Introduction

The implementation stage of the business change lifecycle is concerned with the deployment of the required changes to the business. This stage must be planned and executed carefully if the new work practices are to be embedded in the organisation successfully and the expected business benefits are to be achieved.

New working practices may include new:

- business processes and procedures
- templates and standards
- IT systems
- roles and responsibilities

Attendees at the May 2016 BA Manager Forum (BAMF) event were invited to consider and discuss the key factors in embedding new working practices within their organisations.

The session made use of a simple framework within which groups discussed and recorded their experiences. The findings are detailed in this paper.

A framework for implementation

If change implementation is to be successful, it requires careful planning. The plan depends on the degree of change, the implementation approach (for example, big bang or phased), the development approach (for example, waterfall/linear or iterative) and the acquisition approach (for example, buy or build).

To help consider the elements required for successful implementation planning, the BAMF discussion was structured using a four-part framework. This framework constitutes the following four areas as shown in figure 1 (overleaf).

- Make it essential
- Make it ready
- Make it happen
- Make it stick

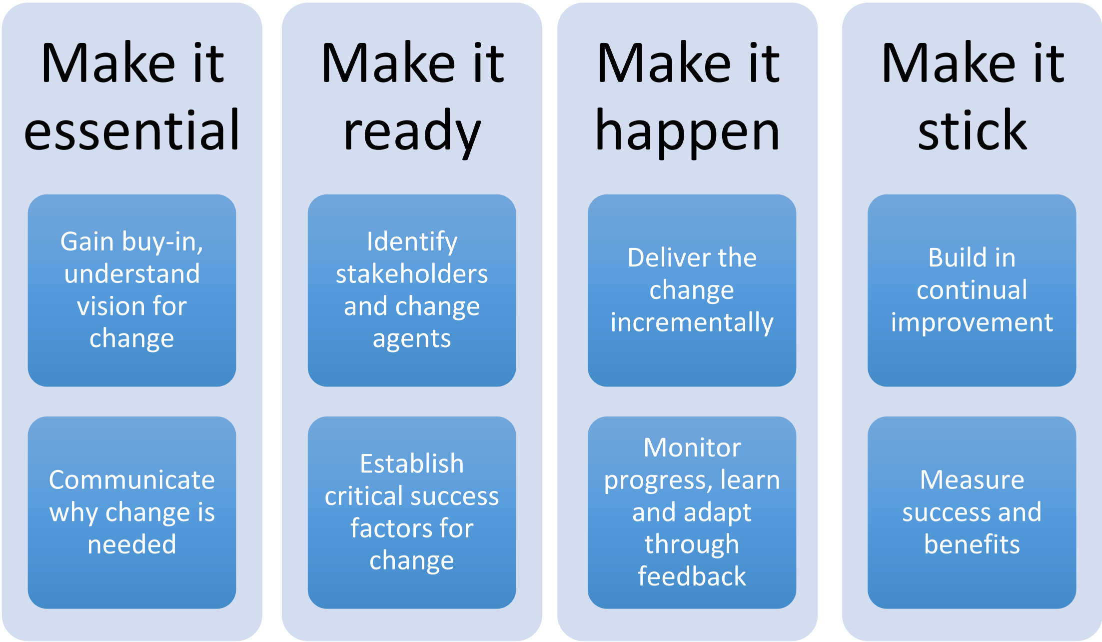

Figure 1: Framework for change implementation

Make it essential

In order to increase the likelihood of new working practices being successfully embedded, the change will be:

- Aligned to the organisational strategy
- communicated to stakeholders
- inclusive
- planned
- relevant and valuable

Strategic alignment

There are several questions to consider: Why are we changing? Why now? Is there a burning platform? What problem or opportunity are we trying to solve for? What happens if we do nothing? Who is championing this change? What is the direction of travel for the organisation?

Without answers to these questions, embedding any new change will be problematic. The change itself and any messages associated with it must be clearly linked to the organisation’s strategy. As the initiator of change, the sponsor must provide a clear vision, which in turn builds trust with those affected. The benefits of the change must be clearly understood with a specific and realistic end-point goal as an outcome. The benefits to the business and the purpose and value of the change must be understood and articulated. A vision needs to be created of how the end state will look and feel and how this aligns to the goals.

