



AGILE CHANGE
management limited

Agile Change Management

Author

Melanie Franklin

Director

Agile Change Management Limited



Introduction

I am working on an assignment to build greater change management capability within a global accountancy firm. It is a big change initiative, with lots of stakeholders, multiple locations and many different views on what change means and how it should be achieved!

This is an emergent change, it will develop over time as progress is made and change management activities begin to normalise. For this reason, I am going to take an Agile approach to making this change happen.

I am using several Agile techniques to help me explain what is going to happen, what achievements the partners can expect (and when) and to make progress visible to all, as a way of encouraging greater buy-in and involvement. Many of us working in change have an interest in Agile methods, so I thought you might enjoy this example. As you might be able to recognise, it uses some ideas from AgilePM® and some ideas from Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®).

Getting started

Using output from the initial stakeholder analysis I am hosting a number of short workshops so that we can all agree the vision of what needs to be achieved. In every workshop I have tried to get the participation of some people who do not see this initiative as anything to do with them. This is because a vision created only by enthusiasts tends to be too broad in scope and expects too much from people who might not feel the same way.

From this, we can break the new culture into a series of small achievements. The emphasis is on small, because keeping change small makes it easier to do, and the realisation of each small change builds an atmosphere of progress and momentum.

User Stories

To make sure each of these small changes deliver value, I am teaching everyone to write them up as User Stories. A User Story is a way of expressing an objective or requirement so that it is directly attributable to the individual or group that needs it:

As a.....STAKEHOLDER

I want.....REQUIREMENT

So that.....BENEFIT

In this way I can ensure that the perspectives of all the staff from the senior partners to the junior administrative assistants is addressed. Obviously at this level, even a small change involves a lot of work in each of the offices around the world. Therefore, these stories act as objectives for each of the teams of Change Agents I am going to create. These teams can then further develop the big User Stories into more specific actions.

Creating the Change Agent Network

Building the skills and passion for managing change needs the involvement of everyone. Change cannot happen if only a few people are involved, as they spend all their time telling others what needs to change, rather than being able to work collaboratively with their colleagues.

Agile approaches all emphasise the need for distributed leadership through the creation of empowered teams, where each member takes personal responsibility for the achievement of the team.

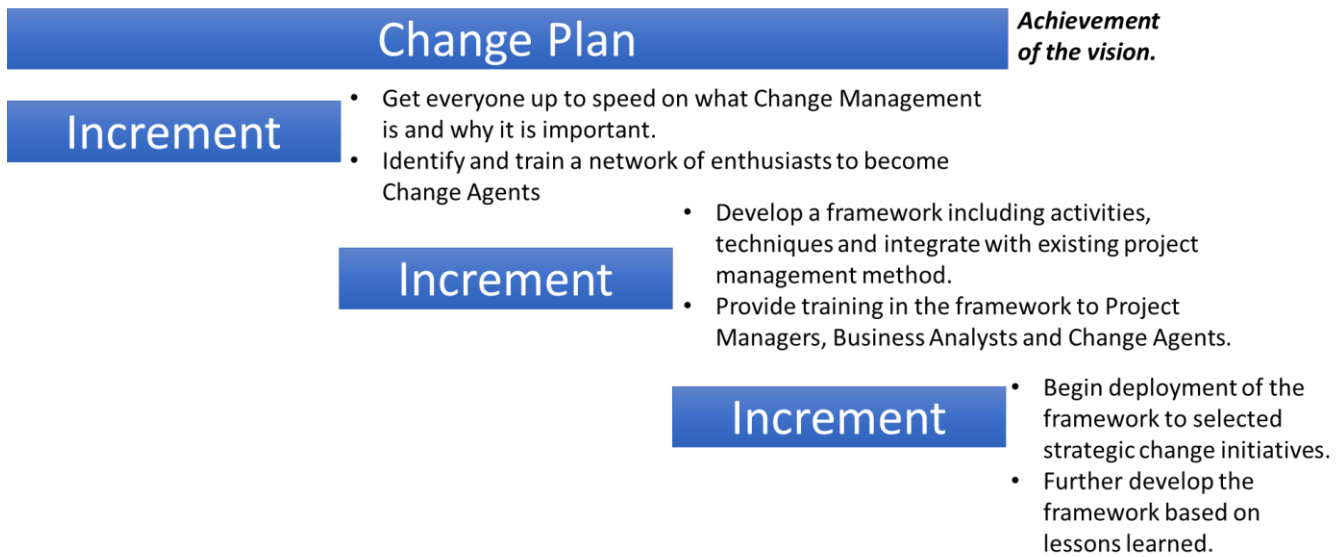
The secret to a motivated and enthusiastic network of change 'champions' or agents is to ask for volunteers rather than appoint people to these roles. In this case I ran several webinars around the world explaining the programme, the role of Change Agent and the opportunities for getting involved. I then followed up with all those who expressed interest in becoming involved.

