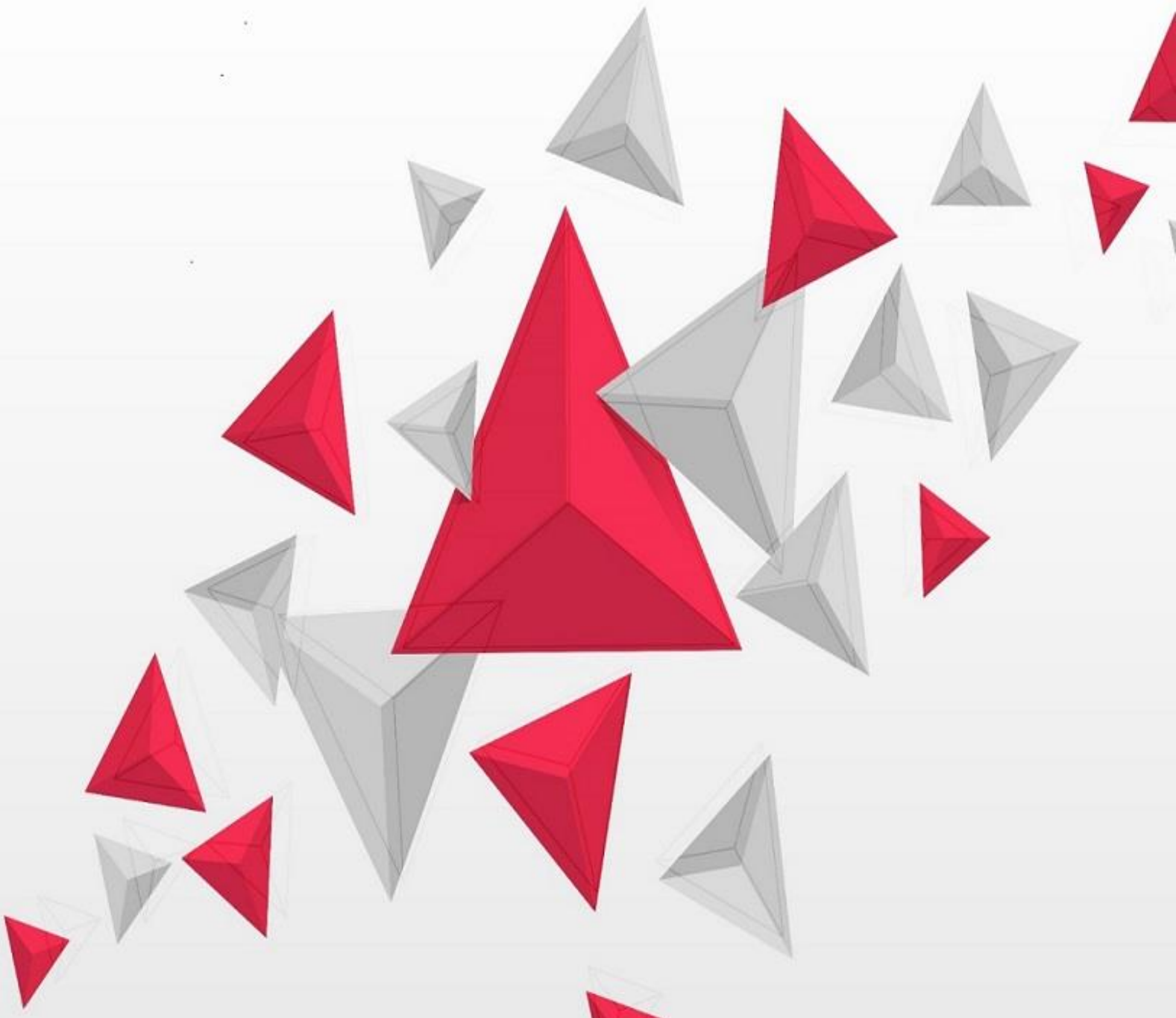


Change Request Form

Guide Book





CHANGE REQUEST FORM – INTRODUCTION

The only thing constant in this world is change.

Heraclitus, while quoting this 2500 hundred years ago, wouldn't have thought how true this would be for the IT projects as well!