Communication

This is of fundamental importance during any change process: too much and too frequent communication will cause stakeholders to lose interest; too little and stakeholders will not be engaged with the process. Communication must be timely and authentic with core messages repeated regularly. A vision of the end state must be defined with the differences from the current situation outlined clearly. Communication must be tailored to individuals, highlighting the benefits of the change to those individuals. It must be coordinated with other communication to avoid conflicting messages. Messages to external stakeholders who are not directly affected by the change should also be considered and managed correctly. Teams of individuals or champions can be used to network the message and overcome objections. Different methods for communication should be considered, such as meetings, e-mails, intranet, posters and conference calls. Key messages should be simple, consistent and clear.

Inclusivity

A key enabler in embedding new change is to ensure that everyone who is impacted by the change is included. A simple mistake such as missing a name of a meeting invite or distribution list for an email concerning the change will severely damage credibility and trust. Building trust with the team is essential. Early engagement and a collaborative approach will aid in the identification of stakeholders, enabling you to assess the change appetite and build enthusiasm for the idea. Involvement can make it easier to take affected team members on the change journey with you. Where there is passive or tentative involvement by those impacted by the change or those sponsoring the change this would indicate that attempting to embed the change may be problematic.

Feedback should be encouraged in order that potential challenges can be anticipated and overcome early.

Planning

Embedding a new working practice should be planned in the same way as with any project. For significant change, a mid-term and long-term plan should be considered. A transitional road map might be appropriate where the change is taking place over a long period of time, allowing for incremental steps. The plan should include making the time to embed the changes. Value statements of work to be undertaken may be required. Risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies should be logged and mitigated against where appropriate.

Relevance

Significant change needs to be credible with those outside the setting where the change is taking place. Embedding a new working practice which is at odds with industry changes or with other organisations of a similar size or type, is likely to increase the resistance and require greater consideration and planning. If an entire industry is going in one direction and you wish to move in the opposite direction, you need to expect and mitigate for additional challenges.

Make it ready

Once all of the critical elements have been considered to make the change essential, organisations must then consider how they best ensure they are ready to make the change. As the old adage goes, failure to prepare is simply preparing to fail. This stage of embedding new working practices looks at identifying those stakeholders crucial to supporting the change, determining the communication strategy and the need to identify the critical success factors – how will we know that the change has been successful?

There are five fundamental elements that are essential in preparing for change:

1. Understanding the gap between 'current' and 'target' state
2. Effective engagement and management of stakeholders
3. Understanding the people impact (including skills, capability and culture)
4. Effective communication
5. Clear measures of success

Understanding the gap between the 'current' and 'target' state

It is important to consider the scope of the change, be clear about what is and what is not in scope, and understand the context for the change. In particular, this concerns the goals, objectives and priorities of the organisation and how the proposed changes will support their achievement. Techniques such as SWOT or PESTLE analysis help to identify the challenges facing an organisation, the opportunities that exist for successful change and whether or not the capability to deliver the proposed changes exist. The Balanced Scorecard can also be useful to highlight potential conflicts. Consideration of the current and desired positions helps to determine the required changes and the resources, such as time, budget and people that are needed. The wider impacts of the change also need to be analysed and any potential blockers identified so that their influence can be mitigated. Impacts may fall on locations, structures, staff members and processes. It may be useful to consider a pilot or proof of concept stage, possibly using the minimum viable product concept, and consider what has worked well in the past. Readiness for change also requires consideration of what success will look like, including how things would look and feel following the change and the benefits that may be realised by each milestone; this helps to determine the steps required to get there.

Effective engagement and management of stakeholders

Stakeholder identification and management is key when planning for business change and the application of business analysis techniques can be extremely helpful. For example, a RACI analysis or the power/interest grid will help to identify the stakeholders who are the key influencers or supporters of the change and determine the stakeholder communication and management strategies. Where appropriate, stakeholders should be kept informed throughout the change process. This may include external parties such as consumers and suppliers. Any legal or contractual implications of the proposed change must also be factored into this approach.