Increment Planning

To give some structure to this distributed leadership, I find it useful to sub-divide the Change Plan into chunks (in the Agile world they call these Increments). These are a similar concept to stages in PRINCE2® or tranches in Managing Successful Programmes, except they are a chunk of time, within which we will try to deliver as much of the objective as possible.

The advantage of dividing the plan into Increments is that we are all focused on a goal, which is smaller than the overall vision, with a shorter timeframe (always important in evolving change to have deadlines to keep things focused).

To ensure this is collaborative, I invite participants from each of the local Change Agent teams to help define the goal for the Increment and to work together to identify all the User Stories that they want to achieve.



Sprints

Once we have established the Increments, we create a Change Plan, divided into a number of Sprints so that there is a focus for each Sprint on achieving at least one User Story.



The Sprints are resourced by the Change Agent Network, where a Change Agent or Champion gets things done in their location with colleagues who volunteer to try out new ways of working. . By distributing the leadership of each of the Sprints throughout the organisation, I am ensuring that all those impacted are making the change happen for themselves and not having it done to them.

The Change Plan needs to recognise this distributed leadership by ensuring that there are multiple Sprints taking place in all business functions in all offices. Therefore, as part of the Increment Planning, representatives of the Change Agent Network collaborate to identify what Sprints they will run and what their objectives will be. Hopefully, as a result, by the end of the increment, these multiple Sprints will have helped us achieve a shift in the culture.

Increment		
Sprint 1 – Team 1	Sprint 2 – Team 1	Sprint 3 – Team 1
Sprint 1 – Team 2	Sprint 2 – Team 2	Sprint 3 – Team 2
Sprint 1 – Team 3	Sprint 2 – Team 3	Sprint 3 – Team 3
Sprint 1 – Team 4	Sprint 2 – Team 4	Sprint 3 – Team 4
Sprint 1 – Team 5	Sprint 2 – Team 5	Sprint 3 – Team 5
Sprint 1 – Team 6	Sprint 2 – Team 6	Sprint 3 – Team 6
Sprint 1 – Team 7	Sprint 2 – Team 7	Sprint 3 – Team 7

Success Criteria

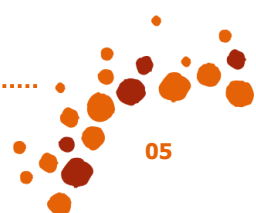
To make sure we get the most value out of this work, I need to keep asking the question “what does good look like?” so we know what measures of success to look for. This isn’t easy, because so much of change management involves persuasion conversations where the outcome is that others start to behave differently. Not easy to track, so we need to agree what we will be able to measure from our actions.

For each achievement at the end of each Increment we need to imagine what the evidence is that we have been successful. For example, if the achievement is to get everyone up to speed on what change management is and how to achieve it, then one of the success measures might be the number of requests received for further information.

Daily Stand Ups and Retrospectives

My job becomes coordinator of this network, responsible for helping them overcome blockages to their change, with innovative ideas for the involvement of others. I am also responsible for creating an atmosphere of inspiration and excitement that gives them the motivation to keep going, even when things are stressful.

I can do this by making sure I attend as many Daily Stand Up meetings as possible with each of the local Change Agents, not to interfere but to be available to help solve issues. Daily Stand-Ups are also known as daily scrums, where all those working on the change come together to give a brief update on what they have done since the last stand-up and what they are working on between now and the next stand-up.



