

What is Change Management?

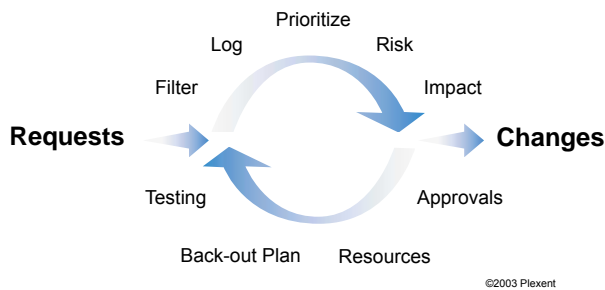
ITIL struggles to define Change Management because of the many, varied and complex definitions for change. Opting for the simple approach, they begin with the following definition for Change:

... the process of moving from one defined state to another.

ITIL then goes on to develop a working definition for Change Management by describing its goal:

... to ensure that standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all Changes, in order to minimize the impact of Change-related Incidents upon service quality, and consequently to improve the day-to-day operations of the organization.

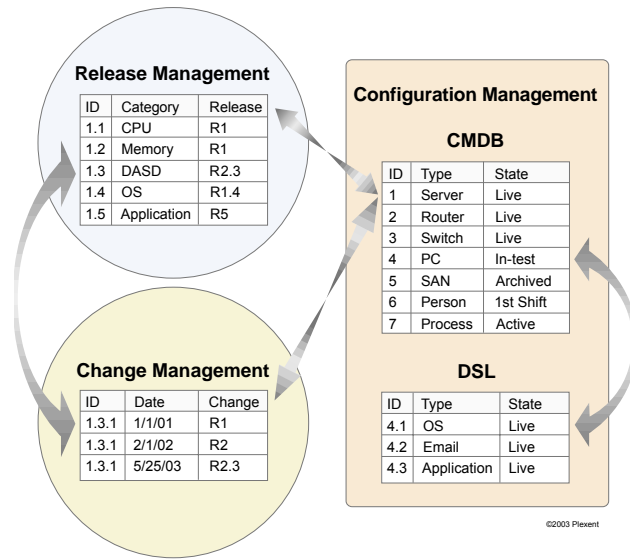
Explicit in this definition is a need to balance the desire for change against the cost and potential impact. This is especially true in progressive organizations. They possess the will to drive change proactively, rather than continually reacting to incidents and letting happenstance dictate the cadence and nature of evolution in their business. To avoid a vicious spiral of incidents and changes the process must be disciplined and documented, yet flexible enough so that Change Management itself is open to the benefits of periodic review and beneficial modification. The diagram below depicts important elements in the change management process.



While the preceding diagram represents a gross oversimplification of the major activities necessary to successfully implement, operate, and maintain Change Management, there are still a few additional key concepts to consider. First, changes can be large or small. Large changes are accompanied by a proportionally larger impact that must be managed, generally within the context of the organization's overall project management framework. Therefore, when developing your Change Management process-

es, remember that one size does not fit all changes and while a flow chart may suffice for a small change that it lacks the detail of a process model and the completeness of a project plan. Next, to simplify the daily use of Change Management, consider carefully change categories and prescheduled time slots. With these in place routine changes can be made quickly, without undue administration because these recurring situations have already been evaluated against the process. An example might be replacing a non-functioning PC. Similarly, by scheduling downtime in advance, all but critical changes can be sequenced into the next available slot. These slots should be chosen based on minimal impact to normal operations and user productivity. Finally, keep your terminology and concepts standardized: An incident is not the same as a change, and a change request is not the same as a service request.

Evaluating what can go wrong when you fail to implement Change Management is a significant undertaking. Assume that the vicious incident-change spiral never materializes and that a major outage never occurs; is it safe to say there is no adverse consequence associated with avoiding Change Management? No, and here is why. There are interdependencies between Change, Release, and Configuration Management (see below) that must be in place to keep the information in the Configuration Management Database (CMDB) current and accurate. Because the CMDB is the central repository for Service Support and provides the basis for Service Delivery reporting, without Change Management your organization is blind. To prevent this, some level of Change Management must be instituted and Plexent can help.



The Plexent Approach

itDNA builds on the Change Management concepts outlined in the ITIL standard and, by leveraging our framework, Plexent can apply ITIL to your organization. If you are just getting started with Change Management you may need help with customizing the processes to meet your business needs. This may entail understanding how your organization handles change and encompass membership recommendations for your Change Advisory Board (CAB). For organizations struggling with more thorny issues, assistance establishing the Change-Configuration-Release Management linkages may be what you require. Whatever your Change Management maturity, Plexent can take you to the next level by bringing all of the pieces together.

Much more than just a framework, itDNA brings real-world tools and techniques to bear on your concerns. Backed up by itDNA's maturity models and rich, intellectual property knowledge base, Plexent's project management combines with proven policies and procedures to provide standardized services

within the following Change Management Elements:

- Change Control
- Project Management
- Communication
- Strategic Planning

Already discussed is the important role Project Management will play when implementing a sweeping change. Of note, however, is the inclusion of Communication among the elements addressed by itDNA. Change is often accompanied by Fear, Uncertainty, and Dread. To keep these from becoming a point of focus for users in the field, Communication is essential. It also opens a channel for feedback on effectiveness and how the change was received.

In addition to enhanced communication about the status of current or pending changes, other benefits of a mature Change Management program include:

- Increased productivity
- Improved risk assessment
- Reduced effect of adverse impact
- Ability to back out of a change
- Reporting and trend analysis
- Oversight via the CAB
- Greater ability to respond to large changes or a disaster

Change Management is not optional, even assuming ideal circumstances. Too many other Service Management Disciplines depend on it to function correctly and the cost of avoiding it, in terms of productivity alone, is too high to ignore. To get you started down the right path or accelerate your progress, Plexent provides assessment services. Leveraging the intelligence in our itDNA, we can help you evaluate where you are today, where you would like to take your organization, and the surest path to get there.