It is important to recognise those likely to resist, or even oppose, the change so that their issues may be investigated and appropriate action taken. Opposition and resistance is likely to require careful stakeholder management. Response strategies to resistance may include demonstrating the benefits of the change and how it will support the organisational strategy. If this approach does not succeed it may be necessary to consider behaviours and motivations behind and resistance to understand if there is a cause that has been missed within change implementation planning.

It is essential that an owner is identified for the change programme and is clear about their responsibilities. Successful change should be facilitated at all levels within the organisation and everyone should be clear about their role. Any potential conflicts between roles in facilitating change, for example, between the project manager and business analyst, must be identified early and the roles clarified. RACI again provides an appropriate tool for this.

Support for the changes must be visible throughout the organisation. The identification of ambassadors for the change can be crucial in order to encourage the engagement of others. We must also ensure that we have considered who will be affected by the change – positively or negatively – and considered the actions that will help to reduce, if nor eradicate entirely, any negative impacts.

Understanding the people impact (including skills, capability and culture)

Inevitably, change programmes have wide-ranging effects so require analysts to take a holistic view. This includes looking at the effect on people, their roles, the processes they carry out and the supporting information and technology they use. There may be a need for new ways of working, frameworks and templates to be adopted as part of the change. Such changes may give rise to new skill requirements and the development of training plans. The training must be proportionate and relevant to the changes being implemented. In some situations, an email or online learning will suffice; in other situations, more support is likely to be needed. In the latter case, the number of people to be affected and whether formal training is required should be considered. There may be subject matter experts available and it may be helpful to use them as mentors or coaches to support everyone through the change process.

It can be helpful to consider using a collaboration/sharing tool where frequently asked questions and other information may be stored. Adequately supporting people through the change is paramount to its success.

It is often the unknown, as opposed to change in general, that people are afraid of. If we make it clear how people will be affected, and what any new roles or responsibilities are, reluctance to the change will be lessened. Here is a good opportunity to look for examples of where this working practice is already employed and works well; showing people how the change will look in reality may assuage some of the concerns. Identify subject matter experts and ensure they are available to support the change. Using another staple business analysis technique, map out the 'current' and 'target' state processes to highlight exactly what the change is; this will also help demonstrate the value and benefits of the change, and identify the route from the current to the target state.

Effective communication

Having and executing against a clear communication plan is key to succeeding with change; a commonly heard complaint regarding change initiatives concerns the lack of communication or the way in which vital information has been disseminated. Messages must be clear, digestible and delivered consistently at the relevant time. Hearing things second hand can create misunderstandings and resentment and is potentially dangerous as the information may be communicated with another person's lens or filter applied. People appreciate honest and direct information that has been communicated well.

The vision and drivers for change should be presented clearly and the benefits must be identified and sold. It may be possible to reference similar initiatives and the benefits that have accrued from them. Some benefits apply to individuals while others may be at a practice or even organisational level. Whichever the case, it is important to recognise that people are most interested in changes where they understand the impact on them and their work; this should be considered when deciding the messages to deliver. It can be helpful to hold a ‘kick-off’ meeting that allows attendees to ask questions and highlight concerns. This can initiate a dialogue with those likely to be affected by the changes and help to gain feedback and generate buy-in to the process.

The style and delivery of any communication should always be tailored to the audience, the level of engagement required, and the size and scale of the changes. For example, some changes require one-to-one sessions, or meetings with small groups; others are for large audiences and may be disseminated using online communication.

As the change is likely to affect people across the organisation, and not just in a single area or profession, we need to consider the best communication techniques. We need to ensure that communication is clear and simple and understandable by the wide audience. Will a use case or rich picture best support the message we are trying to convey or should we use both? Determine the skills and experiences of the recipients to ensure all their needs are considered and catered for.

Clear measures of success

Consideration of measures of success at this stage is more about identifying and deciding what the critical success factors (CSFs)/critical business factors will be and promoting them. Consideration can be made as to how CSFs might drive behaviour and what key performance indicators will be used to determine the success of the change.

Care should be taken that there is a clear and unambiguous definition of done and that results align to wider business goals. This might include qualitative and quantitative metrics. On a large programme of work different areas may work to different metrics but are again aligned to the overall goal.