Pun aside, with continually evolving technologies and agile-based project management, changes in projects are not only inevitable but welcomed as well. However, any uncontrolled change introduced and implemented on the project will cause an impact on the current status of the project areas, which in turn will disrupt the project schedule & quality and have a domino effect on the overall project performance. To avoid any such situation, introducing any changes to a project has to be appropriately managed by a project management concept called 'Change Management Procedure'.

It should be noted that the Business Analyst plays the most vital role in controlling the changes to the project and act as guard to allow only justified changes to be introduced and incorporated.

Let me share with you what I learned the hard way – Scope creep can creep into your project before you know about it. Thus, controlling and safeguarding the project scope while balancing the stakeholder's expectations is quite a delicate dance that the project manager must learn.



ASPECTS OF A CHANGE REQUEST FORM

We shall now learn about the Change Management Procedure, a standard best practice for introducing changes to the projects and is commonly used across information technology projects. Make sure you by-heart this procedure as the business analysts who know how to control the scope command a lot of respect from their peers and project managers alike.

1. Request or identify changes in the project technical or functional requirements

The origin of change requests can be both external and internal and could be functional as well as technical. The client initiates the external changes in the form of an additional feature or modifications to any of the existing functionalities. Whereas internal changes are triggered by the project team and consist of hardware upgrades or software patches.

The business analyst must closely look out for changes that need to be implemented in the project that shall benefit and contribute to the project's success. Alternatively, the business analysts should also *request* changes from their client stakeholders well in advance and help them understand that it's always easy to incorporate changes in the early stages (when functionalities are still being built) of the project than later.

2. Create a Request for Change or RFC form detailing out the change and its need

The moment the BA encounters the need for a change, they must create a change request by filling the Request for Change (RFC) form, thus ensuring that all the following events will follow the standardized process.

The RFC must contain the complete scope of the change, technical and functional feasibility, define its implementation and justify why the change is needed in the first

place – don't worry, we will discuss all this while learning how to create change requests.

3. Conduct impact analysis to deduce the effort and cost against the change

Once the change is documented, it's now time for the BA to evaluate its impact on the existing project areas and associated documents. The BA should use the RTM, which will help understand the cascading impact one change has on all the allied functionalities, underlying code, use cases/user stories, and test cases. Sometimes, only the RTM does not suffice, and the BA will have to analyze the change by brainstorming with the clients, creating flow/implementation diagrams or prototypes, and getting a formal signoff from clients.

The BA should then coordinate with the development and testing team to explain to them the scope of the change, discuss the technical feasibility and get the details of the efforts (calculated in staff hours or staff days) required to incorporate the described changes.

Once the efforts are obtained, the BA works with the project manager to determine the cost against those changes and the schedule impacts. The PM may ask the BA to see some of the other low priority items that can be pushed out of the existing scope if a 'scope trade-off' is to be obtained (implementing the change without disturbing the current project schedule).

Additionally, the PM makes the high-level plan and project schedule to incorporate the change.

PS – Are you interested in knowing how the BA helps assess the cost against the efforts? Most organizations have a confidential mathematical model or tool to determine project costs which takes the project criticality, resource experience, duration of the project, efforts involved, and period of efforts into consideration before calculating the respective values.

4. Present the change to 'Change Control Board' and discuss whether to approve or reject the change

The Change Control Board (CCB) or Change Advisory Board (CAB) consists of the project manager, business analyst, technical lead & the customer stakeholders, and all these members discuss the following aspects against the change:

- Actual need of the change, its viability with the business case of the project
- Priority and extent of the change
- Technical feasibility of the change
- Benefits obtained by implementing the change
- Efforts required to implement the change and its impact on the existing project cost and schedule
- Availability of resources to carry out the change
- A trade-off between the current scope and the change

Once all the above aspects are discussed, it's decided whether the change is a 'Go' (approved) or a 'No-go' (rejected).

5. Implement the change and update the existing project documents with the change details

If the CCB approves the change, it's communicated to all the relevant stakeholders, and now time to implement the change by updating the following documents:

- Software Code
- Technical Design Document
- Application architecture
- Prototype and Workflows
- User Story/User Cases
- Functionality Matrix
- Requirement Traceability Matrix
- Project Schedule
- Test cases

Also, the project plan and the scope, and the quality management plan will undergo modifications cataloging the change details.