The purpose is to provide up to date information, ensure that everyone knows what everyone else is working on so that it is easier to collaborate, to identify and resolve dependencies, risks and issues. The meeting helps the team get things done and minimise the need to escalate to senior managers. I also want to help facilitate their Retrospectives, when they review their achievements from a Sprint before planning their next Sprint. Retrospectives are another type of team meeting which also encourages team empowerment and personal responsibility. The team gets together at the end of a Sprint to review what has been created, and to discuss how the team worked together.

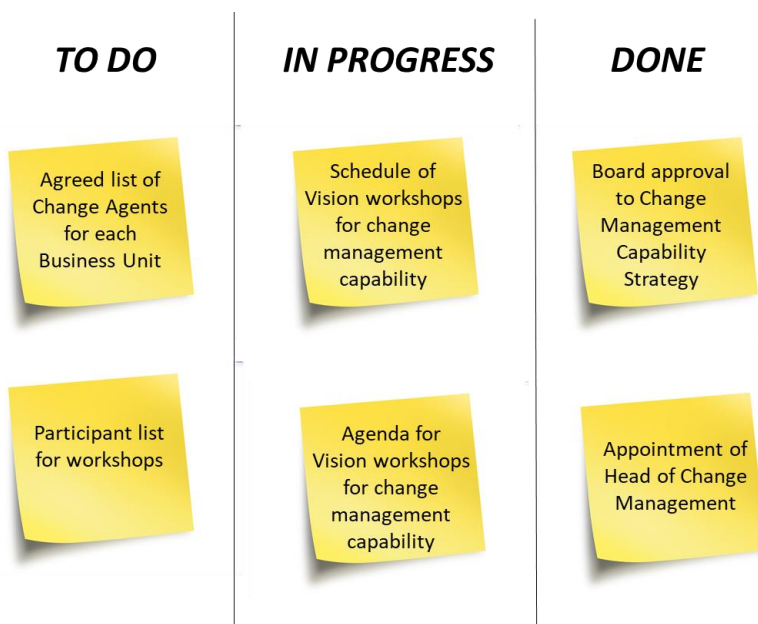
The emphasis is on improvement, which can cover any aspect of the work, the relationships, the skills of the team etc. The value of the retrospective depends on the questions asked and the willingness to share honest feedback with each other. This emphasis on continuous improvement closely aligns to working in Sprints, because each Sprint is an opportunity to apply the lessons learned from the previous Sprint.

One of the key things that I bring to the Retrospective is an update on what is happening to progress the change in other teams and other parts of the business. I share lessons learned from other Retrospectives so that the teams can improve how they do things and maximise the number of success stories that we generate.

Another important aspect of the Retrospectives is the chance to reflect on the vision for the change, and how this is evolving over time. After all, this is an emergent change and as clients, competitors and regulators make more demands on the organisation, and new products and services are developed, there are more strategic level changes that the organisation needs to implement. This impacts the programme to build change management capability, as it makes it even more strategically relevant, and increases the number of stakeholders with an interest in our progress. We can use the retrospective to discuss what we think the evolving vision is and what new achievements we should be addressing. My role is then to pass these conversations on to all the teams of local Change Agents. It is through these conversations that we ensure our initiative is truly an Agile change.

Kanban Boards

I want the teams running each of the Sprints to use a Kanban Board to demonstrate their progress. Kanban is a simple technique for visualising the work involved in making change happen. There are 3 columns: To Do; In Progress; Done. Each task is written on a sticky note, and these notes are moved from column to column as the work progresses.



Each of their User Stories can be shown on a Kanban Board, so that progress can be visible to all by sharing the latest picture of the Kanban Board as part of a weekly blog. Pictures of each of these Kanban Boards can be sent in from each of the teams to form an overall Kanban Board that summarises the progress across the globe.

Conclusion

Many of you reading this paper will think that I am doing nothing new, and we have always run change in this emergent, Agile way. After all, the nature of change is that it must develop, as the reactions to the initial changes help to define the scope of the later changes. I completely agree. The reason I think it helps to apply the ideas shared in this paper is because it is a way of bringing the Agile community in your organisation with you. Agile is now becoming normalised, so to ignore its vocabulary and its techniques runs the risk of change practitioners appearing out of touch.

If you think these ideas would help you, get in touch and I can give you some ideas about how to develop your own Agile skills.

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
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/melaniefranklin1/>