

How2guide: Change Control

Introduction	When do you use this guide
Programme or projects often fail as a result of uncontrolled changes to scope and the functionality of the products that they will deliver. They do not work in isolation, and changes are happening to the environment they are delivering to all the time. Consequently they exist in an inherently volatile environment. This can result in changing business requirements, reactions to unplanned events or failures, and a loss of stakeholder confidence; all of which can affect the ability of the programme or project to deliver its objectives. Change control is the process and technique that enables careful assessment of changes to ensure that their impact is understood and the changes are authorised. Programmes have a particular issue to resolve which is the control of its projects. A particular risk is that small, seemingly low impact changes in a number of projects can aggregate into major problems.	Change control is likely to become more relevant once the project or programme has moved into the Define stage. There is a strong link between change control and configuration management procedures. As with many things in project management, it is the small uncontrolled changes that can aggregate to create major problems later, so the earlier controls are established the better. Change control is normally linked to issue management. Changes tend to result from an issue being raised by someone so the start of the change process is the Issue Log, where the change is captured. This guide covers: • The principles of change control • Change Control steps • Key questions for an impact assessment
Principles of Change Control Change control is all about ensuring that the project or programme focuses on delivering what it has been tasked to do and doesn't deviate without authority. Control of change- Changes of any sort will have an impact on one or more of; time, cost, quality or stakeholder perception. Therefore, change must be carefully controlled and there must be a formal process in place with an impact assessment of each change request, together with the approval by the project board. The assets, documentation and concepts that will be subject to change control must be identified early and clearly communicated. Timely and accurate information- is paramount to undertake an impact assessment. The information collected should be directly valuable to the control process and the assessment of the impact of a change. Wherever possible, statistics should be reported against the baseline and fact focused.	

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Embed monitoring- as you go as it will save time and pain later trying to collect the evidence. Owners of work packages should report to the project manager on a regular basis about progress and any potential changes that may be considered in the future. The focus is on identifying early warning indicators from the work packages, extinguishing small fires now is easier than fighting bush fires later!

Involve the team- in the process of change control. There is a natural resistance to control and reporting, particularly if people don't understand the relevance, so gaining the teams commitment is essential. When the team understands the bigger picture of the project they may well identify issues in their work packages that may be of little interest to them but may be a major threat or opportunity to other parts of the project.

Change control steps

When a change is required it is likely to come from an issue of some kind. There should be a systematic approach in place to ensure that there is rigor and authority behind decisions to accept or reject changes.

The following are the recommended steps for handling a change:

Step	Description
Identify the Change	Log the requirement in the Issue register and describe what is actually required. Categorizing the issue will help, for example, business process, technical or HR will give you a good starting point.
Prioritise	Allocate priority. Decide if it is urgent and needs to be done quickly to avoid further problems or if it is something that can wait.
Impact Assessment	This should thoroughly review the effect that this change will have on the project. The impact assessment should be undertaken against the 4 control areas of time, cost, quality and stakeholders. In addition, if benefits are a key justification for the project, then benefits analysis should also be undertaken.
Options Analysis	There may be a number of ways of meeting the new requirements or dealing with the problem. Each should be analysed using the following criteria: is it desirable? (Are the benefits worth the expenditure?); is the change feasible? (Can the change be delivered?); and is it achievable? (If the products are delivered will the benefits accrue?)

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Authorise Variation	As part of the control design, levels of delegated authority should have been set. This will dictate what can be authorised by the manager and what will need to go to the project or programme board. If the change is rejected, then it is very important that the reasons for rejection are recorded and communicated to the stakeholder(s). This will help with the understanding of what might have seemed like a good idea not being approved. It will provide an audit trail of the decision so that if the issue arises again the benefits of the previous analysis will still be available.
Build and Test Solution	If approval is given then this would become a work package with the normal controls. The solution would need to undergo feasibility, development and testing to ensure it meets the performance and budget expectations and that it interfaces with other outputs effectively.
Implement and Monitor	Implementation will need to be planned. It may be included within a current stage or scheduled for roll out in a later stage. This will need to be packaged together in the most appropriate way. Monitoring the impact on live operations, existing processes and service levels could be part of the process to ensure that capability achieved in previous stages has not become de-stabilised.
Review and Update Documentation	Once implemented, any product descriptions or benefits profiles that have been affected should be updated, along with any revisions to the plans. The issue register and change request should also be updated along with configuration management information.
Lessons Learned	If the change is significant, then holding a post implementation review to reflect on what went well and what didn't, and capturing these in the project lessons learned report will help to ensure that future changes are handled optimally.

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The Technique – Impact assessment

Technique overview		Concept
The technique should be undertaken before any changes to the project or programme are approved by the project board. A key area to address is whether the change will take the project or programme outside of the expected performance levels in terms of cost, time and the quality of the outcomes that it will produce.		The impact assessment is focused on ensuring that the programme or project board maintain control. It is often the case that minor changes aggregate together to create the conditions for failure. A formal impact assessment provides the opportunity for a full examination of the options and their potential effects.
The following is the checklist that should be used when assessing a change		
What is the likelihood of success of the change?	Will it have any effect on the delivery timetable?	Will the change have any dependency with and impact on other outputs?
How much will the change cost?	What would be the impact of doing nothing?	Are there any external dependencies on which the change will depend for success?
What impact will this change have on the overall risk profile?	Will the change have any effect on the potential for achieving benefits?	What is the level of stakeholder support for this change?
Will there be an overall impact on the business case?	Will there be any effect on the outcomes that have been specified?	Does the project/programme have the resources/skills to apply the change?