



Change management:  
A consulting add-on?  
Think again.



**T**hough it is essential to the successful delivery of any analytics initiative—or for that matter, any project—change management (CM) often gets little attention. Project leaders neglect to include a change management component in their planning or, at best, push it to the project’s periphery. Since CM does not fall neatly into any of the traditional workstreams or operational functions, the impulse is to bolt it onto the project as a consulting add-on. This means it is usually one of the first items to go when project budgets are under pressure.

Yet, both clients and consultants should treat change management as a non-negotiable deliverable. After all, if users do not adopt the new solution, even the most flawlessly executed project will have failed. Indeed, a recent Gartner survey found that only a third of change efforts

are clear successes, 16% show mixed results, and half are clear failures.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that companies have increasingly adopted this view in recent years, and many have established internal change management teams to help support key enterprise initiatives. Yet these relatively new teams’ capabilities and availability may not align well with a given project’s focus or timeline. Furthermore, when a company incorrectly assumes that the internal project stakeholders or hired consulting firm is fully equipped to minimize the disruption created by a new project, the consequences range from poor stakeholder engagement to an outright rejection of the new approach, jeopardizing the firm’s entire investment.



<sup>1</sup>Gartner, Manage Change More Successfully, <https://www.gartner.com/en/insights/change-management>



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## **Change management: An imperative for project success**

Beyond advocating that change management be a part of the project, a project team can take the following actions to ensure post-project continuity for users:

**1. Identify the existing client capabilities.** From the outset, the combined project team should explore what capabilities the business has developed that can be leveraged to assist with change management.

Questions to resolve should include:

- **Where do the CM team's core competencies reside?**  
When evaluating whether an internal CM team can be leveraged, it is critical to understand the team's key skills; for example, does the team have a technical or operational orientation?
- **What services do the internal team offer?**  
Determine precisely what the team can provide. Can the company's CM team create user documents, develop and lead user training sessions, or produce training videos that users can watch on-demand?
- **What is the team's availability?**  
Among companies that maintain internal CM organizations, the size and capabilities of

these teams vary enormously. A project team should confirm that the CM team's availability will align with the proposed project timeline.

Having determined that the internal CM team can support the initiative, the project team should then make sure there is CM representation on key project committees. A CM team presence will help promote the development of an effective change plan.

**2. Create awareness early.** Create awareness of the impending changes as early in the project as possible. While the vast majority of projects begin with a degree of uncertainty, informing affected users of impending changes as soon as is reasonable will help advance overall adoption. Early notification will not only enable users to prepare for the pending changes, but will also provide an opportunity for them to alert the project team to potential issues that were overlooked in the planning phase.

**3. Create a transition plan.** Many project plans fall short on creating even soft cutoff or retirement dates, leading to the unintentional vestige of legacy processes, systems, tools, and reports. Such oversights jeopardize the entire project, as many users will inevitably return to legacy approaches.

The growing list of potential issues and the impact created by these inconsistencies grow exponentially over time as unsupported tools and data linger in the new environment and may be unwittingly used for strategic projects to detrimental effect.

**4. Track user adoption.** To quote management guru Peter Drucker, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” Understanding who in the organization is participating in the change management process is almost as important as creating the process itself. Important leading indicators of user adoption include who has attended training sessions, who has viewed the training videos, and who has attempted to leverage or explore the new environment. At a high level, activity volume can illustrate to program managers a need to throttle up or throttle down training opportunities. It can also

help identify potential distractors. In one project that I had exposure to, data analytics demonstrated that a manager who expressed confusion over training materials had, in fact, never logged in to the system or attended a single training session.

### **Enhance project adoption and success with effective change management.**

Above all, successful change management depends on a robust communication plan. Companies that focus on relevant status updates, meeting reminders, and training opportunities throughout a project significantly increase the likelihood of user adoption and overall project success.





## About the author

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