



# JDI - The Ultra-fast Change Process

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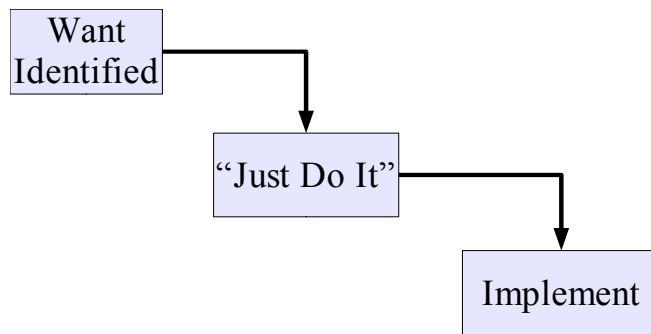
**Just-Do-It (JDI) is often seen as a fast change process. In this paper I present the JDI method, highlight deficiencies and present the RAPID change system which corrects these deficiencies without introducing necessary overhead.**

## 1.0 Just-Do-It

There is no denying that the fastest change process available is the “Just-Do-It” method. After all we make a decision and simply implement that decision directly, what could possibly be faster than that?

FIGURE 1.

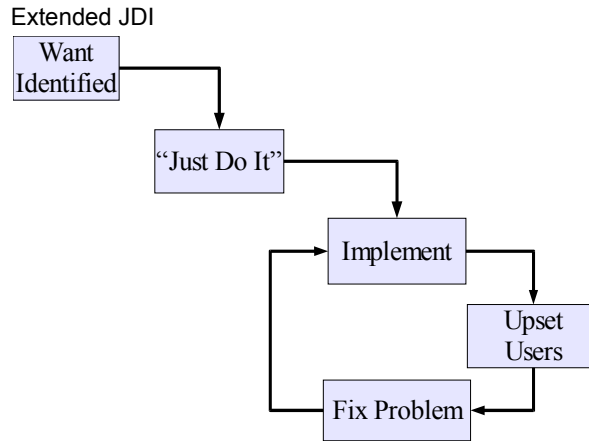
The basic JDI workflow



This is, of course an idealised model of the JDI method. The usual course of events runs on after the implementation phase. A change implemented using JDI often results in problems for users. Users become discontent and the IT department loses respect in the

user community. IT resources are pulled of normal activities to fire-fight the problems introduced by the JDI change.

FIGURE 2.



Actually there is considerable argument that the JDI method is among the least efficient change methodologies available.

### 1.1 Problems with JDI

Whenever JDI is used we see some common problems arise:

- No records maintained
- No accountability
- Unintended consequences
- “Domino” effect

Let us briefly examine each of these problems:

**No records maintained** The JDI method seldom respects record keeping. This means that it is almost impossible for an organisation to learn form its mistakes. Recall the Churchill quotation earlier and my paraphrase; “An organisation that forgets its past has no future”. By not maintaining records of each change and as importantly the effect each change has, we cannot avoid the mistakes of our past, nor improve on our successes.

**No accountability** The JDI method is often driven without accountability, worse the most likely people to invoke a JDI are the more senior management. This often means that when things go wrong the blame falls on the IT department rather than the person who “requested” the JDI.

**Unintended consequences** JDI changes are seldom assessed fully and consequently often result in effects on the systems that no one anticipated. These unintended consequences are troublesome and often very expensive to correct.

**“Domino” effects** This is related to the lack of recording, central coordination or impact assessment. The change made under JDI has an effect on another system, which in turn causes a problem on another, and so on. With complex IT systems this domino effect is almost inevitable with the JDI method.

## 1.2 Root Causes of JDI

If JDI is so harmful why do we see it used so often?

There are three basic causes of JDI changes:

1. Nothing else is available.
2. Change system perceived as too slow.
3. Used to mask true costs of a change.

Let us briefly examine each of these.

**Nothing else available** Organisations with no viable change systems use the JDI method as the only way to get things done.

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### Case

An e-commerce business providing financial products introduced changes to the live web site without any change control other than JDI.

It was widely recognised within the organisation that this was a high risk strategy and could not continue as the site’s profile and user base increased. No other change system was available at the time. I was engaged to implement a change system able to handle the high rate of change necessary for an e-commerce web site. The RAPID system described below was successfully introduced and problems with costly mistakes on the site were reduced significantly.

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**Change system perceived as too slow** The users of the change system use JDI to avoid hold-ups caused by the *official* change system. The reasons for this are legion but among the most common are:

- The change system is too complex. Usually caused by being designed by someone lacking experience of designing change systems, or the change system has succumbed to management pressure to make it too draconian.
- The change system is under-resourced. Weight of numbers can cause a change system to fail simply because changes cannot be processed quickly enough.