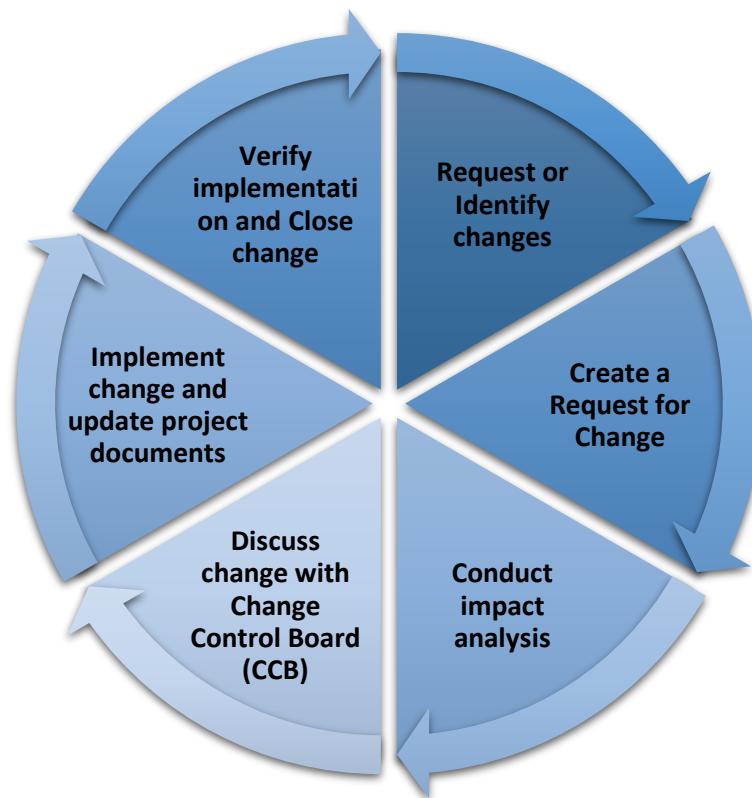
6. Review and verify the implementation of the change as per documentation

Once successfully developed by the team, the change will undergo a round of functional and integration testing by using the test cases designed exclusively for the change.

This exercise is closely followed by giving a systematic release of the application that will involve the overall system testing with the change integrated. Once the implementation of the change is verified, and all the associated test cases pass, the client is told of the successful change implementation and is invited to test the application. This step also leads to changing the change request status to 'Completed'.

7. If the change is found to be satisfactorily implemented, close the change

Once the change passes all the associated tests, there are no significant defects or bugs against the change, and all the related documents are duly updated, the change is marked and 'Closed'.





AUDIENCE OF A CHANGE REQUEST FORM

In this section, we will talk about the different types of stakeholders who will either assist the BA in the creation of the RFC document or will use the RFC

1. The *Project Manager* will coordinate the change management meetings and review the data and details entered in the FRC
2. *Developers* will use the RFC to understand the change and its implementation better
3. The *Business Analysts* is responsible for doing thorough analysis against the change, getting all the required details for the RFC, keeping the FRC up to date, and communicating the changes to all the affected stakeholders
4. The testing team will enter the QC efforts (develop test cases, execute test scenarios and compile test results) details required against the change request
5. The technical lead will refer to the RFC to validate the technical implementation mentioned and update the impacts on the existing code/functionalities.
6. The audit team (whether external or internal) will use the RFC to validate whether the change management procedure is being correctly followed and does the RFC contains all the details required to carry out the change effectively



HOW TO CREATE A CHANGE REQUEST FORM

Following are the fields that comprise the change request document:

- **Project Name:** The name of the project for which the change is being requested come here
- **RFC Number:** This is the unique change request number through which the change will be distinguished. Usually, this number is preceded by the code of the project, followed by a serial number in 4 digits.
- **Raised By:** The name of the resource who has initiated the change will be written in this column. Usually, the business analyst or the project manager raises change requests.
- **Raised On:** The date on which the change request was raised comes in here.
- **On behalf of:** The change request can come from different categories of stakeholders (like finance, marketing, sales, etc..), and the name of the client resource on behalf of whom the change request is being initiated comes in here. If it's an internal change request, the name of the project manager/technical lead can come under this column.
- **Severity:** The severity of the change request, i.e., whether the impact of the change is Critical, High, Average, or Low to the project.
- **Request Title:** Upfront, the title of the request will be entered, which will encapsulate the summary of the change request and shall be used as a reference while discussing and communicating about the change.

