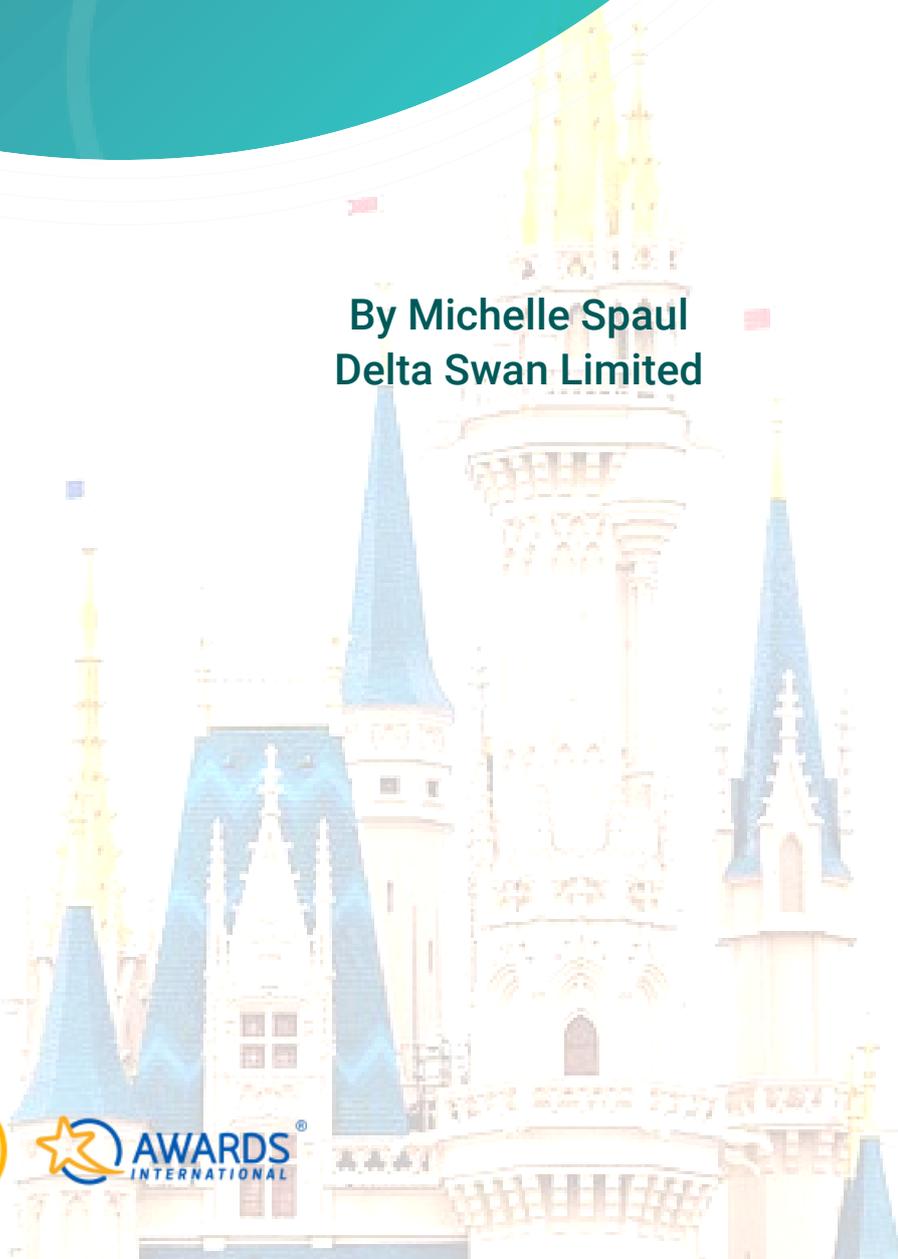


# Change and Project Management

The stepsisters to CX's Cinderella?

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## Introduction

I recommended this topic to Ana and the Judge Club because I often observe that these subjects – change and project management – attract the lowest scores when I judge, making them the stepsisters to CX's Cinderella. Indeed, my characterisation of Change and Project Managers, struck a chord with those who attended the conversation on 18 August.

*Wash the dishes Cinderelli*

*sweep the floor Cinderelli*

*clean the windows Cinderelli*

During the conversation we discussed four questions to explore why that might be, whether it matters and what judges and entrants can do about it.

We concluded that these subjects are important, not just to win an award but to successfully improve customer experience. We look forward to continuing this conversation.



## What are Change and Project Management?

**Project** – a unique transitory endeavour undertaken to achieve a desired outcome (Association of Project Management). Projects have a start and an end point and a defined goal.