Cost benefit analysis and SMART objectives may be useful ways to express the benefits of change.

As part of getting ready for change, we need to think about what good looks like. How will we know the change has been a success and should be continued? Part of embedding any change is reflecting and determining if the change should continue and to do that we must have clear critical success factors. We must also be aware of how CSFs can drive behaviour, so ensuring we have them right is fundamental to making the change stick.

Make it happen

This section covers five topic areas: approach, communication, planning, feedback and structure.

Approach

‘Incremental’, rather than a ‘big bang’ approach is viewed as the preferred delivery approach, although this may not be suitable or possible in every single circumstance. The approach should be informed by lessons learnt from past initiatives and retrospectives can be useful, especially for adapting and changing approaches. However, an incremental approach needs to be carefully managed so that it does not result in a fragmented delivery, for example, increments need to be of a relevant size to suit the situation. It is important to ensure a holistic view is adopted, taking full consideration of technology, people and processes. Teams can also be built in increments with consideration given to having the right people in certain teams.

Regular and incremental change allows quick wins to be showcased and appreciated. Ongoing wins and successes can be seen as continuous improvement and will help to bring more people onside. Early wins will help customers and might also result in prompt realisation of benefits.

Ideas can be piloted or trialled to establish validity, and demonstrate potential to gain stakeholder buy-in. Sometimes trials can morph a pilot into business-as-usual and can create champions, address issues or bring acceptance that it is the wrong thing to do.

Any approach must include continuous senior level support, buy-in and engagement and include ways to overcome resistance and prevent people reverting to old habits. Consideration must also be given to producing a realistic timeline for change that always shows the next steps required. Change agents should not be afraid to review and change their approach if the need arises.

Communication

As discussed earlier, a communication plan is required to provide open, honest, clear and visual information. Communication should be continuous and always regarded as a two-way process with a clear feedback loop in operation and the ability to demonstrate when feedback has been acted upon. Honesty is important so while success stories should be emphasised, it is important to address things that go wrong as well. This will help maintain the credibility of the communication and the change team. The communication of early successes can help build interest and commitment.

Planning

A change initiative should be managed as with any other project and have a full project plan. Thought should be given to the ownership of the plan and planning should be sensitive to business as usual requirements, avoiding operational peaks whenever possible. There may be occasions when implementing change creates a productivity dip and, where possible, this should be planned for. Contingency planning is essential to address issues as and when they arise.

Any plan should include milestones and CSFs and there should be decision and stop points for review and feedback. Time for review and feedback sessions should be allocated. Benefits should be reviewed throughout the change programme, in order to assess that the initiative is still valid and remains on track to achieve the predicted business outcomes.

Feedback

Feedback is a critical part of any change implementation and should be sought regarding both the changes and the approach taken for delivery. The feedback approach needs to be credible and should include ‘mini feedback’ at sensible intervals. Feedback can include reporting achievements and helping stakeholders appreciate that planned actions have been completed. The change team should respond to feedback and be prepared to change course if the feedback is significant. Lessons learned should be documented as the change progresses.

Structure/framework

For a consistent approach a formal framework is needed that should include:

- suitable control processes
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- key measures

The framework might include the method adopted and might set the ground rules for establishing behaviours during the change initiative.

Make it stick

This final stage of a change programme is often overlooked or given insufficient attention. Assumptions may be made that, once the change has taken place, it will be adopted permanently. However, this cannot be guaranteed so this stage in the process needs to be planned just as carefully as the above three stages. The BAMF identified four topics for consideration: plan, approach, review/feedback and measures/KPIs/benchmarking.

Plan

Any planning needs to be undertaken at the outset and not as an afterthought once this stage is reached. The planning is then consistent with the overall approach. A good example could be cultural issues for an organisation with global dimensions.

Approach

Providing sufficient time between change implementations can increase the chances of the change being accepted and embedded. Avoiding a situation where individuals are impacted by multiple major changes in quick succession (sometimes referred to as ‘change fatigue’) should be a component which is considered in the planning and execution of change.

It is also important to strike a balance between the need for continual improvement and the need for sufficient time gaps between the major change implementations. Depending on the nature of the major changes, the internal context and culture it can be appropriate to refine processes and approaches associated with the change based upon feedback received. Where risks are appropriately managed and the teams impacted by the change take ownership for implementation this can be a major factor which leads to successful change acceptance over the long term.

