Post-Project Changes: Occurrence, Causes, and Counter-Measures

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Abstract

Purpose
This study investigates the volume and background of changes done shortly after project completion.

Design/methodology/approach
To ensure a consistent set of projects, selection criteria were related to project budget, time of completion, and executing institution. Data collection included an initial survey followed by interviews.

Findings
The study identified frequency and extent of changes/alterations within a certain period after project completion as well as the dominating causes for such changes.

Research limitations/implications
The study is based on a limited number of projects and from three specific Norwegian agencies. Future research should include a larger sample, possibly also covering other sectors.

Practical implications
If acted upon, the suggestions for countermeasures can contribute to reducing or preventing post-project changes. The findings indicate a need for new performance measures for projects, as the classical parameters provide motivation to project managers and their teams to focus on project cost and timely delivery, rather than the life cycle cost.

Social implications
In sectors experiencing a widespread occurrence of changes after project completion, this could mean that cost overruns or functionality beyond what was sanctioned by the financing bodies are "hidden" in this type of change work. If so, this prevents sponsors and society from seeing the real project cost, and is clearly a misuse of resources.

Originality/value
This study contributes to the limited literature focusing on changes after project completion. The paper includes material that may help project managers and project owners avoid post-project changes and the costs and inconvenience associated with such changes.

Keywords: Project changes, change management, incentives, user involvement