



The Critical Partnership:

Why Project Management and Change Management Must Work Together

WHITEPAPER



A whitepaper on the value and importance of integrating project delivery with behavioural change adoption to realise sustainable benefits.

Executive Summary

Organisations worldwide invest billions in projects that create tangible deliverables - new systems, processes, products, and services. Yet research consistently shows that 60-70% of these initiatives fail to deliver their expected benefits. The primary reason is not technical failure, but the inability to successfully transition people from old ways of working to new ones.

This whitepaper demonstrates why every project plan must include activities that ensure project deliverables lead to the creation and adoption of new ways of working. Without this integration, organisations face:

- Underutilised investments: New systems and processes that remain unused or poorly adopted
- Missed competitive advantages: Being first to create but not first to market due to slow adoption
- Hidden costs: The true cost of change extends far beyond project delivery
- Employee resistance and frustration: Forcing change without support creates organisational stress

The solution requires integrating project management (which creates tangible change) with change management (which enables behavioural change) into a unified approach that recognises both disciplines as essential for benefit realisation.

Impacts of not integrating project and change activities

Business cases

One of the most common failure points I see is the creation of optimistic or “naïve” business cases, because they clearly state the project costs of creating the deliverables, but do not recognise any costs associated with the shift to new ways of working.

Traditional business cases often underestimate the true cost of change by:

- Assuming immediate adoption upon delivery
- Ignoring the effort required for transition activities
- Failing to account for temporary productivity decreases
- Not including ongoing support and coaching needs

Integrated business cases must include:

- Time allocation for employees to participate in change activities

- Training and support resources
- Extended timelines for full benefit realisation
- Costs of maintaining dual systems during transition

Capacity Planning

Failure to recognise the work needed to shift to new ways of working has an impact on resource planning because the amount of time employees need away from their normal tasks to learn about, train and practice new ways of working is considerable.

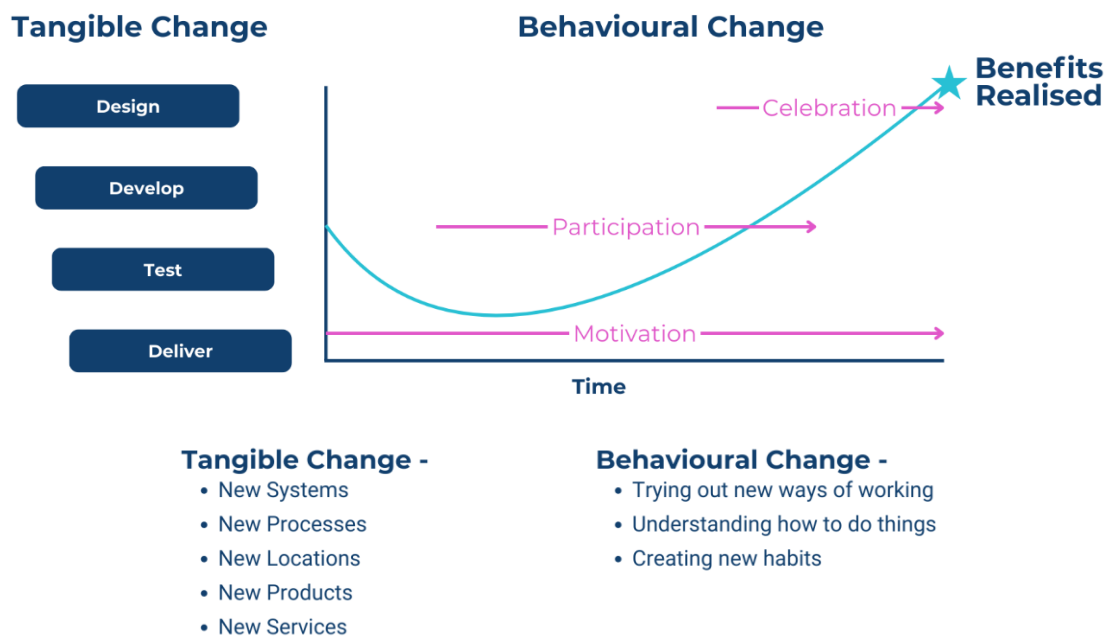
Organisations must recognise that employees affected by change need time for:

- Learning about new approaches
- Participating in design and testing
- Developing new skills and competencies
- Adjusting working practices and relationships

This time must be planned and protected, not treated as an addition to existing workloads.

