Creating an integrated Project and Change Management Plan

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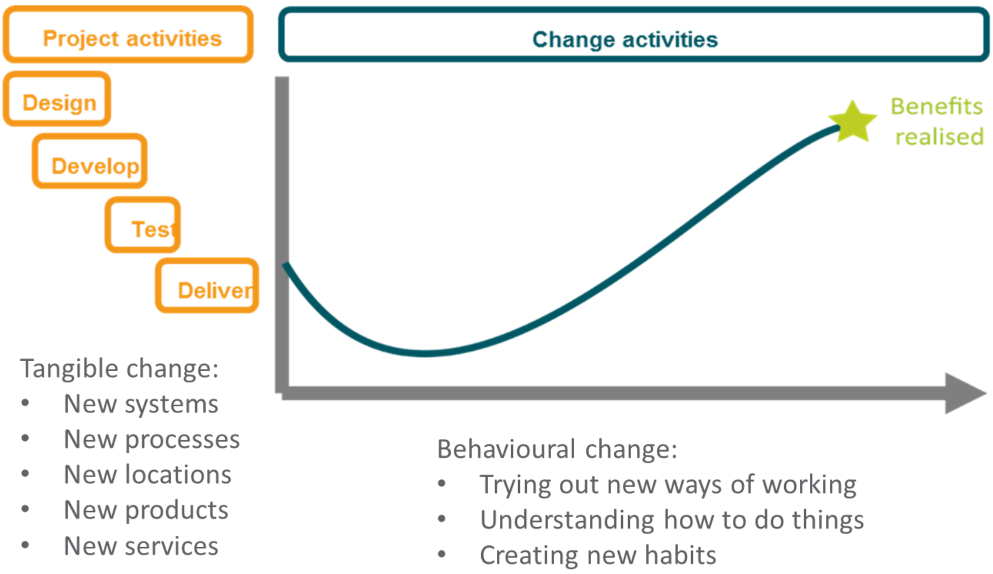
Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explain the need for an integrated plan that covers both project delivery and the change management activities that enable the adoption of these project deliverables into business as usual. This paper will address the following questions:

- What is the difference between a Project Plan and a Change Plan?
- Why do we need a Change Plan?
- What activities need to be included in a Change Plan?
- Who is responsible?
- How do we measure the success of our change management activities?

What is the difference between a Project Plan and a Change Plan?



Projects create deliverables which need to be adopted by their users and incorporated into how work is undertaken. Only when use of the project deliverables becomes normal i.e. they have been fully integrated and are the new 'business as usual' can their benefits be realised.

Change management activities ensure that those affected by change are supported as they make the transition from old ways of working to new ways of working.

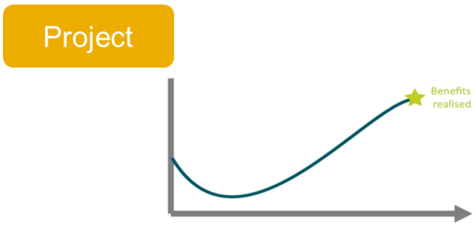
This involves helping those affected to identify what aspects of their work need to change, helping them to re-design their work and providing encouragement to shift from well established, well understood working practices to new approaches.

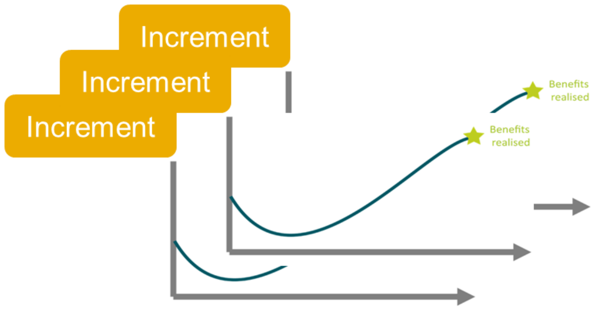
Transition activities are triggered by the start of a project and continue after the end of a project. It is very difficult to estimate an exact amount of time, because transition only finishes when individuals have become comfortable with the new ways of working and have developed a similar or increased level of competence compared to their old ways of working.

