<u>White Paper</u>

Going Beyond Project Management
Adapt to Change. Adopt Profitability.

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Change: A Product of an Old Adage

Project-based organizations realize that customer-focused project management is far superior to product-centric project management. In other words, "the customer is always right". This famous adage that puts your customers' wants and needs first has always been a motto for project managers. However, never has this saying been more critical to the success of project-based organizations than in the current, unyielding pace of business.

Project managers are faced with an unenviable challenge. Everyday, they are tasked to ensure that all facets of a project are working harmoniously for the common good – delivering a quality end product for the client in a timely manner and within budget. This involves managing schedules, budgets, people, and deadlines.

Being the primary contact point for clients, project managers understand that customers will only remain loyal when they get their needs met, fast. This still holds true even if the client decides to change a detail in a project that is already in progress. Worse, the client is still right even when making a change toward the end of the project or when certain phases are nearing completion.

Well-oiled, project-based organizations are synergistic in nature, meaning that a multitude of activities, ranging from creative development to accounting, occur all at the same time by different members of a team. When a client calls asking for a change, a wrench is thrown into the midst of the gears, which can cause a total breakdown of the project and risk its execution and completion.

But client-facing project managers learn from experience that saying 'No' to changes is just unacceptable to the majority of clients. Moreover, denying the client the ability to make changes portrays the organization as unprepared, uncooperative, or worse of all, incompetent. Therefore, in order to follow the mantra, "the customer is always right," avoiding or disallowing changes in projects is not an option.

In today's world, where ideas come and go at a rapid rate, there are many pressures. Enabling change for the purposes of meeting client needs is not only recommended, but also required. An organization that rejects change pushes prospects into the open arms of their competitors, who may also find flexibility a difficult challenge, but will do everything in their power to embrace it. This reality thrusts the project-oriented business into an environment where it is essential to adapt to changes in order to remain competitive and profitable.

To attain profitability, organizations must be able to effectively manage changes in projects, as well as key assets within the organization that are most likely to face the process of change – mainly people and knowledge. By establishing change processes and implementing business productivity software to manage and automate all underlying business tasks within the organization, project oriented organizations can be successful even in the midst of changes.

Implementing Change Control Processes

Left to its own devices, change will create a number of problems. Unmanaged change increases the potential of causing disruption to projects already in progress, which can result in a mediocre end product, missed deadlines and budgets, and ultimately contribute to the deterioration of the relationship with the client. This results in business and productivity losses affecting the bottom line and potential loss of the client.

Designed to consistently handle the inevitable changes that crop up from the shadows, an intelligent change control process, to handle any request that changes the specified project requirements, can help alleviate the pressures of meeting customer change demands. To work, it is necessary to integrate a change control process into the original project contract. This way, if a client needs to make a sudden change in the project, they would have to ask for it through a change request.

The control process should be designed so that good or necessary changes, which will improve the end product, get through, with appropriate adjustments to the cost and time. On the other end, the process also makes sure that the bad or inappropriate changes never get implemented into the project.

Making a Change

When a client submits a change request, immediately assess it to see if it's even worth investigating. During this process the organization, and not the client, needs to figure out how long it's going to take to analyze the impact of the change. After the investigation, compare the estimated benefits with the disadvantages. If the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages, then approve the change.

Remember, as a project-based organization whose goal is to make the customer happy, it is imperative that the interests of the customer take precedence over the desires of the organization. In the long term, a happy customer means more business.

Should the conclusion that a change request is more disadvantageous to the project than it is beneficial, consider working with the client to revise any areas of the change request to make it more feasible to accomplish. However, always keep the original budget and schedule as outlined in the original contract in mind. Should the changes require additional money, it then may be a good idea to persuade the client to drop the change request.

Change request processes will differ from organization to organization. Nonetheless, creating a change process is necessary. Establishing the control process early on empowers project-oriented organizations to maintain control of the project. Plus, the organization is covered by the contract and the client gets what they want, but pays for it if necessary. Everybody's happy.

Tools for the Job

Managing changes to projects within the organization requires knowing what information has changed, who made the changes, and when they were made. To address ever-changing business demands project-oriented organizations must implement an automated business management process which not only helps to manage changes to information throughout the organization, but also to manage all the underlying business processes that run an organization.

Small to mid-size project-based organizations can use technology to help in this endeavor. With the right tool, managing changes in projects effectively opens the door to improved customer satisfaction. The ideal solution offers a well-designed business productivity process that incorporates automation of tasks and priorities, flexible workflow, resource and user impact assessment, and an easy-to-use user interface.

Additionally, this tool ensures that changes taking place throughout the organization are communicated, reviewed, and learned in a timely manner, saving priceless time and keeping data up-to-date.

Business Productivity Software

Changes to projects are inevitable. Expect clients to make changes to their projects. The main challenge throughout the change process will be to match customer intent to the business intent of an organization while reducing the cost of servicing customers.

The key to achieving this is by establishing change processes, which clients will agree to, and implementing cross-platform, business productivity tools to automate the business process.

Small to mid-size project-based organizations are more frequently seeking cross-platform business productivity software solutions at higher rates than ever before because of the many immediate and tangible benefits they offer. Business productivity software eliminates clerical inefficiencies, cuts administrative overhead, and enables project-oriented organizations to deliver work more reliably and manage changes.

The ideal software should offer an easy-to-learn, multi-platform, multi-user management tool, which offers project-based organizations a full array of powerful tools to streamline and refine the entire business process – from the moment a prospective client calls to the moment the final invoice is sent.

Ideally, because everyone in the organization will use the tool, it should make everyone happy. It should offer a cross-platform, client-server solution for estimating, time and expense tracking, prioritizing, resource scheduling, invoicing, accounting, and reporting.

Additionally, the tool should include accounting functionality with A/R, A/P and G/L, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Professional Services Automation (PSA), and more. Therefore, everyone, whether they use Macs or PCs for their design, drafting, programming, or accounting, should be able to learn and use this tool for maximum business productivity throughout the organization.

About Management Software

Management Software is a leading developer of business process management software for service businesses on Macintosh and Windows. Management Software is based in Cortland, New York, where it has provided vertical software applications, custom programming services, consulting, and training since 1989.

Using the technology of 4th Dimension, a relational database programming environment, Management Software develops affordable software applications for automating business operations and procedures.

About JobOrder

JobOrder is comprehensive and robust software that automates the flow of information throughout your entire business – from the moment a prospective client calls for a proposal until the final invoice is sent.

JobOrder provides state-of-the-art functionality and automation capabilities for project-based organizations, including advertising agencies, architectural firms, construction companies, consulting firms, design firms, engineering companies and job shops. JobOrder is an easy-to-learn, multi-user management tool that is designed to maximize business productivity. With JobOrder, your organization will:

- Create accurate estimates every time
- Systemize jobs with detailed specifications
- Prioritize traffic and reschedule staff in seconds
- Manage change orders
- Monitor resources effortlessly
- Send invoices out promptly
- Streamline accounting
- Generate reports instantly
- Identify problems before they get out of control
- Plan for the future with confidence

Unlike other products on the market that emphasize one or another of these functions, JobOrder offers its users a full array of powerful tools to streamline and refine your entire business process.

Everyone, whether they use Macs or PCs for their design, drafting, programming, or accounting, can use JobOrder. JobOrder offers a cross-platform, client-server solution for estimating, time and expense tracking, prioritizing, resource scheduling, invoicing, accounting, and reporting.

JobOrder includes Accounting with A/R, A/P and G/L, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Professional Services Automation (PSA), and more.

For More Information

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