

## Managing Change When Implementing ICT Projects

Why do a lot of ICT projects fail? According to a recent survey approximately thirty five percent of projects are total failures, fifty percent are partial failures and just 15 percent are a success (Richard Heeks). There are many reasons for project failures, including insufficient funds, poor project management, inadequate project staff, lack of strategic vision to name a few, but a factor often over looked is the management of change when implementing ICT applications. Change management involves understanding the level of change that a project will cause an agency and its people and proactively developing strategies and action plans to manage the impact of that change. A successful project devotes significant attention to managing the impact of those changes.



Some factors/elements which are critical to any change management programme are: -

- a. An effective sponsor at a senior level within the agency. This change sponsor should have the authority and organisational power to initiate the change and sustain it through its implementation and also be senior enough to ensure that the necessary resources are available throughout the change process;
- b. Dedicated change management agents/teams. Change agents are responsible for making the change a reality through activities such as the design of the elements of the change and the development of plans for its implementation. Individuals with this role include the project manager, project team members and key influencers within the agency;

- c. Effective communication between the project team and agency staff. A primary focus of the communication must be to market the project to management and staff, with the objectives of building realistic expectations and reducing resistance to the new system;
- d. Involvement of stakeholders including the union(s) in project activities. This will assist in reducing resistance to the changes that will occur as a result of the implementation of the new system. In the case of unions they can influence the people who must change and play a key role in promoting acceptance of the change; and
- e. Adequate training of staff in the new processes and technology so that they can become familiar with its use thereby reducing the possible resistance to its introduction.

In addition to the above, as with any project management activity, formal mechanisms must be implemented to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the change management process. Appropriate changes then can be made to the change management methodology if required.



As the number of ICT projects in the public service grows there is a need for effective management and control given the scarcity of resources. Each ICT project once approved should be given every opportunity to ensure its success because ultimately the main beneficiaries of each successful implementation is the consumer be it another government department, the average citizen or a private sector agency. Therefore it is critical that all factors which can affect the success of any ICT project in the public sector including change be properly managed.

**Charley Browne**

**E-Government Development Officer**