There is a need for a Change Plan irrespective of how the project is being managed:

Waterfall

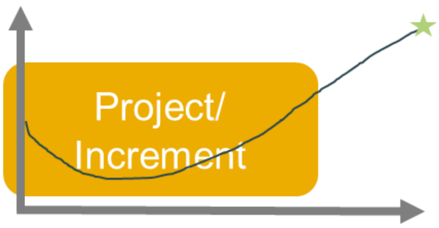
Agile





A Change Plan is needed to help assimilate project deliverables, which in a waterfall style project will come at the end of the project, but in an Agile project will occur at the end of every increment or sprint. It can be argued that there is even greater need to speed up the transition to new ways of working in Agile environments because the volume of change is greater, even if each of these changes are smaller in scale than the 'big bang' approach of a waterfall style project.

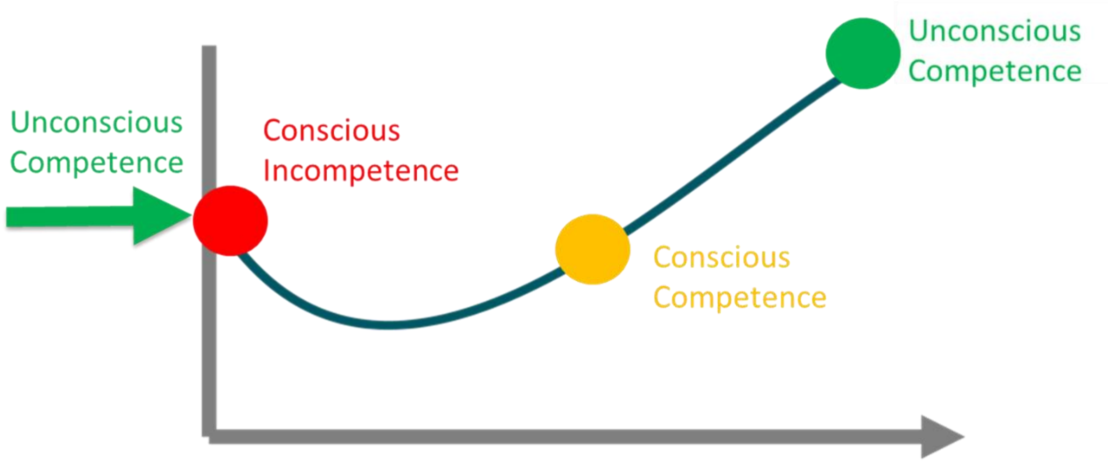
I have shown the project management activities and change management activities as sequential, but this is just to clarify their contents. Ideally, they should be captured in one integrated plan, as the achievements of the project team trigger the need for transition activities within the business:



Contents of a Change Plan

The Change Plan creates behavioural change i.e. we want people to behave differently, work differently, do different things and when they do, the business will improve and benefits will be realised.

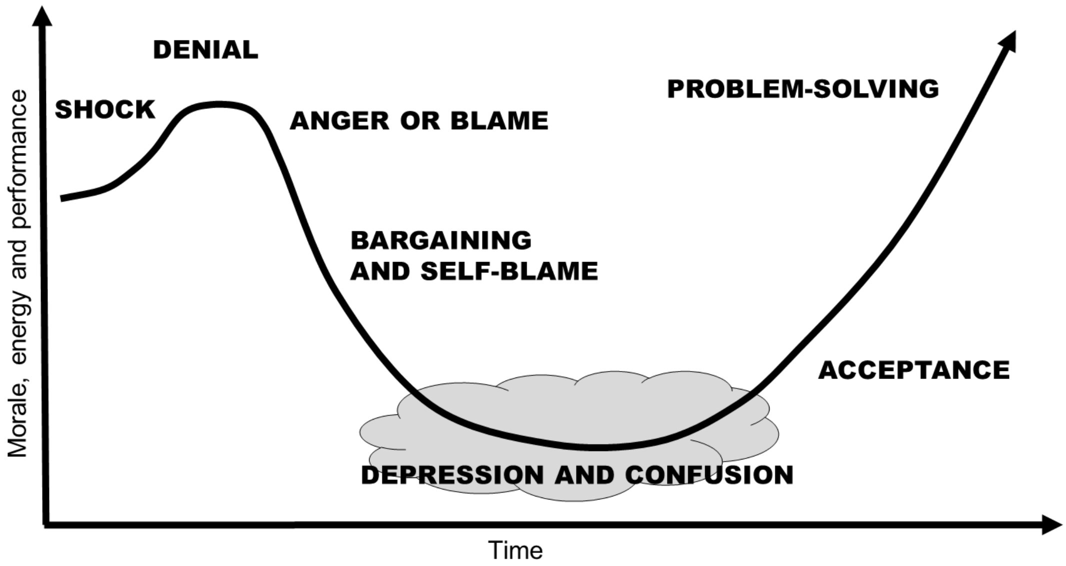
Up until a change is introduced, an individual is working away quite happily, using processes and skills that they are familiar with. They have built up 'unconscious competence' in other words they have an automatic ability to do their work because they have done it so many times before. As their response is automatic, it means that their brains can act on autopilot, allowing them to think about other things whilst they work. When a change is introduced it is a rude awakening.



