

CONFIGURATION MANAGEMENT

A critical tool employed by a project manager is configuration management or configuration change control. As projects progress downstream through the various life-cycle phases, the cost of engineering changes can grow boundlessly.

It is not uncommon for companies to bid on proposals at 40 percent below their own cost hoping to make up the difference downstream with engineering changes. It is also quite common for executives to "encourage" project managers to seek out engineering changes because of their profitability.

Configuration management is a control technique, through an orderly process, for formal review and approval of configuration changes. If properly implemented, configuration management provides

- Appropriate levels of review and approval for changes
- Focal points for those seeking to make changes
- A single point of input to contracting representatives in the customer's and contractor's office for approved changes

At a minimum, the configuration control committee should include representation from the customer, contractor, and line group initiating the change. Discussions should answer the following questions:

- What is the cost of the change?
- Do the changes improve quality?
- Is the additional cost for this quality justifiable?
- Is the change necessary?
- Is there an impact on the delivery date?

Changes cost money. Therefore, it is imperative that configuration management be implemented correctly. The following steps can enhance the implementation process:

- Define the starting point or "baseline" configuration
- Define the "classes" of changes
- Define the necessary controls or limitations on both the customer and contractor
- Identify policies and procedures, such as
 - Board chairman
 - Voters/alternatives
 - Meeting time

- Agenda
- Approval forums
- Step-by-step processes
- Expedition processes in case of emergencies

Effective configuration control pleases both customer and contractor. Overall benefits include:

- Better communication among staff
- Better communication with the customer
- Better technical intelligence
- Reduced confusion for changes
- Screening of frivolous changes
- Providing a paper trail

As a final note, it must be understood that configuration control, as used here, is not a replacement for design review meetings or customer interface meetings. These meetings are still an integral part of all projects.

CONTACT APMC™ GLOBAL TRAINING FACULTY OF FINANCE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AT:

OFFICE: 19 Town Planning Way, Ilupeju, Lagos State, Nigeria.

PHONE: +2348023054799

WEBSITE: www.pmconsultings.org

Practises: www.aapm.info/locations.html, www.aapm.info/africa.html, www.pcmo.org/Affiliation.html,
www.erm-academy.org/national-coordinator, www.aafm.us/locations.html .