Transformation or Strategy, the CIO, the Chief Human Resource Officer or even the CEO. Based on Prosci's research and my own experience, the most important factor is to determine who has the passion for the discipline, the influence to engage with others and the authority to make things happen. After determining the sponsor and the placement in the organization, it is important to determine whether it will be a central, shared services CMO, completely distributed amongst the operating units, or some form of hybrid. Many organizations choose a hybrid because it initially seems like the easiest answer. But I caution on choosing this option too quickly since this form also leaves room for the most confusion if not thought out carefully. The third step is to develop a group of certified practitioners who know how to help each other and provide the needed expertise.

Q9. Why did Prosci develop a 3-phase process to help manage change? What are the 3-phase process?

Dorsett: We developed a 3-phase methodology for a few reasons. Firstly, it allows project teams to plan for and manage the work in a predictable way. By using a repeatable process with standard work, we can estimate and manage the things to be done. Secondly, it makes it very easy to integrate the people adoption work with the technical side of developing and delivering the solution. We know that the value derived from our projects is often very dependent on whether people effectively adopt and use the solution. By developing a methodology to focus on this, we are in a much better position to ensure this occurs.

The 3-phase process refers to Preparing for Change, Managing Change and Reinforcing Change; each have specific activities that are performed in each as well as common deliverables. The beauty, just like with the PMI standard, is that the practitioner uses his or her judgment as to how much detail is required for each based on the size and complexity of the initiative. We have developed a tool to guide the practitioner to assess what is the most appropriate level of depth to breadth to work at.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Q10. In order to manage change, what qualities does the project leader/manager in digital transformation need to have?

Dorsett: In addition to the assumed PM skills, I recommend the following:

- Does he or she have the business context to know why the project is being undertaken and what the organizational goals are? If not, find someone who can describe it.

- Communications skills. The project leader / manager needs to be able to communicate effectively with many roles in the organization including upper management, the project team as well as those being impacted. This requires the ability to speak at a business level, a technical level and with an empathetic ear when talking to the people being impacted.

- It helps to have some level of proficiency in the technical domain, but it is not mandatory unless the team is very small.

- I recommend that they should be very well connected in the organization as there are many stakeholders who need to be interacted with.

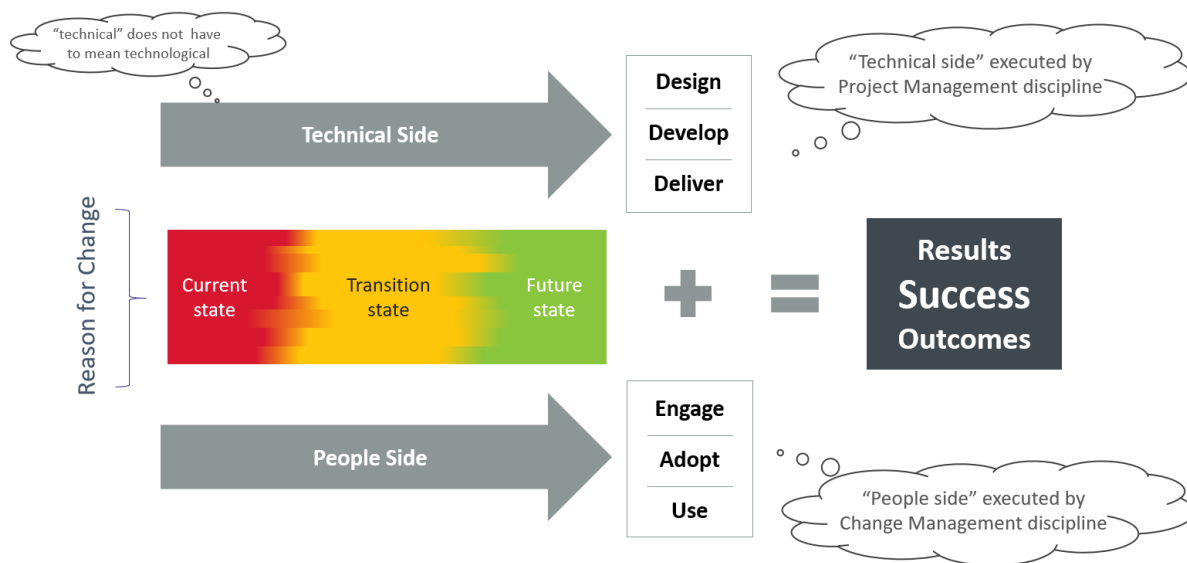**Q11.** Would you please introduce Prosci ADKAR Change Management Model and its application?

Dorsett: ADKAR is a model that Prosci developed to describe the stages that a person goes through whenever a change is needed. The change could be personal in nature, such as better fitness, or as part of an organization project where the person needs to embrace, adopt and use a new way of working. ADKAR refers to Awareness of the need for change, Desire to participate and support the change, Knowledge on how to change, Ability to implement required skills and behaviors, and Reinforcement to sustain the change.

We can measure progress by looking at whether the person demonstrates the following: Awareness ("I understand why…"), Desire ("I have decided to …"), Knowledge ("I know how to…"), Ability ("I am able to…"), Reinforcement (I will continue to …).