We are effectively telling people, stop doing the things you know how to do, do them differently, using techniques and processes that you don't know. This means force them into a state of 'conscious competence'. They have to concentrate to work in the new way. They are likely to make mistakes and they will have to keep practising to build up their skills.

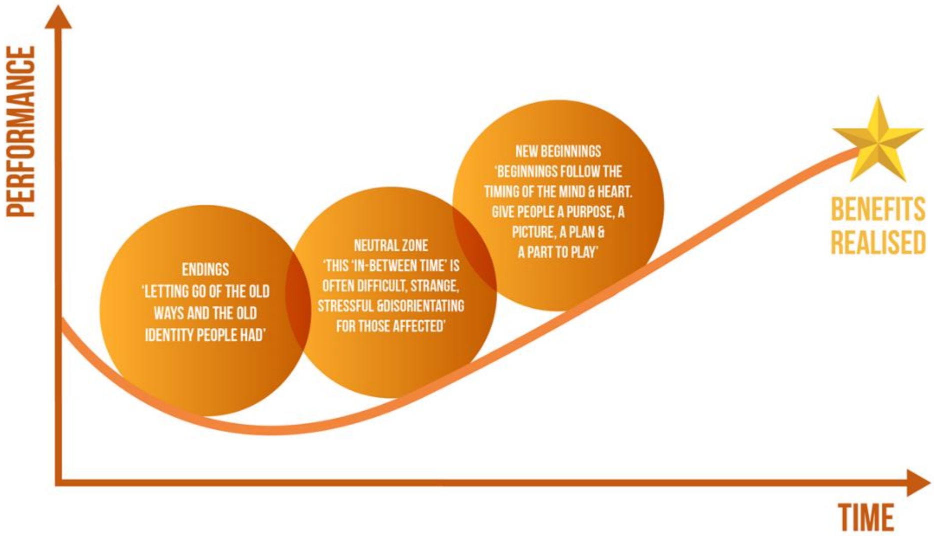
Eventually, over time they will return to a state of unconscious competence in the new way of working, but during the transition from old to new ways of working they will be stressed, they will fear making mistakes and being criticised or punished and their rate of productivity will fall as they try things for the first time.

This is why we often see a dip in performance during transition from old to new ways of working. Another way to explain this dip in performance is to look at the emotions that many people experience during change:



Not everyone will experience every emotion, some people will accept the change very quickly, others will get stuck in the negative emotions, finding it difficult to leave the past behind. Activities in the Change Plan have to help people address each of these reactions.

To give structure to the Change Plan, use a simple lifecycle model. I like this three step model of transition from old to new ways of working devised by Professor Edgar Schein from the Sloan School of Management:



Endings

These are all of the activities needed to explain why the change is needed, what is changing and what will remain the same. The purpose of these initial activities is to enable people to work out for themselves how they are likely to be impacted, and to mourn their losses. These losses relate to the loss of certainty about how they work, who they work with, where they work etc.

They will need time to ask questions and to hear details of the change a number of times before it really sinks in. They must be given the opportunity to discuss the impact with their line manager and to hear how they can participate in the change.

If this aspect of change is done well, those impacted will have a sense of urgency about the need for change and a willingness to participate in making it happen.

Neutral zone

This step in the change lifecycle is where change really happens. It is when those impacted start to participate in creating the details of how the new ways of working will happen. They will take part in workshops and meetings, they will view demonstrations and provide feedback and they will trial new approaches and practice new skills.

The support needed in this part of the change lifecycle is extensive. The Change Plan must identify the scale of the work so that line managers can ensure staff are given the necessary time to participate whilst still maintaining business as usual.