The Fundamental Challenge: Two Types of Change

Every project creates two distinct but interconnected types of change:



Tangible Change (Project Deliverables)

- New systems and technology
- New processes and procedures
- New products and services
- New locations and facilities
- New organisational structures

Behavioural Change (People Impact)

- New priorities and timings
- New working relationships
- New skills and competencies
- New performance measures
- New ways of making decisions

The critical insight: Projects can follow linear timelines for creating tangible deliverables, but the psychological and emotional impacts of change make the adoption of new ways of working a complex, non-linear process that requires dedicated management.

The Business Case for Integration

The Risks of Project-Only Approaches

When organisations focus solely on project delivery without planning for behavioural change, they face significant risks:

Risks	Benefits
1. New functionality - no plan for how to use	1. New functionality + new ways of working
2. Resistance - change is forced	2. Support leads to volunteerism
3. No best practice - must unlearn bad habits	3. Right first-time approach
4. Rework because of mistakes	4. No rework; no apologies
5. Poor relationship with customers/suppliers	5. Customers/suppliers feel involved
6. New ideas take too long to implement	6. Organisation gains '1 st to market' advantage

1. New Functionality Without Adoption Plans



- Project deliverables are completed but remain unused
- No clear guidance on how to integrate new tools into daily work
- Employees default to familiar old ways of working

2. Forced Implementation Without Support

- Changes are imposed without employee involvement or understanding
- Creates resistance and reluctance to engage with new approaches
- Leads to workarounds and suboptimal usage patterns

3. Poor Habits and Mistakes

- Without proper guidance, employees develop inefficient ways of using new systems
- Mistakes multiply as incorrect usage becomes habitual
- Significant rework required to correct poor adoption patterns

4. Damaged Relationships with Stakeholders

- Customers and suppliers experience confusion during poorly managed transitions
- Lost opportunities for collaborative improvement
- Reputation damage from perceived chaos or incompetence

5. Lost First-to-Market Advantages

- Organisations may create innovations first but lose competitive advantage
- Competitors who plan for adoption can overtake original innovators
- Time-to-value is extended, reducing return on investment

The Benefits of Integration

When project management and change management work together:

Enhanced Project Quality

- Co-design approaches bring end-users into the development process
- Requirements better reflect actual needs and usage patterns
- Higher quality deliverables that are fit for purpose

Accelerated Adoption

- Planned transition activities reduce the time from delivery to full utilisation
- Users are prepared and motivated to engage with new approaches
- Reduced resistance and increased voluntary participation

Sustainable Benefits

- Changes become embedded in organisational culture and practices
- Benefits are realised sooner and sustained longer
- Creates foundation for future changes

Improved Employee Experience

- Supportive transition reduces stress and anxiety
- Employees feel involved rather than imposed upon
- Higher engagement and satisfaction with change initiatives

Understanding the Transition Curve

The psychological journey people experience during change follows a predictable pattern:

Current State: Unconscious Competence

- People work confidently with familiar processes and skills
- Automatic responses allow mental capacity for other tasks
- High certainty and status from expertise

Transition Period: Conscious Incompetence

- Must concentrate to work in new ways
- Higher likelihood of mistakes and slower productivity
- Stress from uncertainty and fear of criticism
- Loss of status and confidence

Future State: New Unconscious Competence

- Eventually develop automatic ability with new approaches
- Return to confident, efficient working
- Enhanced capabilities and renewed sense of mastery

Critical Point: *The transition period creates a temporary dip in performance regardless of whether the change is beneficial. This dip is not a failure—it's a natural part of human learning that must be planned for and supported.*

The Integrated Approach: Key Principles

1. Co-Design from the Start

Bring together technical experts with those who will be impacted by the change:

- Include end-users in requirements gathering
- Test assumptions about how deliverables will be used
- Ensure project scope reflects real-world implementation needs