The process of handover is important. This involves handing over documentation and communications processes into the BAU (business as usual) function. Identification of answers to the following questions will potentially be useful

- Who will own and manage the implemented change (or solution)?
- How will the change (or solution) be supported and maintained?
- Who will own future changes?
- What resources exist to support any future changes?
- What service level agreements exist?
- Who will provide administrative support?
- Who do I contact if something goes wrong or if I need support?

Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities should be established across business-as-usual. Where necessary it may be appropriate to consider the recruitment of additional staff to support the change or to contract with a third party for this. Consideration may also be needed with regard to revision role/skill definitions and frameworks.

Communication remains important and is needed to continue reinforcing the change messages after implementation with progress and benefits continually tracked and reported on. This should include the acknowledgement of major challenges and where appropriate the timely celebration of success.

An assessment should be made on whether the sponsor's key measures have been met in terms of: the big picture, external perspectives, and the link to corporate strategy. Benefits should be traceable back to the original vision, and their achievement should be assessed objectively.

If despite concerted efforts resistance to change persists response strategies should be considered carefully. In certain scenarios it may be necessary to escalate or to revise the implementation approach. Highlighting missed benefits can in certain scenarios help to provide focus. In other circumstances genuine barriers to change acceptance may exist. Where this is the case careful consideration should be taken regarding the design of any next steps. Simply seeking to enforce the change without first understanding the perspectives of the individuals or organisational units is unlikely to lead to lead to permanent change acceptance.

Where appropriate and as soon as it is sensible to do so, old systems, forms and templates should be decommissioned. This can help to avoid the temptation to revert back to a previous state once the change implementation team has dissipated.

Review/feedback

Where a new system is to be introduced, the ability to capture and disseminate feedback (good and bad) should ideally be built into the system itself.

When reviewing change, people should be encouraged to discuss their emotional responses to the changes as well as the tangible benefits that have been achieved. Providing an opportunity for feedback to be given can be helpful in creating a sense of ownership and may even prevent people from reverting to old habits.

Results should be published and pioneers rewarded and celebrated. It is important to be patient at this stage and to strike an appropriate balance between celebrating success and being mindful of future change implementation challenges. Communication the results of a successful implementation followed by a reversion back to old ways of working a few months later will be unlikely to build credibility for any future changes.

Measures, KPIs and benchmarking

Measures are needed that capture not just tangible issues, like hours saved or costs cut, but also the softer people dimensions of change. "Soft" measures might include user satisfaction, ease of use and staff contentment. Tangible measures could include increased volumes and productivity.

Measures may relate to existing key performance indicators (KPIs) and show how the change initiative supports their achievement. Benefits should be monitored when relevant in order to evaluate whether or not they have been realised. Other useful techniques to assess performance include the Balanced Scorecard, quality inspections and peer reviews.

The existing controls in the organisation can be revisited and revised if necessary in the light of proposed changes. If the assessment mechanisms used are new to the organisation they can be kept in place to continue to measure success

Summary

The contents of the four main sections of this paper were developed by a large group of senior and experienced business analysts who attended a BAMF discussion in May 2016. However, some common themes which are relevant to every stage of the change process have emerged. These are:

Planning	Whether it is the change programme itself, how stakeholders are to be managed, the transition from 'current state ' to 'target state' or embedding the changed processes, careful and thorough planning is vital.
Stakeholder engagement	Similarly, the stakeholders with an interest in the change programme, are the key to success and it is necessary to engage them, enthuse them, recognise and react to their concerns and, if they are hostile to the change, find ways of generating their support.
Communication	Communication should be consistent, honest, clear and tailored to the specific needs of each stakeholder or stakeholder groups. Communication must also be two-way – back to the change team so that they can recognise any adjustments that need to be made.
Measurement	Progress must be measured during the change programme, and success (for example, in terms of benefits realisation) measured afterwards.
Flexibility	The change team must be prepared to consider where things are not going according to plan and to make adjustments to the programme in order to deal with these problems. Rigidity is not helpful in this type of initiative.