

Importance of Communication for Effective Implementation of ITIL[®] Change Management

Shivakumar N

Part-Time Research Scholar, Department of Policy Planning and Educational Research, National Institute of
Technical Teachers Training & Research (NITTTR), Chennai, India

ABSTRACT: Communication ensures right people have the right information at the right time and supports change management's process goals. Communications is at its most effective when individuals involved in different stages of Change Management are targeted with tailored communications. Clearly defining the role of Change Manager, a detailed Communication Plan, and Change Management interfaces with other Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL[®]) service management processes across the service lifecycle will help to improve the communication for effective implementation of ITIL[®] Change Management.

KEYWORDS: ITIL[®], Change Management, Communication, Change Manager

I. INTRODUCTION

IT Service Management is concerned with delivering and supporting IT services that are appropriate to the business requirements of the organization. ITIL[®] provides a comprehensive, consistent and coherent set of best practices for IT Service Management processes. IT service providers are striving to improve the quality of the service, but at the same time they are also trying to reduce the costs or, at a minimum, maintain costs at the current level. The ITIL[®] Change Management is aimed at lessening risks of impact, exposure as well as disruption to business services. Effective ITIL[®] Change Management protects both the business services and facilitates easy changes without the unnecessary control or bureaucracy.

In today's fast-moving market, the ability to easily and appropriately handle change is even more important than before; that is why IT organizations need to implement and automate best practices for the entire end-to-end Change Management lifecycle. Only those IT organizations that embrace this disciplined approach to change management will be able to deliver the operational agility essential for service excellence [1][2]. For implementing a change successfully, communication is the key and one of the most complex parameters as it involves an exchange of ideas and feelings with people in an organization through various mediums.

II. WHAT IS CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change is a critical aspect of every business. Introducing changes into running software systems is risky. There's always a chance of failure, and that can have a negative impact on business. The goal of the change management process is to ensure that standardized methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all changes, to minimize the impact of change-related incidents upon service quality, and consequently improve the day-to-day operations of the organization [3].

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Type of changes

Whatever maybe the type of change, in the absence of sufficient two-way conversation or effective communication across all the levels, the change effort may fail to meet its objectives. If a communication plan is designed efficiently and clearly, it helps in building awareness and in getting the subsequent support in the entire team. The organisation / business need to ensure that appropriate procedures and communication are available to cover the different types of change requests.

Change Types

Table 1: Change Type and its description

Type		Change Description
Standard Change [4]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a change, which is associated with very low risk and pre-approved by the Change Management process and does not require added approval from Change Manager. The crucial elements of a Standard Change are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tasks are well-known, proven and included in pre-approved change list Authority is effectively given in advance Budgetary approval is within the control of the Change Requester
Normal Change [4]	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact and/or risk minimal (low) and few resources, therefore, the Change Manager may be delegated to authorize. (Change Manager as owner of the CM process. Added layer of departmental Change Manager for budgetary consideration may be added)
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact and/or risk medium and/or significant resources therefore requires the CAB to be involved The Change Advisory Board (CAB) assists the Change Manager in ensuring Changes are implemented with minimal business impact and in good time They will assess RFCs and decide which to reject and prioritize those that will be implemented. In order to do this successfully advice is needed both from all sections affected by the Change and those who will assist in the implementation. To do this the CAB has a variable population of business and technical staff, both internal and external, who will be able to deliver accurate assessments on the RFCs under review. Before CAB meetings all pertinent documents should be distributed
	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact and/or risk high and/or major resources required, therefore, approval from Senior/Executive Management before CAB involvement
Emergency Change[4]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One required quickly, perhaps to rectify an operational failure, and needs fast tracking under Change Management control. Emergency Changes, such as those needed to meet immediate operational needs, are reviewed by the Emergency Change Advisory Board (ECAB)

III. CHANGE MANAGER ROLE FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

For every change, Communication should be in all directions, i.e., inside the Change Management team (if there is one), inside the organization, outside the organization, etc. For this set of activities it's important that the Change Manager has soft skills, like communication skills, the ability to listen, presentation skills, etc. [5]

Kotter [6] found that despite putting effort into communication via newsletters and speeches, senior executives continued to behave in ways antithetical to the vision for change. One of the biggest mistakes a top sponsor can make is

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sending inconsistent signals or not communicating enough; dictating change without communicating the benefits (Prosci, [7]).

The Change Manager is responsible for reviewing submitted RFCs, scheduling CAB meetings, authorizing changes, updating change records, coordinating the build/test/implementation of changes, reviewing implemented changes, producing reports, and improving the change process.

The Change Manager using a Forward Schedule of Changes (FSC) or Change Schedule will communicate to all stakeholders upcoming changes that may impact them. The FSC along with projected service outages (PSO), or expected deviations in service availability, will be taken into consideration when coordinating change implementation. Release and Deployment will be responsible for implementation and coordination of training needs.

- *Forward Schedule of Changes (FSC)* – A forward schedule of changes is a listing of upcoming changes which are to be scheduled and communicated to other IT service management processes and to the rest of the company. The forward schedule of changes shows the changes that have been approved and given a date for implementation.
- The *Projected Service Outages (PSO)* contains details of changes to agreed SLAs and service availability because of the currently planned FSC in addition to planned downtime from other causes such as planned maintenance and data backup. These documents are agreed with the relevant customers within the business, with service level management, with the service desk and with availability management. Once agreed, the service desk should communicate any planned additional downtime to the user community at large, using the most effective methods available.