2. Parallel Planning

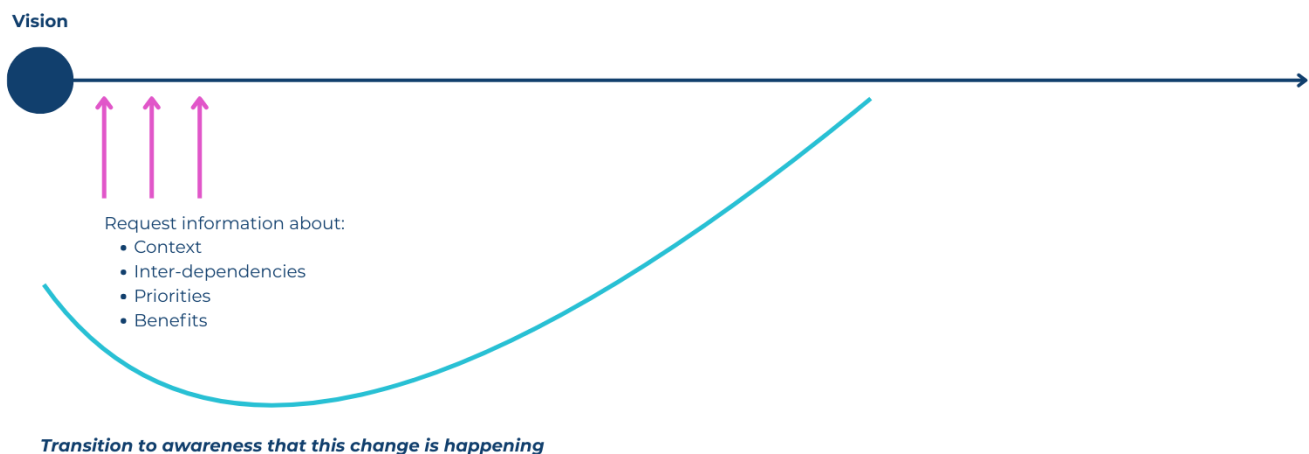
Develop project activities and change activities simultaneously:

- Map project milestones to transition requirements
- Identify when people need information, training, and support
- Plan for the human timeline alongside the technical timeline

3. Points of Integration

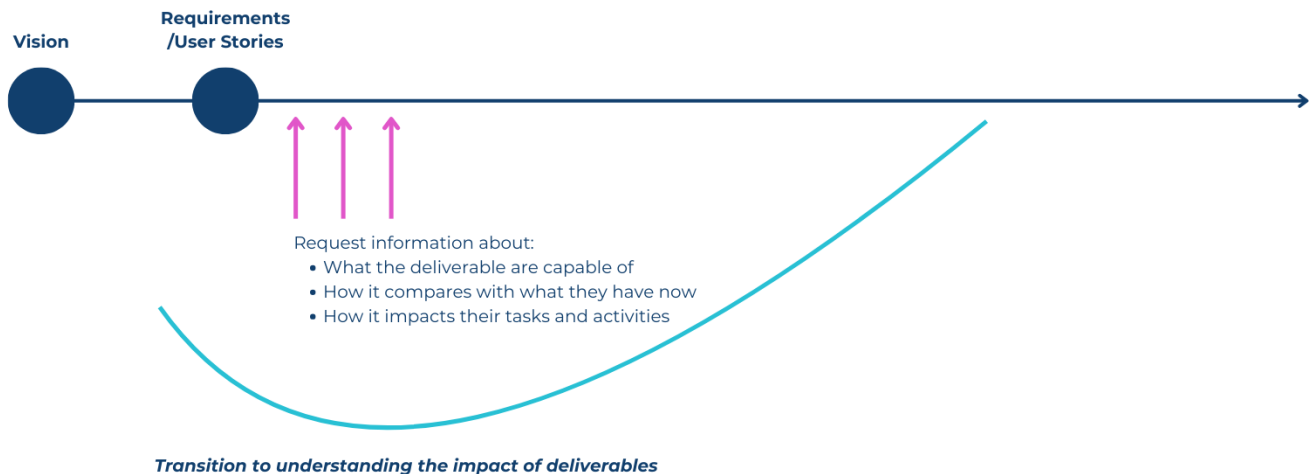
Create specific touchpoints where project and change activities intersect:

