

Change Management Process

Introduction

Companies must adapt and improve within a competitive, ever-evolving business environment. The change management process is a structured approach to transition steadily the organization, its products, services, and employees to a desired state. Each *change* addresses an issue. The *change proposal (CP)* describes the issue, its relevance and maps out possible solutions. Thereby, a CP represents the key document in a change management process instance.

Example of a Change Proposal

Employees with children are limited to part-time positions as they need to pick up their children from kindergarten and the organization neither allow flexible hours nor remote work. Allowing employees to finish work at home in the afternoon would enable them to take full-time jobs, boost creativity, and increase motivation to accomplish more.

Characteristics of the Change Management Process

The change management process comprises two subprocesses:

1. Change Proposal Evaluation (CPE): Organizations deal with limited resources, wherefore they need to focus on changes which contribute to the strategical and tactical goals. The CPE is about evaluating a CP such that the executive board can take an informed decision whether the change should be implemented.
2. Change Implementation (CI): The executive board accepts or rejects the CP. The CI comprises the activities to implement the change in the organization and to ensure that the intended effects occur.

Due to time constraints and to control for the complexity, we will consider only the CPE subprocess, which is triggered when an employee develops a CP. The goal of the CPE is to provide the executive board sufficient information that it can decide whether the organization should implement the change. Thus, the CPE ends when the change is assessed by the members of the *CPE committee* from different perspectives:

1. A project manager drafts a realization plan and analyses whether the organization's objectives are fostered. For instance, the change spends focus to the Chinese market, although the organization strives for reducing the reliance to this market.
2. The information security officer checks whether the change threatens the IT security. For instance, accessing company data remotely may allow unauthorized persons to steal confidential data.
3. A lawyer checks whether legal regulations block or impede a change. For instance, the Factory Act may prohibit work after 9 pm.

Finally, the employee who submitted the CP participates in the CPE to contribute details to her idea and to eliminate lacks of clarity.

Perspective: Employee

You take the perspective of the employee who develops and submits the CP.

You trigger the CPE because you have identified a problem that, in your opinion, should be addressed by the organization.

At the beginning, you develop a CP. Therefore, you fill out a form in the organization's intranet. The form contains prompts to describe (1) the problem, (2) the current state, (3) your solution or the target state, (4) an estimate of the resource requirements for realizing your solution as well as (5) an abstract realization plan.

As you may lack of knowledge for answering some prompts with sufficient detail, you either contact some colleagues to gather further information, or you leave certain prompts empty.

As soon as you have finished the development of the CP, you submit it to the CPE committee which is responsible for evaluating the CP.

After your submission, you can contribute to the CPE in the following two ways:

1. **Eliminate uncertainties and deliver further details.** The members of the CPE committee may need further details or do not fully understand what you mean with provided answers in the CP form. Then, they request you to eliminate the uncertainties by providing further details.
2. **Check assessment state and react.** The members of the CPE committee enrich your submitted CP with their evaluation results. You can check the state of the assessment by visiting the intranet and reading the added results. Then, you can also contact individual members of the CPE committee to provide further details if you think it is necessary. For instance, you perceive that the responsible project manager falsely estimated the value of your proposal because she misunderstands what you want to do.

Perspective: Project Manager (PM)

You take the perspective of the project manager (PM) who is responsible (1) for coordinating the CPE and (2) for contributing assessments and enrichments to it. You handle both responsibilities concurrently.

Coordination Responsibilities

After an employee submitted a CP form, you check whether it is really a CP. For instance, an employee may mistakenly use the form to submit a service request in which she requests the exchange of a light bulb. You reject the request if it does not represent a CP, else, you notify the other members of the CPE committee that they start their work.

If a CPE committee member rejects the CP, you cancel the CPE by informing the other members that they should not spend further effort on evaluating the CP.

As soon as you and all CPE committee members have accepted the CP, the CPE ends, and you send the CP with the evaluation results to the executive board.

Assessment Responsibilities

Besides your coordination responsibilities, you assess and enrich the CP from your perspective, too. It is your decision which assessments and enrichments are required for the CP, and in which sequence you conduct them. However, you conduct each assessment and enrichment at most once. Furthermore, you contact the employee who submitted the CP to provide you further details, if necessary.

Your toolbox comprises the following assessments and enrichments:

- The *problem relevance assessment* checks (1) whether the outlined problem exists and (2) whether it is really a problem. For instance, an employee envisions a tool-based process for handling travelling costs, although an automated process already exists. If the CP's problem statement does not convince you, you reject the CP.
- The *solution assessment* evaluates (1) whether the proposed solution is feasible and (2) whether it really represents an improvement. If the CP does not meet both criteria, you reject the CP.
- The *strategic assessment* checks whether the CP fits to the company strategy and objectives. If the CP does not fit, you reject it.
- As soon as you perceive the CP as relevant because your assessments have returned no doubts, you *sketch out a high-level realization plan*. Thereby, you describe with which resources the organization could implement the CP in which time. The submitted CP form already includes an outline about how the company could achieve the change. However, most of the submissions did not contain valuable plans, wherefore, you do not consider this information.
- If the estimated required resources exceed the expected benefits, you reject the CP.

In the end, you accept the CP if you have not already rejected it.

Perspective: Information Security Officer (ISO)

You take the perspective of the information security officer (ISO).

In general, three information security goals exist:

1. The *confidentiality* goal ensures that information is not disclosed to unauthorized individuals, entities, or processes.
2. The *integrity* goal ensures that information is accurate and complete and has not been altered in an unauthorized manner.
3. The *availability* goal ensures that information and resources are accessible to authorized users when needed.

As changes often influence what and how data is processed, they affect the security goals. Thus, your task in the CPE committee is about identifying the impact of the CP on the security goals and proposing measures which mitigate discovered risks.

For each security goal, you identify requirements which the CP must fulfil to comply to the security goal. For instance, a cloud-based tool without Multi-Factor-Authentication (MFA) is highly vulnerable to data breaches which conflict with the confidentiality security goal.

After you planned the list of requirements, you analyse for each requirement whether the CP meets it. If you lack information for taking the decision, you ask the employee who submitted the CP to provide you more details in the context of the requirement.

As soon as you identify a requirement which cannot be met, you reject the CP and you do not spend further effort for evaluating the CP, even, if requirements are not checked yet.

There are also requirements that have not yet been met but could be fulfilled by taking an appropriate measure. Then, you plan such a measure. As these measures may affect significantly the CP, e.g., as they cause more effort in the operation of the underlying process, you request either the project manager or the employee who submitted the CP to approve the feasibility of the proposed measures. If you cannot agree on a measure neither with the project manager nor with the employee who submitted the CP, you consider the related requirement as not met.

As soon as you know that the CP meets all requirements directly or with the help of feasible measures, you accept the CP.

Perspective: Lawyer

You take the perspective of a lawyer who works in the legal and compliance department. Thus, you are responsible for assessing whether a CP complies to all relevant legal and compliance regulations. For instance, a CP must not impede the compliance to the General Data Protections Regulations (GDPR) which rule how information about natural persons need to be protected.

You start your work in the CPE when you recognize that all other members of the CPE committee endorse the CP because judging a CP from a legal perspective represents a complex, time-consuming and resource-intensive task.

The variety of legal fields, like public law or commercial law, constitutes a key driver of the complexity of your responsibility. At the beginning, you identify which legal fields the CP affects.

Afterwards, you need to understand the CP in detail wherefore, you request more details or explanations from other members of the CPE committee or from the employee who submitted the CP. Thereby, you decide from whom you need additional information.

As soon as you deeply understand the CP, the actual legal evaluation happens. For each affected legal field, you request at least one and at most three reviews of the CP from external lawyers who are specialized in this legal field. After you have received all requested reviews for a certain legal field, you read the reviews and decide whether the regulations of this legal field block the CP. If so, you reject the CP, cancel outstanding reviews, and you do not spend further effort on reading received reviews. If the CP does not violate any regulation from any legal field, you accept the CP.