Great Project Managers are great Change Managers

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Overview

Projects create deliverables, they create new and changed processes, systems, data, team structures and work spaces. Projects create tangible things that trigger new ways of working, because it is the use of the project deliverables that lead to the changes that people need to make at work.

Change Management roles are becoming the norm in many organisations, and according to the pay survey sponsored by the Association for Project Management in the last two years, Change Managers earn more than Project Managers and the pay gap is widening in favour of Change Managers. The average salary in 2016 for a Project Manager was £46,000 and for a Change Manager £51,000 was whilst in 2017 this had risen to £47,500 for Project Managers and £55,500 for Change Managers.

Unsurprisingly this has led to a hybrid role, that of Project Change Manager which reflects that the best Project Managers are also experts at realising the benefits of their projects by guiding those impacted through the transition to new ways of working.

In this paper I am going to describe the activities needed for effective change management and how these can be incorporated into an integrated project and change management plan.

Change management activities

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.

Project Lifecycle	Change Lifecycle
• Concept • Design • Develop • Test	• Build awareness of what will be different • Create enthusiasm for participation in the project • Engage users in working with the project team • Help users to identify all activities needed to create new ways of working

Incorporating change activities into project plans

The easiest way to appreciate the impact on project plans is to consider the quality criteria for an effective project plan. Let's consider two scenarios:

- The old world, where as a project manager I was measured against my ability to deliver all of the requirements specified by my users on time, on budget and to the required level of quality.
- The new world, where I am measured on my ability to create support for the changes being created by the project deliverables and the amount of benefits being realised as a result of the project.

In the new world, hitting the sweet spot of realising all the benefits promised in the business case alongside a community that is fully behind the need for the project means I must include lots of 'marketing' style activities into my project plan. I can no longer take responsibility only for creation. Now I am responsible for creation and promotion of the project deliverables.

To help me make this move, I have created a new set of acceptance criteria for effective project plans, which act as my checklist to ensure I have included all these extra activities. The new world does not replace the old world. Instead I believe that the new acceptance criteria are a combination of both.

Old world – Creation of deliverables	New world – Adoption of deliverables
• Performance metrics track activities that lead to the creation of the project deliverables, measuring if the creation of each component of each deliverable as well as the final deliverables are on time and on budget.	• New performance metrics are created to track the level of involvement and participation by users in helping to create new ways of working that include the project deliverables. Also, new metrics track the level of support for changes that the project is trying to create.
• Does the project plan including activities for training users in how the deliverables should be operated?	• Does the project plan include the development of a shared understanding between users and project team members of how ways of working might be adapted?
• Does the plan allocate activities to project team members?	• Does the plan allocate activities to a mixed group of users and project team members?
• Does the project plan include activities to test if the project deliverables work i.e. they meet acceptance criteria?	• Does the project plan include activities to check is the users view the project deliverables as useful and desirable?
• Does the project plan include activities to communicate information about the project?	• Does the project plan include activities for asking for feedback about the project deliverables from the users?

Participation and Enthusiasm

I think that these marketing activities need to address two areas:
- Increasing enthusiasm for the change
- Increasing participation in the change

Enthusiasm for the change

This means building awareness in the possibilities offered by the project and generating excitement and motivation about being a part of this new way of working:
- Belief in value of the proposed benefits
- Excitement about the proposed future state

If the project deliverables are to be adopted as part of a new way of working, then those impacted must have a positive perception of the usefulness of what they are getting. When confronted by change, our default reaction is negative. We are annoyed by the disruption to business as usual, to our existing habits and the ease with which we currently get things done. The project team have to help those impacted to see how what they are creating are going to improve the current ways of working and offer even more opportunities for improvements in the future.

Participation in the change

This means mobilising all of those impacted by the project to:
- Become involved in designing, planning and implementing changes to current ways of working.
- Take on responsibility for practicing new ways of working so that they move from being unknown to becoming a habit that feels like the normal way of doing things.

We need to widen our brief to encourage our users to prepare for the adoption of the project deliverables. We need to help them form task forces to rewrite their current procedures. We need to help them carry out impact assessments to work out which of their customers or which of their procedures is affected by the project.

