CHANGE MANAGEMENT

WHY:

Change is inevitable, and the rate of change in technology is increasing. Businesses, business processes and business models constantly have to adapt to the economic climate, competitive pressures, and the opportunity to create through change and innovation. Change management, as a discipline in distributed computing is somewhat lacking. Yet, change management for IT operations is critical to improving availability, performance and throughput. Strong change management is the backbone for IT operations. Strong IT change management enables an enterprise to change the business process and business model that are so intertwined and dependent on the technology. Any business process change is likely to require significant technology changes. Thus, the IT operations group must step in and address these changes with the business units and applications development organization. Strong operational change management reduces errors, as well as planned and unplanned downtime.

GOAL:

The goal of the Change Management process is to ensure that standardised methods and procedures are used for efficient and prompt handling of all Changes, in order to minimise the impact of Change-related Incidents upon service quality, and consequently to improve the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

ACTIVITIES:

Activities undertaken will involve:
- Change logging and filtering / acceptance
  - Does the RFC (request for change) have enough, quality, information
  - Unique identification number
  - Filter out impractical RFCs and provide feedback to issuer
- Managing Changes and the Change process
  - Prioritise RFCs (based on risk assessment)
  - Categorise RFCs (e.g. minor, significant or major impact)
- Chairing the CAB (Change Advisory Board) and the CAB/Emergency Committee
  - Assess all RFCs (but not all during the meeting!! CAB is a consulting body)
  - Impact and resource assessment
  - Approval based on financial, business and technical criteria
  - Forward Schedule of Changes (FSC)
- Coordinate the Change
  - Supported by release Management, change management coordinates the building, testing and implementation of the change
- Reviewing and closing RFCs
- Management reporting.

**Urgent changes follow the same steps, but usually in a different order. The CAB/EC approves an urgent change immediately and the building, testing and implementation is done before the paperwork. But DON'T FORGET THE DOCUMENTATION!

Terminology:

Requests for Change
Every change to the IT Infrastructure has to go through Change Management. A Request for Change (RFC) is formally issued for every change request.

Change Manager
Responsible for the Change Management process and authorises all changes

Change Advisory Board CAB)
A dynamic group of people (depending on the change) that approve Changes with medium to high priority, risk and impact.

CAB/EC
CAB Emergency committee approves and authorises changes with high urgency, risk and impact.

Change models
Some organisations use change models prior to implementation to estimate the impact of the change. Change Management and Capacity management work together on this.

FSC
The Forward Schedule of change (FSC) contains details of all approved changes and their proposed implementation date.

PSA
The Projected Service Availability (PSA) contains details of changes to agreed SLAs and service availability because of the current FSC.

RESULTS:

A controlled way of managing changes in the IT infrastructure with minimal –or deliberately taken – risk to the service levels.

COST:

Personnel – staff (Set-up and ongoing)
Accommodation – Physical location (Set-up and ongoing)
Software – Tools (Set-up and ongoing)
Hardware – Infrastructure (Set-up)
Education – Training (Set-up and ongoing)
Procedures – external consultants etc (Set-up)

The two major costs of Change Management are for **staff** and **software** tools support.

Staff costs include costs for the Change Management role and team, CAB members, and Change builders, including Configuration and Release Management. These costs should of course be outweighed by the benefits that are, or will be, gained. In practice, most organisations already have a number of people who are spending time on handling Changes.

The cost of **support tools**, together with any hardware requirements, needs to be considered. Although tools that integrate support for Change Management, Configuration Management, Problem Management and Service Desks are likely to be more expensive than 'simple' Change Management tools, the additional cost is often justifiable. For larger organisations, management processes can be virtually impossible to implement effectively without adequate support tools.

BENEFITS:

- Better alignment of IT services to business requirements
- Increased visibility and communication of Changes to both business and service-support staff
- Improved risk assessment
- A reduced adverse impact of Changes on the quality of services and on SLAs
- Better assessment of the cost of proposed Changes before they are incurred
- Fewer Changes that have to be backed-out, along with an increased ability to do this more easily when necessary
- Improved Problem and Availability Management through the use of valuable management information relating to changes accumulated through the Change Management process
- Increased productivity of Users - through less disruption and, higher-quality services
- Increased productivity of key personnel through less need for diversion from planned duties to implement urgent Changes or back-out erroneous Changes
- Greater ability to absorb a large volume of Changes
- An enhanced business perception of IT through an improved quality of service and a professional approach.