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### Case

A large public organisation in the UK had a series of complex change control procedures that demanded many stakeholders to approve changes before they could be introduced into the live environment. This was often seen as too complex for simple changes and was therefore often ignored, or overridden using JDI.

We engaged with all the stakeholders in the existing change systems and produced a much simplified and consolidated change system that everyone could use. The simpli-

fied system was based on the RAPID change system presented below and improved the perception of change within the organisation, reducing the incidence of unauthorised and JDI change to almost nothing.

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**Used to mask the true costs of a change** This is most commonly demonstrated when a senior executive with little understanding of the complexity of the organisation's IT systems wants a particular project implemented without a complete understanding of the IT systems and costs involved, they simply want the "new toy".

Without a change management system there is little visibility of the true costs of a change making it significantly easier for the true costs to be hidden in IT overhead costs.

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### Case

A large public organisation had an executive that decided a Blackberry technology was to be implemented into the organisation. Without a complete understanding of the implementation details, costs or on-going IT commitment required the instruction was given "Just-Do-It".

The resulting project took IT resources away from day-to-day activities (resulting in delays helping users of other IT systems). The implementation was bulldozed through (because the executive wanted it), problems in implementation pulled yet more resources away from daily activities. The system was finally delivered but continued to use resources that had not been allocated to the original costs, these additional costs were "lost" in the IT budget.

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## 2.0 Fixing a JDI

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In the previous section we identified some of the basic problems and causes of the JDI approach to change. In this section we will address these common problems and causes and show how to move from JDI to RAPID change.

### 2.1 Recording

One of the first problems we encounter with the JDI method is that there is little but anecdotal evidence available that the JDI method is doing any harm. Our first task is to record all changes (JDI or otherwise) and then record whether they succeeded or failed.

Set up a centralised<sup>1</sup> logging facility to keep track of all changes. This will provide immediate benefit as the organisation can see how many changes are being processed and can quickly establish the failure rate of changes. This provides information useful in future developments of the change system.

The JDI method does not account for communication across all stakeholders in a change. There tends to be one driving force behind the change and this force commonly

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1. 'centralised' will depend on context, for example a project may have a centralised change function, or a live infrastructure IT department may have a centralised change function.

disregards the impact that their change will have on the IT systems it interacts with. After all, the focus of attention is on getting “my” change into the system, not the problems it will cause to “you”. The introduction of a central change recording facility will not prevent this, but it will provide a single source of truth for changes and allow you to highlight the problems caused by JDI changes.

### **2.2 Assessment**

The JDI method does not address the question “Can we afford this?”. The JDI method is desire driven, an effective change system is driven by rational assessment.

We submit each change to an appropriate level of analysis and evaluation. All stakeholders are consulted to provide a full picture of the impact that the change will have on the systems it affected.

### **2.3 Permission to proceed**

Someone must be responsible for the final decision to commit the resources and implement the change. This person is responsible for permitting the change to proceed.

### **2.4 Implementation**

Surely the JDI method has the implementation phase right, after all now we have the records, the analysis, the approval, what more could we demand and add still add value.

The first element is the introduction of the idea that the change is exactly as specified in the change. If any modification is necessary then this change-to-the-change must be analysed, assessed and approved in the same way as the original change.

### **2.5 Double-check the Change**

This step is never present in a JDI change system. The basic test is “is the person pushing the JDI happy?”. This is fine but almost any change will have an impact on many people in the organisation, not only must the check be made to ensure the original requester is happy that the change is correct but we must ensure that there have been no unintended consequences of our change.

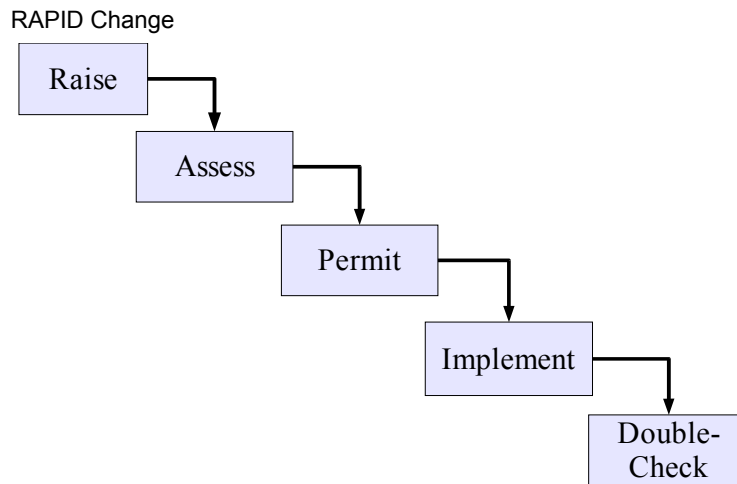
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## **3.0 RAPID Change**

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So we see that by fixing the JDI method, introducing a few common sense controls to changes across out IT infrastructure we have a system that need not be overly bureaucratic.

