# IT Change Management Post Implementation Review

If you're like the average IT shop, once a change has been implemented, that's the end of the story - off to the next urgent matter.

You've heard me time and again - as Change Management matures, it must become increasingly focused on the end-to-end life-cycle of changes. Change Management that's focused exclusively on making sure we "screw it in, not screw it up" is primarily playing the role of 'protect the production environment. In the immortal words of Captain Jack Sparrow - "it’s a fine goal, to be sure". But where Change Management starts to fulfill it's true calling is when it has a positive impact on the actual outcomes of changes, which is really hard to do if you don't evaluate changes after they've been implemented.

## Post Implementation Review

Post Implementation Review (or PIR for short) is a grand name for a relatively simple concept: after the dust has settled, complete the job by analyzing the change and establishing how it turned out; what went well, what could have gone better.

This is critically important in establishing the health of the overall Change Management capability. In the PIR, we want to look at what went well, and what could be improved. We especially want to be on the lookout for systemic reasons for success or failure. In other words – the PIR is not exclusively to look at the specific change under review, but rather to use the specific change as case-in-point to better understand the overall state of the Change Management Capability.

## Minding the Culture

To successfully adopt the PIR in support of continual improvement, it’s important to understand the culture of the organization and how such an effort will be perceived.

For instance, in highly silo’d culture, the PIR can easily devolve into a finger-pointing exercise, where teams not directly involved with the change under review use it as an opportunity to point out where other teams have made mistakes or fallen short. This must be avoided at all cost.

## Measure what matters

You know the saying – what gets measured gets done. I prefer the corollary “Measure what Matters”. In other words, if what gets measured is what gets accomplished, then it’s absolutely important to make sure we’re measuring the things that really matter.

In the case of Change Management – it’s the business outcomes that matter most. Not the number of changes, not the percentage of emergency changes. Not even the number of technically successful changes implemented.

No, with regard to change management, what matters to your organization (trust me) is the business results enabled by timely and effective changes.

## PIR Objectives

The PIR is intended to:

* Establish and/or validate outcome classification of RFC
* Determine if the change achieved the desired business outcome(s)?
* Evaluate if risks were properly identified and appropriately managed?
* Understand the effectiveness of the various change-producing workstreams
* Identify opportunities to improve the change management capability in better support of desired business results.

### Outcome classification

Different tools and teams track changes differently. We often classify as ‘successful’, ‘failed’, ‘rolled back’, and the like. Whatever classification system you use, it’s important to have a clear and consistent understanding of what each means. Keeping it vendor neutral – it’s important to determine the outcome for each change.

It’s not uncommon for changes reviewed by PIR for the outcome classification to be established in the review itself.

The goal is to open the dialog to more than the change implementor to determine the result of the change. This is a bit of a human nature – fox/hen house kind of thing.

### Business Outcome Achieved

Did the change accomplish the business purpose intended?

This simple question has two subtle implications:

1. We understand the outcome the business anticipated, and
2. We are able to determine if it was accomplished.

Properly done, this is something the business answers, not the IT change implementors – an important distinction. The end goal of change management - regardless of how practiced - is to achieve business outcomes.

If the outcomes are not clear – how can we make them clearer in the future?

If we are unsure if the outcomes have actually been achieved, why not, and how could be certain in the future? What means or measures need to be in place to ensure outcomes are achieved?

### Risk Management

For any given change, were the risks properly identified and mitigation strategies developed?

If the change failed, or was less that flawless in execution – where there unidentified risks, or risks that were realized that had ineffective mitigations plans?

### Validate change quality of workstream

For organizations hoping to improve their Change Capability, this one is absolutely key. Here, we seek to establish and continuously monitor the quality of changes being produced by the various workstreams (product teams, platform teams, etc.)

This requires some form of measuring and analyze the number, types and success rates of changes by workstream. How this is done is less important than the need to track outcomes to individual workstreams. Whatever measures are used, they must be established in the workflow – not an afterthought, a bold on, or a quality inspection point at the end of the process.

This is becoming critical, as many organizations are adopting new development methodologies – DevOps, Agile and the like. As the quality of changes produced in these workstreams increases, change management should increasingly delegate change authority to the workstream itself to be managed in the pipeline.

### Improvements to Change Capability

Last, but certainly not least is PIRs are part of improving overall Change Management capability. Although this is a subtle distinction, It’s very important, as Change Management, assuming its rightful place in modern IT delivery, serves an oversight and governance role for the overall Change Management capability of the organization. It must elevate its view, and focus on the overall practice, and not individual changes.

The PIR practice provides a broad vantage point on changes from the technical experts themselves. This body – assembled as needed – serves in research and advisory role.