Vision and Scope



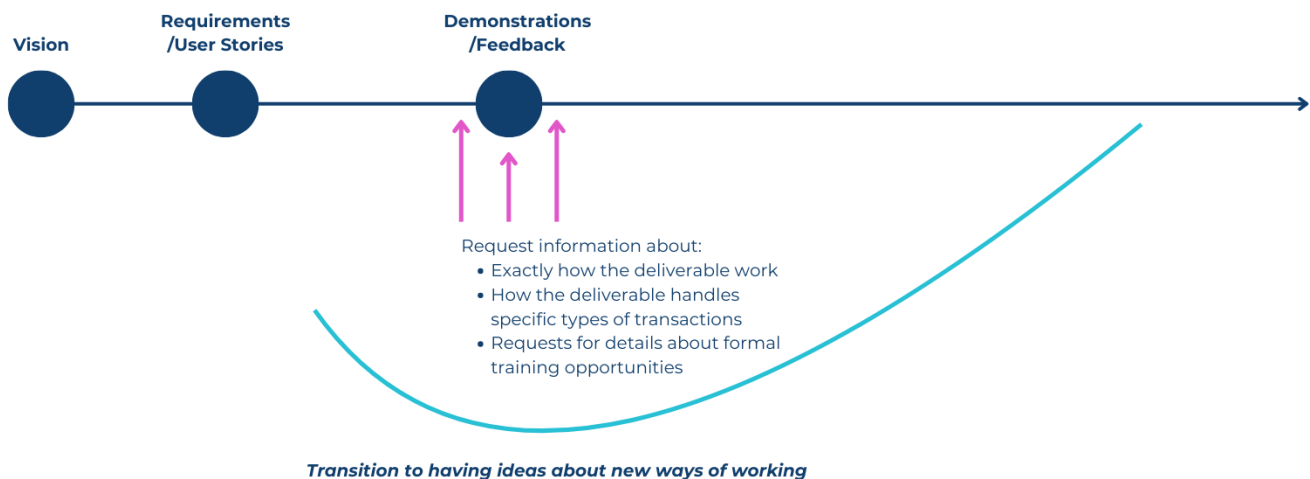
- Extend project vision to include descriptions of new ways of working
- Engage stakeholders in understanding broader implications
- Use feedback to refine project scope and approach

Requirements and Impact Assessment



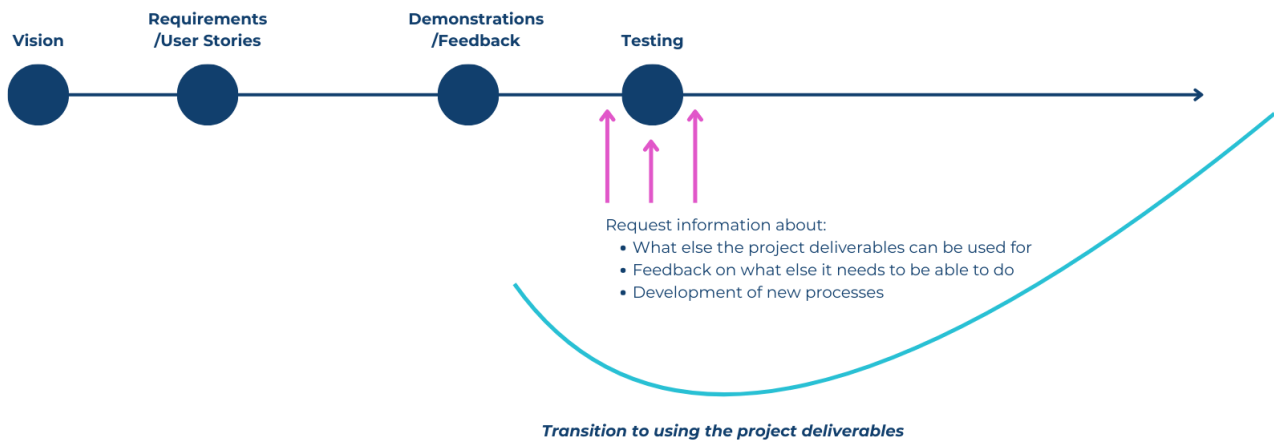
- Help stakeholders understand how deliverables will affect their work
- Gather input on transition needs and concerns
- Build change requirements into project specifications

