



## Five Minutes with... Karen Walker



*Question 1: Please tell us your name, title (if relevant) and company (if relevant) and a little bit about your change management experience*

Answer: Karen Walker, Senior Change Management consultant, currently consulting for Allegra at the National Australia Bank.

I've been consulting for over 8 years now, predominantly in change management also including strategic management, project and programme management roles. I was also freelance journalist for 6 years.

My clients include local government, utilities, hospitality, gaming, financial services, publishing, information technology, charitable and manufacturing organisations.

*Question 2: How did you come to perform in a change management related role? What attracted you?*

Answer: My first change management role was such a long time ago, with Cadbury Schweppes in 1987, it was before the term 'change management' was coined! What attracted me to the role was the opportunity to work in a project environment and introducing what was then, cutting edge technology.

Since that first change role, my experience includes technology support, learning and development, and senior operational management and leadership roles. The constant through a diverse career is involvement in the implementation of new and innovative practices, and greenfield operations. For me, consulting in change management utilises over 20 years experience in managing, leading, supporting and designing change, in both project and operational environments.



*Question 3: Why is good change management so critical to the way businesses perform today?*

Answer: Organisations are increasing their investment in change project delivered benefits, with the expectation they will make a significant contribution to their performance in today's competitive and global marketplaces.

Good change management makes it as easy as possible for everyone in an organization, including their customers, to adopt new ways of doing things and sustain those new behaviours. It goes a long way to ensuring early and full achievement of the benefits the organization is expecting from a change project.

*Question 4: What makes a great change management practitioner?*

Answer: I strongly believe a change management practitioner is a true consultant. Organisational change management isn't black and white, nor a repeatable process. Getting results in change management is more about 'the way that you do it' that is customized to each client and project.

A good change management practitioner considers the nature of the change, operational and business circumstances, and existing constraints, to recommend activities and options that best support the outcomes a change project is seeking. It is also about constantly refining and reviewing the organizational change management activities during the lifecycle of a project, as a more detailed understanding of the nature, impact and perceptions of change is gained.

A great change management practitioner keeps their eye on the endgame. That is putting the client in the best position possible to manage and sustain the change after it is implemented, rather than being wedded to the activities in a project plan created at the project's conception.

*Question 5: What would you say to anyone thinking of starting/developing a career in change management.*

Answer: Logic and creativity, attention to detail and seeing the big picture, conceptual thinking and detailed planning, psychology and business acumen, are what makes working in change management so enjoyable for me. It requires a diversity of skills and ways of working that suit my own need for variety in my working day.

People considering change management need to ensure that using a wide diversity of skills rather than being an expert in one or two types of activities, will provide them with a desired level of work satisfaction. They need to also be



'students of life', open to constantly learning and appreciating other people, points of view, industries and businesses.

*Question 6: What is your idea of a great change management challenge?*

Answer: A great change management challenge to me is influencing a client's thinking to successfully do things in a new way they'd never even considered, that put them in the best position possible to manage and sustain a significant change after it is implemented.