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Introduction

Change Management has its roots in the second half of the 20th Century. Changes in social and organizational structures, frequently driven by changing technology, created an environment of rapid and discontinuous change. Business leaders, managers and professionals from a range of disciplines recognized the challenge of creating and sustaining value in this challenging environment. It became a commonplace observation that change in organizations frequently became chaotic; it destroyed value, rather than creating it.

Change Management is an **emerging** profession

Organization Development practitioners and academics approached change from the perspective of psychological and social disciplines. Half a century of social science research was plundered to gather insights that might help organizations to engage people more effectively in the change process. The human side of change became a key driver of success.

Project and Programme Management professionals, drawing on operational research and other well-developed academic disciplines approached change from a different perspective. Their fast-developing profession provided powerful tools to define, plan and control change initiatives in organizations. They offered structures and processes that reassured organizations that change could be managed.

Systems theory, chaos theory and other powerful strands of thought also made their contributions to understanding change and shaping the way it is managed. Large consulting firms began assigning their most capable practitioners to support organizations approaching significant changes. The literature of Change Management became more and more prominent in business and universities began to offer courses dedicated to Change Management.

From these diverse professional backgrounds, a number of individuals began to define themselves as Change Specialists or Change Managers. Organizations, struggling to maintain or increase value through times of change started to employ people in roles identified as 'Change Manager', either internally or through external recruitment processes. Consultants advertised their Change Management services and were engaged to provide guidance. The discipline of Change Management began to form.

Change
Management
is an
interdisciplinary
profession

There is a substantial and growing body of literature about organizational change. However, it is clear that effective Change Management draws on the expertise of a wide range of other professional disciplines. The history of Change Management illustrates some of the disciplines that contribute to the effective management of organizational change. In this Change Management Body of Knowledge (CMBok) we have sought to identify, recognize and calibrate those elements on which the Change Management profession relies.

The specific context of any change initiative or process will determine which of these elements are most significant. That context includes the national, ethnic and organizational cultures in which the change takes place. It also includes the particular nature of the change and the forces that are driving – and resisting – it. It certainly includes the people involved, especially those leading the change process, and the outcomes that are required.

Because of this variation in the context, no single definition of the knowledge required to underpin effective Change Management will meet with universal approval. Professionals with different orientations, from different cultures and facing different challenges will (unsurprisingly) reach different conclusions about the 'correct' content of a CMBok.

In this edition we have built on eight years of Change Management Institute research which has defined what effective Change Managers actually *do*. This research has drawn on the experience of more than six hundred Change Management professionals in thirty countries, and is published as a competence framework for a Change Management practitioner (www.change-management-institute.com).

In developing this CMBok we have engaged in further research with a similarly global constituency to define and balance ideas about what Change Managers must know in order to display those competences effectively – and to deliver change successfully. Our decisions about what to include, and with what emphasis, will not please everyone – but the results are based on strong global foundations. We believe it to be a worthwhile contribution to defining this emergent profession.

The Change Management profession is no longer embryonic and is readily identifiable in organizational, and especially in business literature. Nor is Change Management in its infancy. Early faltering footsteps and hesitant speech have given way to a sense of balance about the profession and to a clear voice that articulates a strong contribution to thought leadership. Perhaps, however, we could say that Change Management is in its adolescence. It is no longer dependent on its parent disciplines – such as organization development and project management – and is becoming ‘its own person’. Parental influences are still strong, but it is now making substantial and distinctive contributions to the world around.

However, the Change Management profession is itself in a state of rapid change and growth. Our research shows that the numbers of explicitly Change Management jobs is growing, and more organizations are actively seeking to build Change Management capacity and capability. The shapes of these initiatives are many and varied; the knowledge and competence of the effective Change Manager still needs to evolve to meet the resulting demands. New ideas and innovative approaches –spread by online forums faster than printed literature can keep up – are rushing around the globe and are driving behaviour which varies from thoughtful and highly sophisticated to reflexive and faddish.

This is a good time to identify the best in the developing Change Management profession. We have taken an ‘agile’ approach in the CMBok. We have chosen not to wait until all is clear and the evidence is universally agreed. This first edition is a work in progress. As we publish we are already gathering data and insights from the global Change Management community, which will shape the second edition. Through this iterative process we aim to maintain a clear, current, convenient and valuable reference to what organizations require of an effective Change Manager.