New beginnings

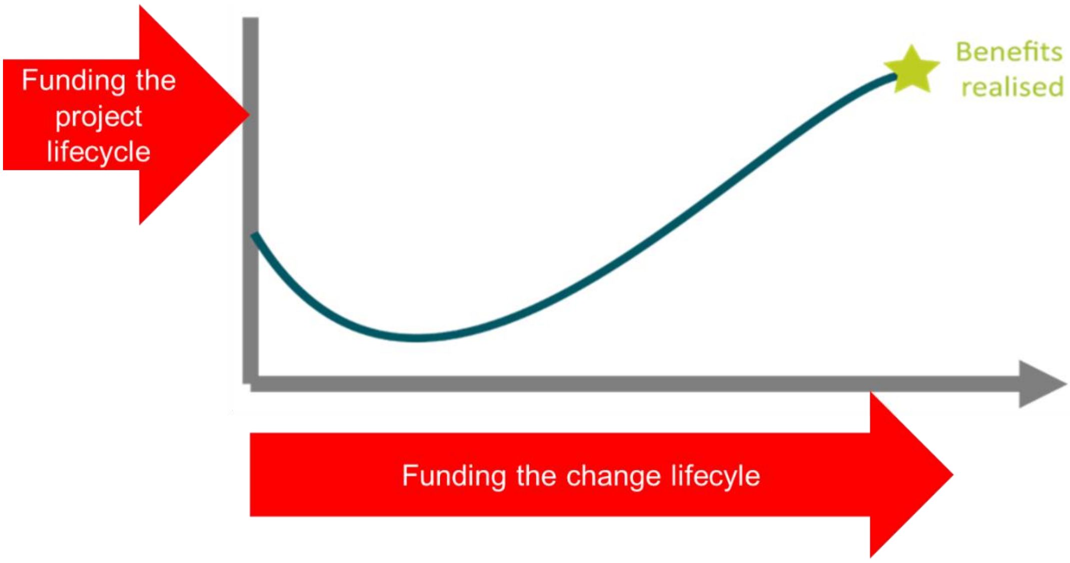
This comes towards the end of the change, when staff have begun working in new ways. Elements of the old ways of working can be abandoned as they are no longer in use e.g. turn off old systems, remove old guidance documents.

Information about the new ways of working need to be included in all the formal aspects of how the organisation is run e.g. new performance metrics and new job descriptions reflected in the performance management system, training in new systems added to the training catalogue and new processes written up in standard operating procedures.

Why do we need a Change Plan?

If change management activities are not included as part of an integrated plan, changes will be delivered but without adoption by the intended users. This means that new ways of working will not be created, and the project deliverables will not be used as intended and therefore will not realise their expected benefits.

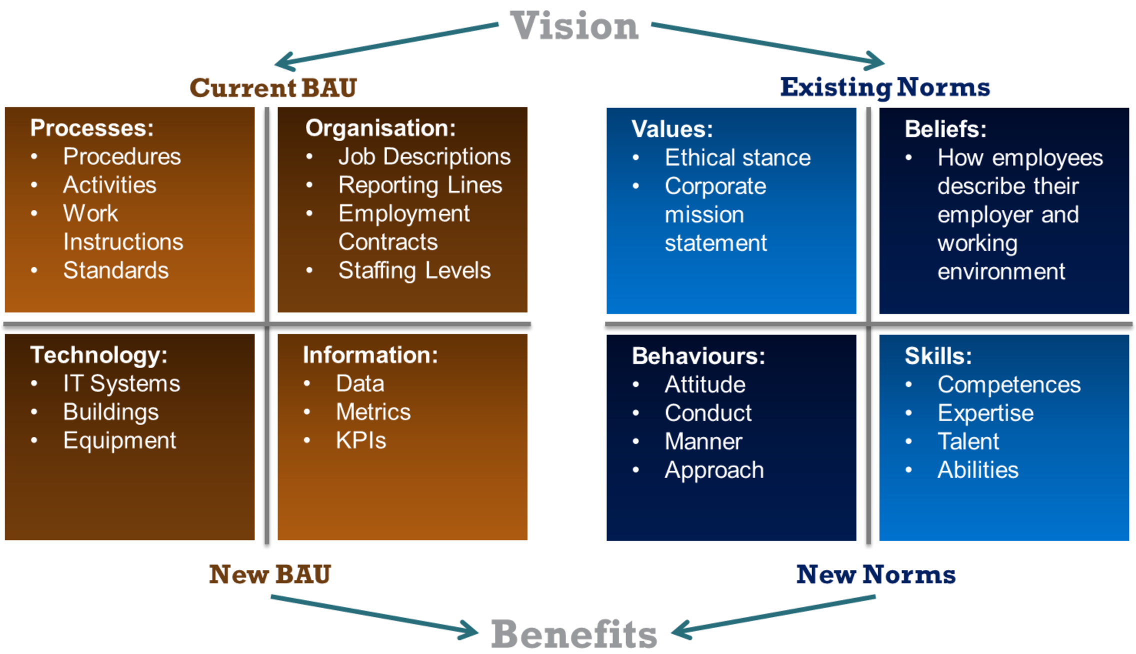
Change Management activities form a risk management strategy, minimising the risk of disruption from the uncertainty brought about by change and minimising the risk that the benefits will not be realised.