Small but effective

Many change activities are small, often they are conversations that put forward the positives about the project. However, even though the effort is small, the volume of encouragement can generate a significant impact on how the change is viewed.

There is no simple strategy for increasing user participation in the project and emotional buy-in to what it is creating. Listed below are examples which will have some effect with some users, so it is important to identify as many examples as possible and to include as many throughout your project plan. Make sure you carry them out early and frequently during the project.

1. **Emotional encouragement** – actions which inspire an internal pressure to change. On the positive side they create the feeling of 'I want to be a part of that group' because involvement

in the change appears as an attractive proposition. On the negative side, emotional levers can induce a feeling of guilt and anxiety about being left behind or not doing what is needed or expected.

2. **Embedding in procedures** – actions which are imposed by the process that must be followed. These levers do not rely on persuasion to encourage people to work in new ways. Instead they make the use of the new project deliverables integral to the way things are done by including this use as specific steps in the process.

3. **Control mechanisms** – rewards, punishments and responsibilities which create an external pressure to change. These levers create an organisational structure that expects/demands use of the new project deliverables as part of the role that someone performs and part of the metrics against which their performance is measured.

4. **Environmental factors** – physical and structural aspects of the working environment which encourage use of the project deliverables.

It is difficult to come up with examples as they are so specific to the types of projects that you are managing, but here are a few ideas to get you started:

Emotional encouragement
Generate pride in being associated with the project:
- Invitation only workshops where specially selected users are made to feel special and important and part of the 'in-crowd'.
- Early sight of project deliverables via demonstrations and walk-throughs to highlight that their views are of special importance to the project and their input is valued.
- Linking new ways of working with promotion prospects to generate a strong reason for getting involved in the project (this can also be part of a structural lever).
- Creating a club house for those users taking on additional project responsibilities to make them feel valued and important, and to create an identity for the group they are a part of.

Generate guilt about not being involved:
- Pointing out the negative impact to colleagues of delays in creating the new project deliverables and moving towards new ways of working. These delays might be a suppression of new business opportunities or the continuation of mistakes and the need for rework.
- Outlining the disadvantages experienced by customers in the current and demonstrating how use of the project deliverables will make engaging with your organisation easier/faster for your customers.

Embedding in procedures

Add an extra question onto an agenda:

- ensures that a certain subject is automatically discussed as part of a meeting. For example, if you want users to discuss the progress of the project and their involvement in it, make sure a section on project progress is added into their existing process for team meetings.

Add use of the project deliverables:

- Include them into the completion criteria for a specific task. For example, if you want to make sure information is added into a new system by a sales team after every sales meeting, ensure that this field becomes a mandatory part of the input process.

Control mechanisms

- Reward schemes for users giving up time to get involved in the project
- Public thanks from senior leaders
- Bonus schemes to share the additional value created by the project
- Explicit responsibility for the creation of new ways of working given to specific staff

Environmental factors

- If new procedures are to be adopted, make sure there are posters, diagrams and flowcharts explaining the new procedures in clear sight of everyone.
- If a new system is to be adopted, ensure there are short video clips of the most common tasks available to watch on the intranet.
- Establish a learning area where access to a demonstration version of the system is available for use by anyone to try things out.
- Create a space for informal meetings so that when people need to ask questions or need help to adjust to the change, they can do so away from their desks.

Conclusion

Project Managers need to incorporate change management activities into their project plans if they are to increase the chances that their projects will realise all of the benefits promised in the business case. Whilst many Project Managers possess skills that will help them achieve this including scheduling, resourcing and team management, many still need to learn the basics of change.

Without this fundamental understanding of how individuals react to change Project Managers will find it difficult to identify the activities to help people to participate in the change whilst overcoming their natural resistance to it. Understanding how to manage the transition to new ways of working is now a fundamental part of effective project management.

Whether the title becomes Project Change Manager or remains as Project Manager, the hybrid nature of the role is here to stay. For the best career opportunities, make sure you have your own development plan for learning about how to manage 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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