IV. COMMUNICATION PLAN

The change management process Communication Plan describes how information will be handled during the change management life-cycle. It ensures right people have the right information at the right time and supports change management's process goals.

It includes:

- Describing how timely, relevant information will be delivered to key stakeholders to quickly remove roadblocks, resolve issues and minimize the impact of change within the organization.
- Detailing the communication necessary to facilitate a smooth transition for staff with minimal disruption to daily organizational operations.
- Demonstrating how the change management process activities will be communicated so that it fosters enthusiasm and obtains buy-in across the organization.

Elving [8] notes that poor communication, coupled with an overload of information can leave employees feeling bombarded, which results in less efficiency. The benefit of having an effective communication system is that it is an opportunity to have supervisors and employees talking positively about the change initiative. It progresses the change, helps to clarify existing attitudes towards the change initiative and it sets the basis for any required corrective-action and "error-cause-removal steps" (Soltani [9]).

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Communication Matrix: The details of the Communication Plan are provided in matrix format to facilitate use of the information.

Table 2: Communication Matrix

Audience	Purpose	Frequency	Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change Manager Business Customer Change Requester 	Communicate Request for Change (RFC) has been submitted	Each time an RFC is submitted	Change Requester
All resources required to participate with the RFC	Gather expertise to efficiently handle RFCs	Each time an RFC is being assessed	Change Manager
Change Requester	Communicate that budgetary approval for the RFC has been rejected	Each occurrence of budgetary rejection	Change Manager
Business Unit IT leadership	Provide information for the upcoming Change Advisory Board (CAB) meeting	Weekly for CAB meeting	Change Manager
Change stakeholders	Communicate that the RFC has been either approved or rejected	Weekly for CAB meeting	Change Manager
Change Requester	Communication that RFC has been rejected and to provide timeframe to appeal	Weekly for CAB meeting	Change Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change Requester Incident Manager Problem Manager Release Manager 	Communicate that Emergency change has been received	Each occurrence of an Emergency change request	Change Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change Requester Service Desk Problem Manager Release Manager 	Conduct Post Implementation Review (PIR)	Each occurrence of an Emergency change request	Change Manager

V. INTER - RELATED ITIL® PROCESSES

For effective communication, Change Management interfaces with other ITIL® service management processes across the service lifecycle. The key processes are:

a) Problem Management

Problem management and proactive problem management all have the potential to create value for your organization. In order to resolve problems, changes are often required to implement workarounds and to resolve known errors. Getting stakeholders on board by communicating information about the benefits of process optimization using in-house data is a key component of project success. Problem Management can submit a RFC to resolve an error in the IT infrastructure that is causing problems and incidents. Problem management can work using the normal, standard or emergency change process. In either case an RFC must be submitted.

b) Configuration and Asset Management

Communication is central during every service transition. Change Management relies on configuration management information within the CMDB when assessing the impact of a change on the IT infrastructure. It is essential that CIs affected by the change are identified. Information associated with the impacted Configuration Item (CI) is also updated throughout the Change Management process.

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Some of the benefits of implementing a CMDB for Change Management are:

- Enforcement of consistent communication between Customers and IT
- Effective management of RFC's and Configuration Items
- Standardized procedures for managing Change Control across disciplines
- Reduced unplanned work due to cascading impacts of changes
- Coordinated planning of changes across IT organization

c) Release and Deployment Management

Change Management manages the change and coordinates the build, test and implementation with the release and deployment process. These two processes are so integrated that they should look like one process because of the handoffs. This helps with serviced orientation and removing process silos or what is known as the “throw it over the fence” approach to implementation. Release Manager should send advanced communication of release to all stakeholders. Communication should include:

- Proposed date of Release
- Purpose of Release

d) IT Service Continuity Management

In an effort to minimize and manage risks that can negatively impact the business, IT Service continuity ensures necessary IT services are resumed within their minimum agreed to service levels. Regular review of the whole BCP is needed. For IT this is required whenever there is a significant change to any component of production systems/services. Such changes should be done through ITIL[®] Change Management and communicated to the ITIL[®] Service Continuity Manager so as to assess impact before implementation.

e) Security Management

Each change that occurs will be evaluated for its impact on security. From an ITIL[®] perspective, the ISMS addresses: Security policy and supporting policies; Security plan; Security organizational structure; Management of security risks; Communication strategy and plan for security.

f) Knowledge Management

Helps ensure decision support for changes. This includes coordination and collaboration with other process areas for evolving data, information and knowledge for service oriented decisions.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that all stakeholders receive appropriate and timely communication about change so that they are aware and ready to adopt and support the change
- Post and communicate information and minutes from all CAB meetings so that communication is cascaded to all change stakeholders. This communication can serve as a channel for informal education and awareness of the process

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VII. CONCLUSION

Communications plans needs to cater to all stakeholders impacted by the change and ensure that the entire IT staff is kept informed on changes and developments on a consistent basis and in a way which creates value to each of the teams. Since change is ongoing, automating change processes, notifications and communications will help streamline the change process and motivate buy-in.

Whatever solution is adopted, based on organizational structure and ITIL[®] maturity, the secret of the success of the interfaces between various key ITIL[®] Processes lies in good communication and involvement between the organization and the service management functions. An effective communication channel should be established as soon as possible between the organization and the service management functions.

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