There is a significant time lag between the commencement of a project, and the realisation of benefits. Change management activities provide the business with a structure to ensure the adoption of the new ways of working.

What activities need to be included in a Change Plan?

There are many elements that form our ways of working. These include who we work with, the order and priority of our activities, the systems and data we use and the metrics we measure to check if we are doing things well. Our actions are governed by our beliefs, values, skills and behaviours and this blueprint gives an understanding of the wide scope of items that must be addressed in the Change Plan:



On the left hand side of the diagram are the formal activities and instructions that create an agreed approach to "business as usual". On the right hand side are the less tangible but just as important underpinning beliefs about how work should be carried out and how it should be prioritised. Another way of identifying the activities is to use the simple lifecycle that we saw earlier:

- Endings
- Neutral Zone
- New Beginnings

For each of these phases, there are 3 key activities that must be undertaken:

1. Preparation – this refers to all of those activities that involve deciding on the scope of the change, preparing documentation to reflect these decisions, working out who needs to be involved, agreeing the resources needed to support the change and making sure they are available,

appointing people to roles and gathering together all of the information about the change needed.

2. Engagement – these are the actions that enable others to get involved in the change, to help design it and experience it. This includes demonstrations, training, coaching, pilots, trials, testing and providing feedback. They also involve formalising the change by making sure that as the new ways of working are created they are included in the procedures, checklists, rules and regulations for the organisation.
3. Measurement – these are the activities needed to track if the change management activities are making change happen.

Example Change Plan structure – for all stakeholders

	Must change their ways of working	Affected by change as inputs & outsputs to their processes are changed	Are interested in the success of the change
Endings			
Prepare			
Engage			
Measure			
Neutral Zone			
Prepare			
Engage			
Measure			
New Beginnings			
Prepare			
Engage			
Measure			

The plan that you create must take into account the needs of different stakeholders. To keep things simple I have segmented the stakeholders into 3 groups:

1. Those that must change their way of working
2. Those that are not designing the change but are recipients of it
3. Those that would benefit from knowing about the change

If we just look at the first group, those that need to change their way of working, we can identify the activities that need to be included in the Change Plan, demonstrating how involvement in the change deepens over the lifecycle from endings, to neutral zone to new beginnings:

Example Change Plan – with high level contents

	Must change their ways of working
Endings	***People feel this is something they should/want to be involved in.***
Prepare	Make announcements, explain the scope and the reasons for the change.
Engage	Encourage discussions and questions about what the change means for them.
Measure	How many discussions took place and how many people were involved?
Neutral Zone	***People are having a go at the change, turning it into practical steps.***
Prepare	Plan workshops and opportunities for people to practice new ways of working.
Engage	Hold workshops, give staff a chance to practice and feedback their views.
Measure	How many people are participating in creating the new ways of working?
New Beginnings	***The change is no longer a change, it is now the 'norm'.***
Prepare	Gather the details of how people are working in new ways.
Engage	Capture the new ways of working as processes, roles and KPIs.
Measure	How many people are now working in the new ways?

Endings

Preparation – as the Endings phase is the start of the change, preparation activities include announcements by senior managers and department heads who will put the change in the context of the strategic direction of the organisation and the context of the departmental objectives and metrics.

Engagement – this involves those affected starting to think through the impact the change will have on their ways of working. After all, if they don't realise that it will affect how they work they will not get involved in making the change happen. A lot of activities in this early part of the Change Plan will involve conversations and listening as people talk about their views and assumptions about the change. Whilst not every conversation can be planned in advance, the Change Plan should include the time and resources needed for one to one meetings with line managers and workshop style sessions where questions about the impact of the change can be debated.

Measurement – the number of sessions available to staff to talk through the change, and the number of staff attending these sessions and asking questions should be tracked so that any staff that remain disengaged can be identified.