Demonstrations and Preparation



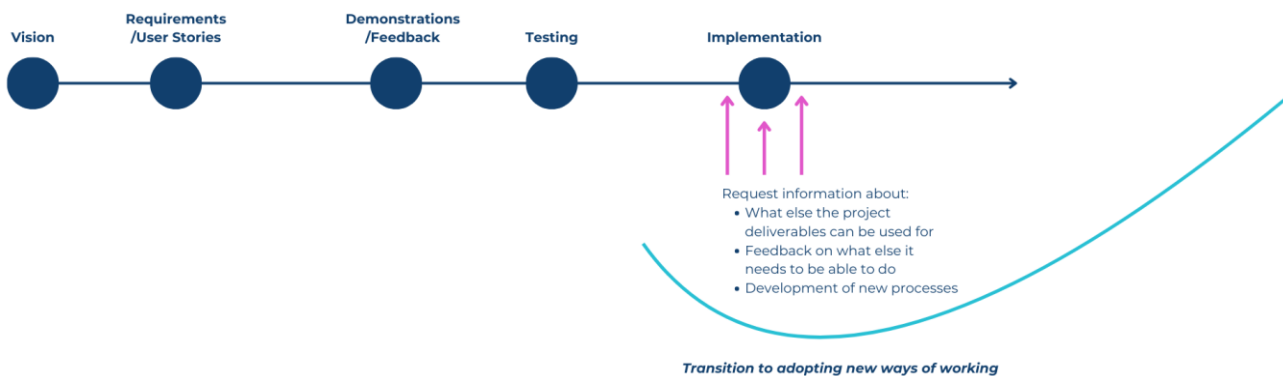
- Use project demonstrations to help people understand coming changes
- Generate excitement and voluntary engagement
- Identify training and support needs before go-live

Testing and Practice



- Include end-users in testing to build familiarity
- Create opportunities for safe practice and learning
- Gather feedback to improve both deliverables and transition plans

Implementation and Support



- Provide warranty periods with project team support
- Maintain change resources during transition period
- Monitor adoption and provide ongoing assistance

4. Comprehensive Change Planning

Address all elements of working practices that may be affected:

Formal Systems



- Processes and procedures
- Technology and tools
- Information and data
- Organisation structure

Cultural Elements

- Values and beliefs
- Behaviours and approaches
- Skills and competencies
- Performance measures

Success Metrics

For every activity, make sure that there are clear measures of success so that everyone involved can easily understand when what they are doing is having the desired effect and when they need to take corrective action. There are three types of measurement: tangible change (project delivery metrics); behavioural change (adoption metrics) and benefits that result from the combination of tangible and behavioural change.

Project Delivery Metrics

- Scope delivered on time and budget
- Technical performance and quality measures
- Stakeholder satisfaction with deliverables

Adoption Metrics

- Speed of transition to new ways of working
- Level of utilisation of new capabilities
- Reduction in workarounds and exceptions
- Employee confidence and competence

Benefit Realisation Metrics

- Achievement of intended business outcomes
- Return on investment including transition costs
- Sustainability of changes over time
- Foundation for future improvements

Call to Action

The evidence is clear: projects that create tangible deliverables without planning for behavioural change consistently fail to deliver their intended benefits. Organisations must evolve beyond the false economy of project-only approaches.

Every project plan must include:

1. Activities to engage stakeholders in understanding change impacts
2. Resources to support people through transition
3. Time allocation for adoption activities
4. Measures that track behavioural change alongside delivery
5. Honest assessment of the full cost and timeline for benefit realisation

The partnership between project management and change management is not optional—it's essential for organisational success in an era of constant change.

By integrating these disciplines, organisations can move from being first to create to being first to benefit, ensuring that investment in innovation translates into sustainable competitive advantage and organisational capability.

This whitepaper is based on insights from change management practitioners working with organisations worldwide, synthesising decades of experience in both successful and failed change initiatives.