

# Building capability for managing change – a case study.

**This article showcases how organizations are using the Change Management certification scheme from APMG International as the basis of their capability building for managing change. There are two levels of certification:**

- Foundation certification demonstrates the candidate's understanding of a wide range of change management theory and practice, aligned with the professional development requirements of the Change Management Institute.
- Practitioner accreditation demonstrates that the candidate can use this understanding, applying it appropriately to 'real world' situations, contributing to decision-taking and evaluating options.



Richard Smith,  
Chief Examiner for the APMG Change  
Management qualifications

The syllabus is based upon *The Effective Change Managers Handbook*, edited by Richard Smith, Chief Examiner for the APMG Change Management qualifications. This handbook has been developed alongside the Body of Knowledge from the Change Management Institute. Richard says: "For organizations seeking to implement change – whether tactical changes or organizational transformation – which is vital to build their change 'bench strength'. The capability and capacity of the organization to address change effectively differentiates those that succeed from those that fail. Thanks to the Change Management Institute's professional Body of Knowledge we now have real clarity about the knowledge needed to manage change effectively across a range of situations. The new APMG course has been built to develop professionals who can apply that knowledge, and help their organizations flourish through change."

## Change management is growing in importance

As Richard Smith says, there are many reasons why organizations are increasingly viewing the creation of an internal change management capability as an essential task:

- Implementing change easily and with little disruption is viewed by executives and senior managers as a competitive and cost advantage. We all know lots of examples of failed change initiatives and the cost of disruption to customers and the upheaval experienced by staff leading to lower productivity can last many months.
- There is a direct correlation between effective change management and the realization of benefits. It is only when new ways of working have become the norm that organizations can reap the economies of scale and other improvements that they expect from their investment. It is the objective of change management practices to enable 'normality' to be achieved as quickly as possible.
- Change doesn't stop. All organizations are grappling with the difficulties of having too many ideas and not enough time or resources to adopt them. Many are under pressure to implement more change more quickly in an ever faster cycle, relying on the ability of staff to be willing and able to manage their work within this environment of uncertainty.
- Change initiatives are different from projects as they must include resources from the organization being changed to be successful. Projects can be resources externally for design, development and testing. However, as soon as we have to start changing how people work to incorporate use of the project deliverables we need high levels of participation from those affected.

For organizations  
seeking to implement  
change



Jon Burnes,  
Head of Change Management,  
Swansea University

“I found the course stimulating and it prompted me to think in new ways”

## What is a change management capability?

As Jon Burnes, Head of Change Management Swansea University explains, change requires the participation of all those who will have to work differently in the future, driven by new systems, new procedures, new responsibilities and reporting lines. Participation is a key word because as it implies, it requires voluntary involvement. People have to want to take part in change. They have to be persuaded of its benefits and be re-assured about its difficulties. Although force can be applied including threats of redundancy or rewards such as bonuses these will only achieve compliance. Staff may make the changes on the surface but never really embed them into new ways of working. They will slowly roll back to old ways of working.

Additionally, staff need to be supported by those responsible for change initiatives, who have a deep understanding of how change should happen, and take responsibility for defining the activities required and the best practice that ensures that these activities will be done in the right way by the right people. This requires an investment in the education of some staff who can form a ‘centre of excellence’ for leading change initiatives internally.

To develop this concentration of expertise coupled with organization wide understanding of change management, all staff must be offered some training in how to manage change. After all, the most effective way to generate participation in change initiatives is to up-skill staff in what change involves, how it can be managed, what the likely pitfalls are and how these can be overcome.

## How are organizations developing skills and ability for managing change?

In my experience this up-skilling takes two different forms:

1. Use of open course involving candidates from a mixture of organizations
2. In-house training where the examples and scenarios used are relevant to the culture of the organization and the type of change they are doing.

