

Defining Change Management

Change Management is a common buzz word in today's businesses. With constantly evolving business goals and strategies, change is inevitable and managing change is essential. Change management is also used as a catch-all for project activities that may otherwise be overlooked. It is thus important to understand what it is and how to use it to be effective in the discipline.

Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented and for achieving lasting benefits of change. The change management focus is on the wider impacts of change, particularly on people and how they, as individuals and teams, move from the current state to the future state. The change could range from a simple process change to a major system change to achieve the organization's potential.

There are two types of change management programs:

- Systematic organization-wide change initiative that involves an organization-wide transformation effort.
- Specific internal change management or change control program that involves providing tools and processes to control daily operational or project-specific changes.

Both these programs use similar tools but have different goals and priorities. They are equally important for the organization's success.

Organizational changes happen naturally in projects. By definition, projects are changing the state of things and will, most likely, include processes and procedures.

Change management differs from project management in its ultimate objective. Project management is restricted to the application of a set of tools and processes by a small group of professionals to achieve project goals. On the other hand, change management emphasizes the people side of change and targets leadership at all levels of an organization including executives, senior leaders, middle managers, supervisors, and staff.

Understanding Change

Change management represents a large and rapidly growing discipline that is being increasingly deployed on a global scale by all types of organizations. It refers to a structured approach that facilitates the adoption of change by groups and individuals within an organization.

The process of how organizations change draws on many disciplines from psychology and behavioral science to engineering and systems thinking. The underlying principle is that change does not happen in isolation. It impacts the whole organization and each individual associated with it.

Change Management Perspectives

It is important to note that 'organizations' are not the ones that change; it is the people within organizations that change. Therefore, the success of the project ultimately is measured by the difference in work done by each individual multiplied by the number of employees impacted by the change. Consequently, effective change management requires an understanding for, and appreciation of how one person makes a change successfully. Without an individual perspective, change management amounts to activities performed without goals or outcomes achieved.

TCS' approach acclimates the clients' culture, key stakeholders, organizational style, and the appetite for change to design a program that will overcome fear, uncertainty, doubt, inertia, and resistance. It is designed to effectively engage the right people without interruption of on-going business and system implementation activities. The integration of change management activities with the process design ensures a smooth business transition, avoids possible business delays, and achieves the full benefits enabled by processes and technology changes.

Change management is a very broad field and its approaches will vary widely depending on the organization and specific project. Many organizations and consultants subscribe to a formal change management methodology that provide toolkits, checklists, and outline plans of what needs to be done to manage changes successfully. Having a methodology is only part of the solution. Unless the people using it have an underlying knowledge of the change process, it can be reduced to a set of check boxes and activities that may or may not enable long lasting change.

Leading Change

To effectively lead change, recognize that the 'change' itself does not need as much managing as the people involved in it. To successfully manage and lead people through any type of change, it helps to be aware of the different ways people prefer to deal with change, and to realize that perceptions of the change styles of others are colored by the leaders' perception.

Change Ownership

When defining change management objectives and activities, it is very important to coordinate closely with others who are involved by identifying owners responsible for change. Owners may be project managers, business managers, and the HR department. For example, who is responsible for identifying change agents, who will define the re-training plan, and what will be the impact on changing job descriptions and employment contracts?

Knowing who is responsible and how things are organized will help define the change management scope. Additionally, it will identify the working relationship with other people required to bring about the change. The change manager's role is to ease the journey towards new ways of working.

The key to success is to create a sense of urgency, recruit powerful change leaders, build a vision and effectively communicate it, remove obstacles, create quick wins, and build on momentum. These will help make the change a part of the organizational culture.

Communicating Change

Communication plays a critical role in overcoming the fears and concerns stimulated by change. People are often concerned about the effect the change will have on them. Uncertainty in a working environment reduces productivity, therefore, it is important to communicate what is changing and why. There are three key subjects of communication – present state, intermediate state, and future state.