Neutral Zone

Preparation – it is during the Neutral Zone that staff help to design the new ways of working, experiment with different processes, data and structures, pilot their ideas, gather feedback and apply lessons learned. To enable this to happen, there are a lot of activities needed to provide detailed information about the change and opportunities for participating in its creation through design workshops, planning workshop, demonstrations and feedback sessions.

Engagement – this is when all of these workshop style events take place. There is also likely to be the need for formal training and some coaching. Buddying up of staff to address a specific aspect of the change or to train each other will also take place.

In order for staff to participate in making the change a reality, their initial awareness of the impact of the change has to become more detailed. Provide them with a template so that they can conduct their own personal impact assessment. It is only when they have the realisation that they cannot continue to work as they do now, and that certain things will stop, or change or new tasks are required that the change becomes real. In this example I have suggested a number of different aspects of the change, and 4 levels of impact from no change to totally changed. Ideally this type of template is created collaboratively with those that will be filling it in:

Personal Impact Assessment	1 – No change	2 - Some changes	3 - Lots of changes	4 - Completely changed
Number of steps in my process		2		
When tasks are carried out	1			
How often I carry out tasks			3	
What equipment/machinery I use	1			
Which techniques/skills I use		2		
My customers	1			
My suppliers	1			
The inputs I use	1			
The outputs I produce			3	
My level of responsibility				4
Who I report to	1			
Colleagues in my team	1			
Colleagues I work most closely with	1			
Where I work	1			

I often use this template as the structure of a collaborative workshop, where all those impacted can come together to discuss the impact of the changes. The structure of this template ensures that the change is debated from many different perspectives, with the column on the left being amended to reflect the specific change being discussed.

To help staff identify and track what they need to do to make the necessary changes, provide them with a template for a personal Change Plan:

Change	Notify suppliers of changes to inputs	Changes to inputs	Changes to process step 1	Changes to process step 2	Changes to process step 3	Changes to outputs	Notify customers of changes to outputs
Change 1							
Change 2							
Change 3							

In this template I have used the SIPOC schema from the lean movement to give some structure from the activities, starting with consideration of inputs that need to change and therefore the communication of these changes to the relevant suppliers to changes in outputs and the communication of these changes to customers, both internal and external. In the centre are the changes to the individual tasks that are performed by this person.

Measurement – measuring the number of people taking part in the activities to track if the change has been accepted as something everyone needs to take responsibility for. How many staff were involved in designing the impact assessment? How many have carried out a personal impact assessment? How many have created their own change plan? How many are actually making changes to how they work?

New Beginnings

Preparation – gather together the details of the new processes that form the change. Some of this will not have been documented, and some of it will be the results of workshops that have taken place to define and design specific changes.

Engagement – the change is being formalised at this point, so may require the involvement of functions that were not that heavily involved before including Internal Audit and HR. New job descriptions need to be created to reflect the changes in activities and responsibilities. New processes, procedures and governance arrangements need to be defined. Also, there needs to be the removal of access to old ways of working and the termination of old contracts and old metrics that are no longer relevant.

Measurement – at this point we should be able to track how many people are actually working in the new ways. It is also worth tracking anecdotal evidence of how many people refer to how they work as the "new way" rather than now seeing it as "business as usual".

Conclusion

Planning transition activities for all those impacted by a change cannot happen all at once, at the very start of a project. As understanding of the impact of the change develops, the necessary changes emerge. This makes it difficult to put a figure on the resources needed for change.

Another complication is that change plans are difficult to create, because they operate at two levels:

1. Change Plan for those overseeing all the change activities, planning and resourcing them and tracking that they are taking place. This change plan, by its very nature will not capture every conversation, every persuasion activity and every influencing comment that takes place on the journey to accepting new ways of working.

2. Change Plan for each person impacted by the change. These plans are less formal, but it is important that we ensure they are made, because it is only when individuals start working in new ways that the change becomes a reality, and we need to encourage them to plan their transition to help ensure it occurs.

This paper establishes some examples of activities to look for, but more detail can be derived by collaborating with all those impacted by the change.

About the author

I have been responsible for the successful delivery of effective change and for creating environments that support transformational change for over twenty years. I have an impressive track record of successful consulting assignments and I am an acknowledged thought leader in Change Management.

I am the Co-Chair of the Change Management Institute UK and a respected author of text books and articles on change, project and programme management. I am a talented communicator with a reputation for delivering complex information with humour and passion. I draw on my wealth of practical experience to illustrate concepts and to engage my audience in lively debates on advantages and disadvantages of each approach that I outline.

To access more resources about change management, connect with Melanie on LinkedIn
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