FIGURE 3.



Even the most simple change is subject to these basic steps. Consider a personal decision you have made recently that involves a change it probably involved these five steps. Say, buying a car: You *raise* the matter with your spouse, together you *assess* the situation (“Do we need a new car?”, “Do we have the money to buy it?”, etc.), then a decision is made and *permission* is given to proceed, you *implement* the plan and buy the car and finally you *double-check* and think either “What a great decision that was”, or “What a waste of time, effort and money”.

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#### 4.0 Next steps

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We now have the framework for a RAPID change system. Many of the details of the change system have not been discussed in this paper, for example we have not discussed the management issues, nor how or by whom changes are to be assessed, analysed or approved. This is deliberate, each organisation will have its own management structure and needs for these aspects of the change system but the core RAPID principles are universal and found in all Best Practice documentation on the subject.

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#### 5.0 Case Studies

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Presented in this section are three case studies of the introduction of the RAPID change system.

##### 5.1 E-commerce

A large on-line financial instrument trader had just launched a new website. A rudimentary change log had been used during the final phase of the project to launch the site but this log contained 300+ logged changes, none of which had been progressed.

The manager responsible for the production site called for a change management system that was simple but effective in managing the logged change backlog and also suitable to mediate with the business any new changes required to their very active website.

An initial scratch review of the 300 extant changes was performed with a team drawn from the business and technical support teams. This eliminated and consolidated many of the changes the resulting list was in the order of 100 changes. These changes were then prioritised by the team using business priority as the driver. This prioritised list was used to seed the new change system.

The initial team was used as the change control board and the business production manager was nominated as the change approver.

PVCS Tracker had been used to monitor all defects and changes raised during the project and this was maintained for all future change control. All change was registered in the PVCS Tracker database.

Two weekly meetings were initiated. The first was business focused and prioritised all new changes for analysis and to review the analysis of all changes dealt with during the previous week. The second meeting was technical in focus and prioritised IT work for the following week, including all analysis and implementation work.

Additional reviews were held during the week on an “as needed” basis to accommodate all changes that fell between the weekly meetings. These were generally conducted at the desk or over the phone, but the basic principles of approval and analysis were still adhered to.

Reports were generated for each meeting and, in conjunction with release management, the IT workload for each period was maintained at 80%, allowing 20% for contingency work.

It took approximately 3 weeks for the new system to become normal working practice and in the following 15 months only one production problem attributable to the change activity was experienced (and this was due to a DBA breaking the change process and applying an untested change to the system).

The speed and efficiency of the RAPID change system was initially challenged. A workshop was held with the business units concerned about the “complexity” of the change system (historically the business had been used to JDI). In this workshop we walked the attendees through the design of a change process using their own ideas and contributions. At the end of the workshop we demonstrated that they had arrived at the RAPID change system. This was then more widely accepted and with firm management support it was easily demonstrated that it was more efficient to follow the lightweight change process than to violate it.

## **5.2 Centralised IT - distributed organisation**

A large national organisation had an existing change system that was too complex resulting in many circumventions and JDI changes. The RAPID system was introduced, cutting the overhead of getting changes through the system.

In 12 months change turnaround dropped from days/weeks to hours/days for most BAU activity with an increase in auditable trail records.

JDI activity continued at high levels, dropping towards the end of the 12 month period but not being totally eliminated. It was identified that a more senior management briefing was required. Armed with the information from the change system, and evidence that major problems had resulted from two recent JDI changes the staff on the change management team gave senior management briefings to both business and technical managers. We await the results.

### **5.3 Large national organisation with distributed sites and IT**

As part of a large IT rationalisation programme a new IT change management system was to be introduced. Historically the organisation had a change management function operating at an organisation level dealing with major changes, the programme wanted to introduce end-to-end IT auditability of all changes.

A brief survey of stakeholders revealed considerable resistance to changes to working practice (the organisation was historically resistant to change). A series of workshops were held over a four month period during which all stakeholders were asked to contribute to the new change system. The first meetings were used to brief participants on the RAPID approach and all agreed that it represented a minimal set of steps in order to maintain auditability.

Workshops were arranged so that one set dealt with business concerns while the other dealt with technical concerns. This was done in order to reduce the time of each workshop and keep minds focused on the task in hand. We felt that this worked very well as business and technical personnel had different concerns for the change system.

At the end of the workshops a final workshop was held in which all participants were briefed on the jointly design system. While the final change system added several elements to the detail within the RAPID phases the overall structure remained the same.

The final system was documented and implemented using PVCS Dimensions. My involvement ended at this point but I understand the system was eventually implemented successfully.