**Project management** – the process by which projects are defined, planned, monitored, controlled and delivered so the agreed benefits are realised (Association of Project Management)

**Change Management** – including stakeholder engagement – the management of change and development with a business or similar organisation (Oxford Languages). While it is people centred, it has tools and techniques in common with Project Management, especially Risk Management and Communication. Change Management requires empathy and is, therefore, quite a lot like CX. Change Management enable both Project and Customer Experience Management.

Ginger added Project Management is like giving someone a to-do list, whereas Change Management is saying we have to do something differently.

Edwin added Change Management is something different [to Project Management], it is really a long-term approach.

Naval added while Project Management is about one-off activities, Change Management is continuous and responds to the changes in the world. It must have a 360° view of the organisation and be holistic. Changes that impact customers are more challenging as every customer is different with their own likes, dislikes and emotions.

Chris added Project Management is about defined activities with a start and end point. While Change Management shares some of these characteristics it is all about people and gaining their buy in.

## The Conversation

### Are the Change and Project Management answers the weakest?

#### 4. Planning and Implementation

What steps did you take to plan the initiative? How was the initiative implemented? Who was involved and how was communication maintained? What was the target, budget and timeframe. Show results of any challenges along the way and the results against target, budget and timeframe

#### 5. Stakeholder Engagement

What was the leadership model and who were the relevant stakeholders? How were their needs identified and understood, and how were they engaged in the process?

I feel these questions are rarely answered directly and when questioned during the presentation phase, entrants cannot answer as they have planned instinctively.

*"It's like trying to describe how you walk up stairs."*

Chris felt these questions scored the lowest and there was some confused about what to put. When there was information, it was thin.

Ginger felt that question five (stakeholder engagement) is easier to answer than question four (planning and implementation) as the latter is more in-depth. And that both are easier to answer than do.

## Why might this be?

I have many theories why these answers are the weakest. My primary reason is, ironically, that Change and Project Management are a bit like Customer Experience. Everyone thinks they are good at them, regardless of training, experience and outcome.

Ginger added that people often struggle to identify the broader stakeholders, for example only recognising the people impacted by the launch of a new [marketing] campaign. As a judge at marketing awards, she shared that entrants with strong answers to these questions are often head and shoulders above other entrants in all categories. Might the answers to these questions be showing training gaps in the profession?

Chris highlighted the variety of entrant types – e.g., different sizes and sectors – and his observation that smaller organisations tend to give thinner answers as they are smaller and don't need to think about who their stakeholders are or to formalise the planning and implementation process as two or three people will 'just do this stuff'.

Jessica mentioned in her experience in CX stakeholder management is the toughest part and, therefore, this question is hard to answer. In particular, moving through initial enthusiasm to actual support and showing other groups the value of CX takes time. Changes in personal resets the clock.

Edwin made the point that the sponsor needs to be a leader and support stakeholder engagement.

## So what?

One category must get the lowest score – does it matter that these two tend to take that position? Clearly, I think it does. Because Change and Project Management focus on delivering successful change, without them we run the risk of the changes we make to improve Customer Experience failing. This might be a quick failure, with a project collapsing or not delivering its promised benefits. Or it can be a long, slow failure as a series of ‘fixes’ are used to improve the delivered quality of a project, ultimately costing more and creating disruption which damage the reputation of Customer Experience.

Ginger answered this question from the perspective of winning – low scores here matter because entrants want the highest score.

A quick show of hands showed that the attendants feel these subjects are important in the delivery of better CX and business outcomes.

## How can we improve the quality of entries?

What can we do to improve the way entrants describe their Change and Project Management?

In Ginger’s experience these sections are difficult to answer succinctly, and entrants might benefit from more guidance on what to highlight.

Naval suggested that Awards International teach and inspire by sharing examples, business cases and best practices.

In the chat, people also mentioned mentoring.

Ana pointed out that judges must use the feedback to emphasise weak points to help entrants in further years. I mentioned that feedback only helps one person, not the community. Ana explained the support given by IA through case studies, networking meetings, the guidance given by the consultants, signposting to people who can give support, sharing best practice and the Golden Winners with every entrant and every judge.

Naval added that coaching and support – pointing out the good bits as well as opportunities to improve is vital.

## How can we improve the quality of Change and Project Management?

How can we help entrants get value from using Change and Project Management well?

Thinking back to Catrina who asked whether the answers to these questions show training gaps among the profession, should we train CX Professionals in Project and Change Management.

Mandy feels

we should train people in these subjects rather than let them learn on the job. If we omit this as a skill, people will be less successful in CX which needs many people and project skills.

Catrina pointed out the opportunity to set a standard for the way CX is managed.

Mohammed joined the call to learn practical tips for Change and Project Management and make cultural change.

### Conclusion

As a judging and CX community we have an opportunity to improve the way we management CX by better understanding and using the skills of Change and Project Management.

### Next steps

For the Judge Club to discuss in more detail and identify opportunities to support the community, not just in the awards but in the achievement of better CX outcomes.