Those attending the open courses are often driving the creation of a change management function within their organization. They recognise the importance of their own certification in giving them the credibility to tell others what is needed for effective change management. Often they are at the start of their work and can use what they learn on the course to create their own change management frameworks and methodologies. It is a common occurrence for me to be sent examples of these methodologies a few weeks after the course for review. They really benefit from the networking on these courses as over the course of the week real camaraderie builds up as people feel the pressure of revising for exams. This provides them with a supportive network outside of their organization which is useful when introducing new ideas. After all, building the capability for change is a change initiative that is subject to resistance and push-back like all other changes. It helps to be able to share ideas with those going through a similar thing but in another organization.

My role at Swansea University is to head up the Change Management team in the Planning & Strategic Projects Unit. This involves leading a team of Change Managers and Officers to create, implement and embed strategic change for the University across all prioritized areas such as research, innovation, student experience and resource allocation. The broad range of change portfolio affects culture, systems, processes and structure. Therefore, a change management framework that is robust, yet flexible is key to the success of embedding change and realizing benefits.

“I found the course stimulating and it prompted me to think in new ways about my own approach to change management. The course also helped me put a number of current change management issues into a wider context and helped me work through some interesting solutions. The APMG Change Management qualification has already led to increased credibility with internal stakeholders, senior management and with external partners through increased confidence, broadened knowledge and enhanced skills.”



Sebastian Rottmair,  
Change Manager,  
People and Change Group

## TOP TAKEAWAYS FROM THE COURSE

According to Sebastian Rottmair, Change Manager for the People and Change Group, the course was extremely useful in,

1. Meeting new people from a range of professional backgrounds and being able to share and learn from different perspectives.
2. Putting years of change and project management practice into a logical order with grounded theory that brings about new ways of thinking about my approach.
3. The qualification has equipped me to lead on a variety of change management initiatives that will significantly enhance the implementation of a number of strategic initiatives at Swansea University.
4. The course has confirmed that I'm 'doing the right thing' when it comes to change management.
5. Combining the complimentary aspects of project and change management processes and tools will provide a powerful approach to implementing change initiatives.
6. I cannot stress enough the importance that the APMG course has taught me to get stakeholder engagement and communication right for any change initiative.

Lots of people attend the change management courses to check out its suitability as an on-site course at their own organization. They are far better equipped to make the business case for training their colleagues if they have first hand experience. I can honestly say that since I started running these courses nearly 10 years ago, I have never had someone turn around and say the course was a bad idea.

On-site courses allow for tailoring of the course material so that the examples and scenarios used to illustrate the models and techniques can reflect the types of change that those on the course will be implementing.

As well as defining the approach for managing change, many people attend the courses because they are establishing a change management group or function within their organization. Some call it the Change Management Office and sometimes it forms part of an existing strategy or portfolio office.

The change management course can also allow the group to explore the different roles involved in change and debate what their change management function looks like. Obviously it is a big advantage if all those within that function are certified change managers as it immediately confers credibility on the group. After all we would not make unqualified accountants responsible for our finance departments so why would we allow change management to be defined and propagated across the organization by unqualified people.

Another advantage of running the course on-site is that it can be repeated as the network grows, ensuring that all those inducted into the change management function are given the same bedrock of understanding about the theories and concepts of change. This is empowering because as they develop their own views and opinions on the best way to manage change, they can use this appreciation of best practice in forming their ideas.

At UNOPS – the only self-financed entity of the United Nations – change is an everyday business reality. Having a strong network of change management practitioners helps us to capitalize on change opportunities to the benefit of people in need. The APMG Change Management Practitioner course is a fundamental building block for our change management network as it equips network members with solid knowledge and tools to be effective change managers. It is important for us to help network members understand that while the UNOPS Approach to Change is our guiding methodology, an appreciation of the complexity of transformation processes is required to be truly effective in our work. The APMG Change Management Practitioner certification is a great way to achieve that.

## Conclusion

**The Change Management Foundation and Practitioner course is a valuable contributor to the creation of change management capability and continues to grow in popularity as the importance of effective change management is recognized by organizations in all sectors of the economy.**



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