

## How the internet is transforming the business of change management

As a business, Changefirst has collectively been spending a lot of time recently thinking about the impact that the internet is having on the way we conduct our business. In this article we look at what this trend for online means for the business of change management and more specifically for Changefirst itself. As part of this analysis, we look into the near future and give consideration to some key related issues including the potential for on-demand delivery of change management services, the power of continuous change learning, the use of change “wizards”, the potential for customisation and integration of change services and providing support for online change communities.

### Business has now moved firmly online

There is little question that the internet has now fundamentally changed the way that many businesses operate. Google have been the trailblazers in online. They weren't first to the party but they stand head and shoulders above others in their sector, showing the way in terms of how to monetize internet activity and also creating a sizeable amount of goodwill along the way.

However, the interesting factor in terms of our analysis is how other businesses – large and small - have followed their lead and used the internet to revolutionize the way they operate. From how they promote themselves, to how they deliver and support products and services, through to how they interact more closely with their clients. Many completely re-inventing themselves and their business models along the way.

All of this set us thinking about how Changefirst operates as a business and has led to some fairly significant changes in the way we view, and plan to develop, our business going forward.

### What does online mean for Changefirst - and change management in general?

So what do we see as the major implications for us, our clients and the change industry in this online world?

The answer is probably too much to cover in a short article like this. However, we do think the internet will have – and is already having – a fundamental effect on the way that both companies like ourselves and customers approach the business of change management.

Our thinking is that – in the same way that online applications have become essential in other disciplines like sales and marketing and HR – companies in our sector will increasingly build their activities around a central business change application which supports interaction with customers both on and offline.

We see a new way of working on change management delivery and implementation that has some exciting new features including:

**On-demand service delivery** – the internet opens up significant opportunities around the way that clients can access and consume change management products and services. From allowing clients to purchase services online at a time of their choosing through to providing secure, 24/7 online access to business change applications, clients will be put firmly in control of when and where they choose to access the services they need.

**Comprehensive change applications** – traditional change delivery models have consisted of a combination of offline and online delivery comprising workshops, change tools etc, very often delivered in a range of media from face-to-face delivery to CD-ROM. There is significant potential in combining the best of these delivery mechanisms into one single business change application – accessed through a single user log-on - and in way that draws together the value in each of mechanisms under one roof.

**Continuous learning** – ultimately the Changefirst model is geared towards transferring the change management knowledge, expertise and techniques we have developed in-house to our client base. To date that knowledge transfer and learning has taken place at specific “point in time” events and in a number of ways including offline delivery. By making our change services available online we remove the “point in time” constraint which means our clients can to continue to learn and refresh their skills and knowledge from the point they start using our online application – and crucially always at a time and place of their choosing.

**The “wizard” effect** – to date much of the work online in change management has been around the provision of largely “non-intelligent” combinations of tools and other support activities - like e-learning and CR-ROM based materials. In essence, users had to have a good idea of how to use these type of tools before picking them up to use them. Whilst we recognize that this will still be the case for expert users we also see the potential for a “wizard” based approach within a more comprehensive, online change application. We see this as built-in “GPS” system for change – one that clearly maps out the steps you need to take, step-by-step and in an easy to follow manner. One that you might not choose to use, but it’s there if you need to call on it.

**Customisation and integration** – we are increasingly encountering requests from clients who would like to take elements of what we do and customise it for their own organisational needs. By developing an online application it becomes quicker and easier to tailor processes to more closely mirror the needs of specific clients and make the change process more valuable within their organisation. This also opens up the possibility of closer integration with other industry applications and tools – and at the far end of the scale an app exchange community around the application.

**The power of community** – at times by default –and as providers of change management solutions - we find ourselves in a pivotal role as regards to bringing members of the change management community together. Our change workshops typically bring together change practitioners from different organisations but with very common challenges and issues. We know from feedback the sessions are invaluable in terms of networking, sharing ideas and leveraging the experience of other change practitioners. However, there is a limit to what can happen at these events and again it is a “point-in-time” experience. We see the ability to network and share ideas as being a central

part of any new change application and will continue to develop the concept of our community site in this respect.

## Watch this space

If you have read down to here you have probably been scanning the text for some sort of punch-line as regards what this means for Changefirst and our clients.

Well, Changefirst see a significant part of our business future online and have been planning over the past 6 -12 months to transition to an online delivery model built firmly around a central business change application. We continue to see a role for additional services to support this application including workshops, customisation and integration services particularly for our clients.

We aim to provide more details of our plans early in 2010.

This paper is one of a series on a number of change related topics all of which are available from the [Knowledge Centre](#) on the Changefirst [website](#).

You can also follow our progress in the following ways:

