Breakfast Roundtable

Change Happens –

Techniques for Managing Change

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One company has initiated a change delivery organization which was previously called operations process improvements. The organization is for all project managers who are responsible for delivering change for the organization.

* Everything is either change or part of running the organization.
* It is actually the PMO.

Documenting and justifying the change:

* Scope change
* Budget change
* Getting buy in to protect yourself
* Get a signed agreement

How to draw the line between changes that should be documented vs. minor changes:

* Use cost as the cut off.
* Include things that impact the schedule.
* Positive changes to the schedule are rare, can result in bonuses sometimes depending on the contract (cost plus).

It helps to involve those actually doing the work in addition to management when discussing changes.

Small companies are concerned about change especially for fixed price contracts. It is important to ensure that the clients see the change as you do to minimize misinterpretation.

Agile

* A comment was made that changing a project mid-stream is challenging. The topic then shifted to a discussion of Agile, which is all about change. Using Agile is constant change and it is easier to incorporate change.
* With waterfall you think you have it all set up, but you need to make many changes, especially in larger projects. To incorporate Agile and Waterfall, do a design up front and then break into iterations (2-3 weeks), with constant review and feedback.
* Agile is a corporate culture shift and it is harder to make the shift in larger companies. Those who have used Agile think it’s worth the effort.
* It is easier to incorporate change in Agile and smaller projects.
* The biggest concern in using Agile for IT project is database design, since it is harder to change that once it is started.
* Agile incorporates uncertainty.
* Agile is a subcategory of Lean.
* 2 by 4 Agile – swapping responsibilities for each iteration provides for cross training and improved communication especially with off shore workers because you are getting information from more people.
* Can Agile apply to hardware development? Yes, “locking people in a room” you can get so much more accomplished because everyone can focus on one thing.
* Agile is harder for infrastructure or database people, because once you lay the foundation it is harder to change.
* With hardware development, using Agile in the conceptual design phase it might work better than the detailed design phase; you can make samples or design models.

Topic shift to more hardware focused discussion.

* In dealing with hardware line changes, the challenge is how to assess the changes and how large is the impact?
* There is a need to get additional funding and schedule extension approval.
* One important point that came up is that time is needed to define the change. That frequently gets overlooked in planning.
* Use a log to keep track of the decisions.
* Add margin to the project schedule ahead of time with ranges to cover variability for time to define changes.

Construction change :

* There is a need to know the specs better than the customer.
* Lump sum jobs are tough because you need to be low bidder and also make money, so changes are harder to absorb.
* Changes need to be resolved with the customer.

The more people that are involved in a project, the harder it is to manage change.

Grand Island Bridge Project:

* The construction company devised a new plan for rebuilding the bridge.
* There was a huge penalty for delays.
* It is important to have mitigation plans for new things (that have never been done before) to consider the risks.

When doing estimation for research type projects it helps to do prototypes. Documentation is key.

There was agreement that it was important to have a change management repository.

* Use standard forms with a folder for changes, one for each project.
* You need to be careful to not have too many documents with the same information managed by different people, for example each person having a different copy of a spreadsheet.
* Many people used change management forms which were approved at different levels.

Is the PMO involved in managing changes? No, they just provide the template.

Mature organizations can estimate projects better since they have a lot of experience, leading to less budget changes.

“Hope is not a strategy”

When IT is leading the change they must understand the business strategy.

People can have trouble dealing with change too.

* When people are resistant to change, put yourself in their shoes and tell them what they will get out of it to get them to accept change.