What is Change Control?

~ By Duncan Haughey

Change control is an important part of the project management process. With the pace of change today, it is almost certain that projects will face the demand for change during their life. While change may help ensure the project’s alignment with business needs, it is important to consider and approve each change carefully.

The change control process in project management ensures that each change proposed during a project is adequately defined, reviewed and approved before implementation. The change control process helps avoid unnecessary changes that might disrupt services and also ensures the efficient use of resources.

Change control contains five stages:

1. Proposing a Change
2. Summary of Impact
3. Decision
4. Implementing a Change
5. Closing a Change

There are two documents used during the process:

1. Change Log: used to provide a record of all changes requested and decisions made
2. Change Request Form: used to document details of the change, including the business case

1. Proposing a Change

This process gives the ability for anyone in the project team (including the customer) to suggest a change to the project. The proposal must include a description of the change and expected benefits or other reason for the change. The change is presented using the Change Request Form and added to the Change Log for the project.

2. Summary of Impact

This process is carried out by the project manager, who will consider the overall effect on the project, covering the following items:

- Quantifiable cost savings and benefits
- Legal, regulatory or other unquantifiable reason for change
- Estimated cost of the change
- Impact on timescales
• Extra resources needed
• Impact on other projects and business activities
• New risks and issues

After this assessment, the project manager recommends whether to carry out the change.

3. Decision

This process involves a review of the change request by an approved authority who will consider all the information provided by the project manager and person making the request. The decision will usually be:

- Accept
- Accept with comments and special conditions
- Reject
- Defer (change is not approved, but is left for consideration later)

4. Implementing a Change

If the change is approved it is planned, scheduled and executed at a time agreed with the stakeholders.

As part of the planning, a regression test plan is needed in case the change needs to be backed out.

After implementation, it is usual to carry out a post-implementation review.

5. Closing a Change

Once implemented, the requester checks and agrees on the change, and it is closed in the Change Log by the project manager.