As stated previously, these are very predictable, predictable stages that a person goes through for any and all changes.

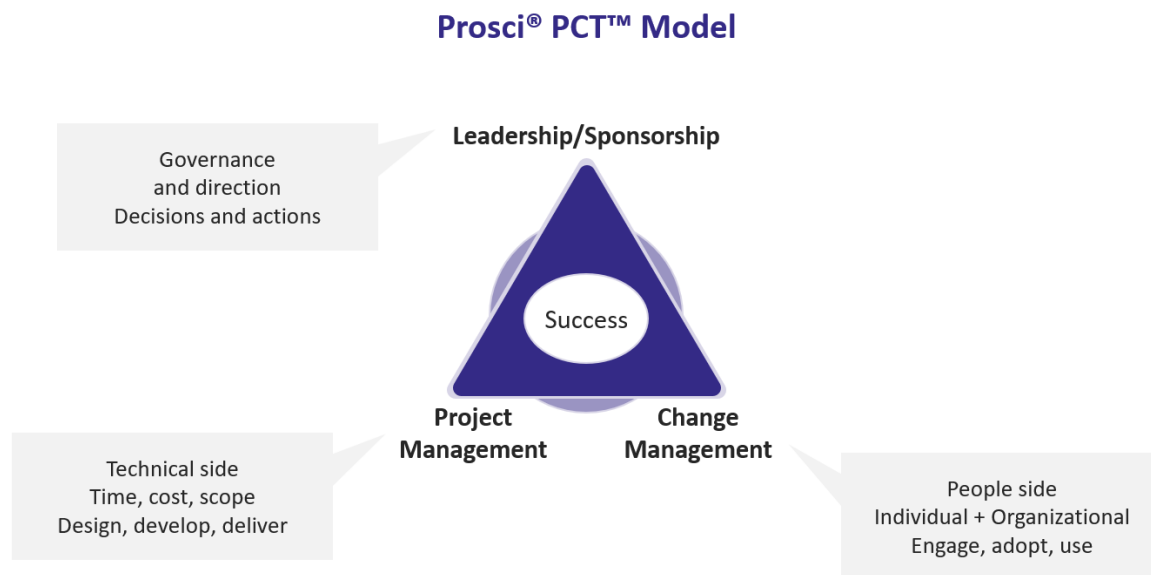**Q12.** Please offer some tips for managing change for PM practitioners.

Dorsett: Pictorially, I view it this way:

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Successful change requires both the technical and people side. The technical side is executed by Project Management discipline and the people side is executed by Change Management discipline. The effective PM focuses on getting to the "Future State" both technically and on the people side. When we focus on the desired outcome, we can work backwards to ensure the proper activities are being undertaken. Following the organizational standard for the project methodology, budgeting, planning and reporting are important. But I would rather have a project that was successful than one that followed every step perfectly. For me, the steps and processes we follow are important so that we know where we are and what comes next, but I believe that focusing first on the "Future State" allows us to think differently than we manage from the back and look ahead.

Q13. You've said successful projects require all three corners of the Prosci PCT Model ((Project Change Triangle Model). What are the three corners and why are they important?

Dorsett: From our research we have found that effective Sponsorship / Leadership, Project Management and Change Management are needed to have confidence that the results can be achieved. Visually it looks like this:

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

Prosci® PCT™ Model

What we have found to be helpful is to assess the strength of each area at various times throughout the project lifecycle to understand if we have risk. We can try to mitigate the detected risk and increase opportunity for success.

Q14. Based on your experience, what are the major barriers in helping organizations implement change?

Dorsett: The good news is that we have research that helps us understand why organizations are not successful in implementing changes. The top reasons are:

1) Ineffective sponsors. Amazingly, 57% of executive leaders do not know how to perform the ABC's of sponsorship that I mentioned previously.

2) Inadequate change management buy-in and resourcing. By wanting more effective adoption of the new way of working just doesn't happen because we talk about it. It takes commitment, time and resources to make this happen.

3) Resistance and lack of support for the particular solution. The greatest impediment here is that people do not understand why something is important and they only hear about the "what" is changing.

4) A change resistant culture. There are a variety of reasons why individuals and organizations are reluctant to change. The primary one is leadership does not foster a growth mindset and set the expectation that change is the norm.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

To read the original interview and to learn more about PMR magazine, visit
http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english/

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. IX, Issue I – January 2020
www.pmworldjournal.com

Interview with Mark Dorsett
by Yu Yanjuan, PMR
Interview

About the Interviewer

Yu Yanjuan

Beijing, China

Yu Yanjuan (English name: Spring), Bachelor's Degree, graduated from the English Department of Beijing International Studies University (BISU) in China. She is now an English-language journalist and editor working for *Project Management Review* (PMR) Magazine and website. She has interviewed over sixty top experts in the field of project management. Before joining PMR, she once worked as a journalist and editor for other media platforms in China. She has also worked part-time as an English teacher in training centers in Beijing. Beginning in January 2020, Spring also serves as an international correspondent for the *PM World Journal*.

For work contact, she can be
reached via email yuyanjuan2005@163.com or LinkedIn
https://www.linkedin.com/in/yanjuanyu-76b280151/.