# **How to…do a change impact assessment**

A change impact assessment typically takes place once the detailed design of the future is complete – whether that’s user stories, web page mock-ups, an organisational structure and job descriptions, or detailed processes. It should answer the question of what does this mean? In other words, what exactly has changed and what is the scale of that change?

## **Step 1: What’s documented and what’s not?**

There are many different ways to do change and not every method will insist on documenting the current and future situation.

Depending on the team and organisation, more or less of the processes, systems and organisation may or may not be documented.

The first step in performing a change impact assessment is understanding exactly the level of information documented. What information do you have about the current situation? What do you have about the future? Are there any gaps?

The larger and complex the change, the more it is vital that there is documentation. However, this is not always possible where current information is concerned and a common sense decision needs to be made about whether to document or not – usually this is a cost/time versus benefit analysis made by the change sponsor. If it’s going to delay the project for a long time, a workaround may be required.

Best practice advice would always be to document any future aspect so this doesn’t arise the next time a change may be required.

## **Step 2: Desktop versus interactive**

In an ideal world where the documentation exists in full, a desktop analysis can be performed by comparing the current and the future and simply documenting the evident differences. This is the easiest way to do a change impact assessment.

If there are gaps in documentation, unless you are a subject matter expert yourself and can fill in those gaps, you may need to perform a more interactive change impact assessment with others.

Interactive change impact assessments can be done through:

* A workshop which brings together current subject matter experts and key resources involved with design who can discuss what the change impact is likely to be and document this during the workshop
* An interview with a single subject matter expert and the change manager or a business analyst to elicit the differences and do the change impact assessment together
* Observation by a change manager or business analyst of the current situation which can then be compared to design documentation

Choose the method which would work best for your change and makes the best use of the resources you have.

## **Step 3: Use McKinsey 7S to guide the assessment**

McKinsey 7S provides a good way to ensure all aspects of the change have been considered even if ‘no change’ may be the response to some areas.

* Shared values: What will change about shared values?
* Style: What will change in the leadership style?
* Strategy: What will change in strategy?
* Systems: What will change in the technology or processes?
* Staff: What will change in regards to the staff?
* Structure: What will change in regards to the structure of the organisation?
* Skills: What will change in the skills required?

The Change Impact Assessment templates are already set-up to enable a McKinsey driven assessment.

## **Step 4: Validate the assessment**

Validation of the change impact assessment is always required. This ensures that nothing has been missed and that all aspects have been considered.

For small changes this may be a simple team review of the document. For large and complex change, the validation of the change impact assessment may be the first in a series of transition workshops with impacted teams.

## **Top Tip**

When you are missing documentation and need to run an assessment workshop, combine this with the validation by including the right people in the workshop – this will save time.