

Change Management: How to Remove the Spoiled Teenager Stigma

Change management is a common Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) process. Despite this prevalence, IT leaders and business executives often fail to see value from change initiatives. A performance management solution can provide valuable insight before, during and after change. Most importantly, it can demonstrate to key stakeholders how change creates business value.

Since the popularization of ITIL in the early 2000s, change management has emerged as a central component to Service Design and has become increasingly prevalent. In fact, behind only incident and problem management, it is one of the most popular areas of focus for companies that are embarking upon, or revamping their ITIL initiatives.

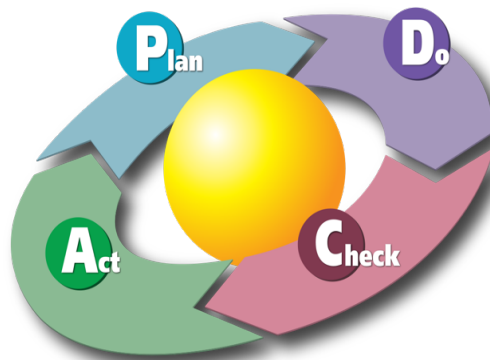


Figure 1: The Deming Cycle¹

What is change management? It is a standard set of methods and procedures that are used for efficient handling of all changes within the IT infrastructure. Its goal is to minimize the risk and impact of change on the enterprise. Changes might arise from response to problems, externally-imposed requirements, or part of an ongoing proactive set of initiatives. The general purpose of change management is to ensure standardization for the methods, processes and procedures that govern IT changes to facilitate efficient management of those changes. In other words, the goal is to ensure the benefit of the change without realizing the potential risks.¹

Like most ITIL processes, change management is fundamentally built on the Deming Cycle for continuous improvement where the company plans an initiative, executes the initiative, checks the effectiveness post-implementation and resets performance expectations.

For ITIL-based change management, change is often initiated with a change request, tracked via defined flow chart processes and governed by a change advisory board (CAB).

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change_management_\(ITSM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change_management_(ITSM))

Even with all this process definition, IT leaders still find it difficult to realize benefits from institutionalized IT change. Many leaders liken change initiatives to spoiled teenagers who constantly ask for money, have nothing to show for it, and hold no accountability.

The issue is a fundamental shortcoming in the approach to change management. While significant focus is applied at the points where change is identified and where it is implemented, there is far less rigor applied during the Plan, Check and Act phases of the Deming Cycle. There is great detail around processes for approving the change, defining the workflow for implementing the change, and even making a decision about whether to rollback the change. But, how does one know which changes to make? Did the change produce the desired effect? Is a rollback the only recourse? Can performance be measured after the fact?

The legacy of change management is one that borrows heavily from IT Service Management (ITSM). Only recently have organizations begun to leverage performance management capabilities to integrate performance information measured directly from applications, end-user experience, infrastructure and networks. When performance parameters are missed, an incident is automatically generated within the ITSM solution. In the other direction, performance management integration often enables the ITSM solution to drill into the root cause of issues, thus enabling greater productivity within Tier 1 support.

Companies that do not apply performance management principles and capabilities to the change management process are vulnerable. Visibility is reduced across the remaining **three** phases of the Deming Cycle: Plan, Check and Act.

Plan

Change initiatives range in complexity. Some are as simple as updating operating systems on network infrastructure, while at the other end of the spectrum, others can be multihased, complex undertakings.

Regardless of the complexity, it is critical that change initiatives are generated from performance criteria, not merely good ideas.

Performance management provides baseline performance levels that can identify network, infrastructure, end-user experience, and application areas that require attention. It also provides transparency and a point of comparison into SLA performance so that organizations can evaluate the eventual success or failure of the initiative.

Transparency is not only relevant to baselining and comparing performance – it is absolutely vital to understanding dependencies in more complex change initiatives like application migrations to the cloud, data center consolidation and data center migrations. These initiatives, which are often highly-visible and strategic, involve legacy applications that have complex database structures and hidden elements running on undocumented infrastructure. One of the primary causes of underperformance or even failure for these initiatives stems from an inability to identify everything that needs to be migrated.

Network Performance Management (NPM) tools can discover application components that are communicating with one another and map interdependencies. Leveraging NPM techniques, organizations can better identify everything in the environment that needs attention. They can then mitigate risk by migrating inclusively or creating workarounds to fix application issues that have arisen over time. In addition, Application-aware Network Performance Management (aaNPM) capabilities can be leveraged to validate performance and troubleshoot issues before, during and after an IT change event.

