



Change Management Plan

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"Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." - George Bernard Shaw

PRACTITIONERS have recognised that implementing projects are synonymous with change. Where projects exist, the organisation and groups of people affected by the project will experience change in their day-to-day operations. As changes occur, people are forced to change the way they perform their routines; learning new ways of doing things, and unlearning what they have already learned previously. Usually, as people are being forced to break away from old habits or move out of comfort zones, they find themselves either adapting or resisting to the changes.

Unsurprisingly, the response to change and the phenomenon of change resistance are to be expected in the overall change process. Resistance to change can slow down implementation efforts or even cause project failures. But because most project managers are so engrossed in making sure projects are delivered within the set timeline and budget, they often overlook the preparations needed for the change process. Therefore, a conscious effort must be made to create a change management plan that integrates with the project plan, in order to ensure the transition is managed smoothly and with less pain.

What is Change Management?

Change management is the systematic approach of dealing with change. It could be making change at the individual level or organisational level. It is about managing the transition from the current status quo to the desired future state. Managing change includes addressing resistance, accommodating and internalising change. Successful transition to change is crucial in bringing individuals and organisations towards dealing with a new encounter, adopting the change and adapting to it.

How Does Change Management Fit With Project Management?

You must be wondering what change management has to do with project management? Typically, projects bring change to the organisation's business practices, environment or structure. Specifically with ICT projects, it is always about improving or changing the business processes through the implementation of ICT systems. Most of the time, the ICT system is seen as a 'solution' to solve a lingering business problem or for making improvements to the current situation. However, people have different interests and needs; even the best of intentions can be misinterpreted by those with differing perceptions. Change is often perceived as a threat to the users' status quo and power position. Most people are content performing the same routine every day in a familiar environment; therefore they often resist going along with the change, due to fear of the unknown and uncertainties that lie ahead.

When there is change, resistance will inevitably set in. Results of a study in Hong Kong (Poon & Wagner, 2001) found that organisations tend to resist new ICT systems due to a 'fear-based culture', where users in the resistance group are willing to let the system fail rather than enjoying the benefits derived from the system. As such, change management is inevitably needed.

In managing change, there are three categories of stakeholders that must be addressed:

- Users
- Management
- Project Team

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