- **Reason for Change:** The rationale for why the change has to be implemented in the project. The BA should provide sufficient justifications about the importance of the change request to get approved by the CCB.
- **Change Description:** This section should contain the complete description of the change, including (but not limited to) the functional explanation of the change, the workflow/flow of events, business rules, UI requirements, any technical details, reference documents, or any other piece of information that will give more information about the change to be implemented.
- **Change Impact Analysis:** This section should present a structured synopsis of what all will it take to implement the change, what all existing functionalities will be impacted, what are the code files that needed to be modified and what is the extent of regression testing that will be required to validate the implemented change.
Also, any risks involved in the change implementation, like existing functionalities getting unintentionally impacted, incompatibility with the present code/framework, service disruptions, possible downtime for live systems and applications, etc., should also be listed under this section.

The business analyst has to be the flag bearer to collect all these details, liaise with all the relevant stakeholders, structure the information, and present it under this section.

- **Impacted Project Artifacts:** All the project documents that might get affected by the change shall be listed here. This list should be comprehensive and should list down all the documents ranging from technical, project management, analysis, and testing.
- **Change Risk Profile:** The risk incurred while implementing the change can be categorized as 'Low', 'Medium', and 'High'.
- **CR Status:** The current status of the change request should come in here, which could be anything from
 - Initiated - Change request is created, and the relevant information is being collected

- Under Discussion - Change request is being discussed with CCB
 - Rejected - Change request is rejected by the CCB
 - Approved - Change request is approved by the CCB
 - In-progress - Change request is approved, and the respective implementation is underway
 - Completed – Execution of the change request is completed, and a release is awaited
 - Closed - Change request is successfully verified for the functionality and now stands closed
-
- **Implementation Effort:** The development and testing efforts required to implement the changes are listed in staff hours or staff days.
 - **Implementation Cost:** The cost associated with the implementation will come here.
 - **Change Authorization Date:** The date on which the change was authorized will come here. These dates are sometimes evaluated to see the promptness of the CCB.
 - **Change Implementation Date:** The date on which the code development and implementation of the change request started.
 - **Change Verified & Tested:** The details of whether the change was verified post its implementation and whether the respective testing was performed will come in here.
 - **Change Acceptance:** This field will log whether the client accepted the change and if 'Yes', the acceptance date and the proof of acceptance (email or document) should come in here.
 - **Change Request Closure Date:** The date on which the change was successfully closed comes her



CHANGE REQUEST FORM - BEST PRACTICES

1. You might not find many business analysts requesting changes from the client, fearing increasing the current workload, or pondering *why they should give ideas to the client that things could still be changed?*

Although a business analyst aims to safeguard the project scope, another equally significant aim is to ensure project success and client satisfaction. Such an act will help win the client's trust and help enforce the belief that your actions are committed to the best interests of your stakeholders.

However, just ensure that you request changes early in the project lifecycle and set the expectations that if the change is significant, it might require adjusting the project schedule accordingly, or a trade-off has to be made by removing some of the functionalities already in scope.

2. While performing an impact analysis, not only the code implementation effort should be taken into consideration, but the effort to update all the existing documents like use cases/ user stories/ BRD, etc. as well as the test cases should be counted as well.

It's a best practice to include the time required to update the associated document with the change effort. Also, once the documents are updated, the relevant stakeholders should be informed of the change, and the modified documents should be shared with them.

3. One should know that not all the changes need to go through the CCB for approval, and generally, changes that require less than 4-6 hours to implement can be implemented by the approval from the Project Manager itself. It is worth noting that

these numbers vary from one organization to another and may sometimes depend on the nature of the project.

4. Assessing changes can be tricky, and amid project activities, the team may sometimes miss estimating some of the areas. Thus, it's always a best practice **to refer to some of the existing change requests that had been raised for a similar project within your organization** - every organization maintains some knowledge base or repository that contains such information, and your PMO (Project Management Office) should be able to help you.

5. I have always found out that most customers cannot differentiate between the project *need* and *want*. **Projects needs are the functions that are integral to the project success, and project wants are just the wish lists and the 'nice to have' things.**

It's the professional responsibility of the business analyst to educate the customer about the viability of their suggestions against the business case of the project. Politely explain and reject any changes that do not match the project scope and entertain only those changes that add value to the functionality and contribute to the success factors of the project.