A focus on performance management during the planning process can shorten time to value and reduce rework (some estimates believe the planning process can be improved by as much as 2/3rds). Ultimately, the project is completed sooner and the desired outcomes – the cost savings, efficiencies, etc. – are achieved faster.

For example, assume the new data center is significantly more energy efficient and costs \$350,000 less per year to run. Leveraging performance management to enable migration to that data center six months earlier results in a significant acceleration of benefits.

Check

The riskiest steps in the change request's lifecycle are at the end. Despite taking precautions to mitigate issues (running pilot groups, etc.), the organization rarely has full visibility into performance and financial impacts and expected results prior to the cutover. The most common recourse once a significant problem **does** occur is a rollback. But, this creates additional costs and risks.

Leveraging performance management during the Check phase has the potential to fundamentally change how companies manage final close and review steps, which are generally manual, reactive and prone to significant risks.

End-user Experience Management (EUEM) solutions measure application performance from the end user's device, which enables organizations to compare performance across groups of users **before the cutover**. When applied to a pilot group, for instance, the organization can see whether the initiative will result in performance and productivity improvements. This means IT teams can proactively answer critical questions like: Will the converged data center result in slower performance? Will the server upgrade reduce outages? Will the Windows 10 migration benefit the organization? And, they can answer these questions ahead of the close and mitigate risks as needed.

Act

The application of performance management processes to the Plan and Check phases improves the richness of information related to the change event and mitigates the risks associated with it. Unfortunately, these improvements alone do not fully alleviate the "spoiled teenager" comparison. To fully remove the stigma,

change management teams need to fully demonstrate **value** for the initiative.

To attain this, change management needs to extend the performance management measurements that were initiated in the Plan phase and expanded in the Check phase, to the Act phase. Companies can and should compare post-change performance to baseline measures to document improvements, establish project value and identify new potential areas of focus. By leveraging and transparently reporting performance (as well as derivative financial measures), the executive team has a line of sight into the true value of the change request and implementation process.

Conclusion

Clearly, companies need to ensure that change initiatives perform reliably, that they meet business objectives, and are able to capture market opportunities.

By embedding performance management solutions into change management processes, companies can holistically manage the digital experience of customers, employees, suppliers, and partners. They can understand how each domain (infrastructure, network, application and even the end user's device) impacts the overall experience, rapidly troubleshoot and resolve issues, and identify areas for strategic improvement and acceleration. In the context of change management, these solutions provide transparency into performance across all of these domains.

Riverbed SteelCentral Digital Experience Management

Riverbed offers an interoperable set of performance management solutions that ensures IT service quality before, during and after change by:

Collecting and analyzing all data from all domains, all the time. The integrated visibility architecture combines and unifies performance monitoring across the end-user, network, infrastructure, and application domains. Integrated visibility that spans your entire application and service delivery architecture is the only way to address all of the potential problem sources and ensure high-quality digital experiences.

Providing an integrated view to improve digital experience performance by blending end-to-end performance monitoring data and analytics from different domains into a common user interface, which makes it easy to share and tailor data across various technical disciplines and stakeholders and to drill down into any performance issue both reactively and proactively. SteelCentral combines breadth of monitoring and depth of analysis presented in custom views according to role via a single pane-of-glass.

This comprehensive, integrated, approach delivers several key benefits for the enterprise. The solution:

- Captures all data and transactions from all end user devices, networks, infrastructure, and applications at a granular level for faster and more effective root-cause analysis.

- Provides fully integrated performance insights, blending and correlating analysis from all domains to provide a one-stop solution for managing the entire digital service.
- Detects and fixes problems before they impact the business with insights designed to guide fixing, optimizing, and prioritizing application and network performance for hybrid networks and SD-WAN architectures.
- Measures, understands, and remediates the business impact of poor application performance that leads to poor digital experiences.
- Provides role-specific insights for each stakeholder via custom dashboard views, consumable by non-technical line-of-business managers as well as technical professionals.

For more information about the Riverbed SteelCentral Digital Experience Management solution, please visit <https://www.riverbed.com/solutions/digital-experience-management.html>

About Riverbed

Riverbed®, The Digital Performance Company™, enables organizations to maximize digital performance across every aspect of their business, allowing customers to rethink possible. Riverbed's unified and integrated Digital Performance Platform™ brings together a powerful combination of Digital Experience, Cloud Networking and Cloud Edge solutions that provides a modern IT architecture for the digital enterprise, delivering new levels of operational agility and dramatically accelerating business performance and outcomes. At more than \$1 billion in annual revenue, Riverbed's 30,000+ customers include 98% of the *Fortune* 100 and 100% of the *Forbes* Global 100. Learn more at [riverbed.com](https://www.riverbed.com).

