



Beyond Go-Live: How Operational Sustainment Determines Long-Term Project Value

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Protect Your Investments

Organizations invest significant time, capital, and talent into projects designed to improve operations, enable growth, or modernize technology. Yet far too often, once a project or change is delivered the assumption is that success has been achieved along with any expected value.

In reality, value achievement is only beginning when a project is activated. Focused effort is required to sustain adoption and continue to receive and grow benefits from the change. Post-project sustainment efforts are essential for ensuring [continued] quality and realized value.

Projects should be investments designed to deliver value and continue providing value and performance long past activation. **Operational sustainment protects investments, reinforces adoption, and transforms change into measurable, enduring outcomes.** Therefore, it is important to focus on sustainment as an inherent and integral part of change implementation.

Project Completion Does Not Equal Sustainable Success

Even projects delivered on time and within budget can fail to produce lasting outcomes. Without deliberate sustainment planning, organizations often experience:

- Erosion of user adoption
- Growing technical debt
- Inconsistent workflows and workarounds
- Declining performance and unmet benefit expectations
- Difficulty expanding, optimizing, or scaling the solution

As project efforts complete and changes are moved into daily productive use, it is important to be prepared for how the changes will be transitioned from project implementation processes to standard operational and support practices.

Sustainment must be built into the project lifecycle from the very beginning, not addressed as an after-thought once implementation teams disband.



Sustainment Starts During Implementation

As projects transition from implementation into daily operational use, responsibility for the solution typically shifts from the project team to business owners and operational support teams. This handoff is a critical moment—and a common point of failure.

Successful sustainment planning requires that project teams actively partner with operational stakeholders to understand their *operational reality*. This includes clearly communicating:

- Expected benefits and performance metrics
- Total cost of ownership
- Support responsibilities and service expectations
- How ongoing changes will be requested, evaluated, and delivered

According to the [Project Management Institute, *Beyond the Project: Sustain Benefits to Optimize Business Value*](#) (PMI Pulse of the Profession® In-Depth Report, 2016), organizations that commit to transition and sustainment activities as part of project implementation perform better than those that do not.

To avoid situations where your organization is left asking what value was gained proactive sustainment planning, support tools, and processes are necessary.

What Enables Successful Delivery

Sustainment is impossible without strong project implementation fundamentals. Projects that deliver sustained value share several common characteristics:

- Clear and measurable business and project objectives and benefit metrics
- Strong stakeholder commitment and shared ownership
- Transparent communication and information flow
- Allocation and engagement of the right resources at the right time
- An established implementation framework and methodology
- Thorough validation and testing to support adoption
- Effective end user education of workflows

Bottom line: You can't sustain what wasn't clearly designed, tested, and adopted in the first place.



Tools such as [MAKE Solutions' TransIT](#) provide **Plans** to help organizations document objectives, benefits measures, and communication plans, and provide **Workflows, Scripts and Testing** to support validation and education activities creating a robust operational foundation for efforts beyond go-live.

From Delivery to Sustainment: Closing the Gap

Once a change is live, focus must shift to maintaining achieved benefits and continuing to realize full operational value.

Successful sustainment requires:

- A structured handoff from project to operations, with roles, responsibilities, expectations, and assumptions clearly defined.
- Commitment to on-going monitoring and measuring of benefits attained versus benefits expected with scheduled reporting and accountability.
- Enforced service desk processes for reporting and requesting fixes, routine maintenance, and standard changes including expectations for responding in a timely manner.
- Clear criteria for distinguishing when support needs are beyond operational management and a new project is required.
- Ongoing end user education and processes, validation practices for standard changes and fixes, and communication feedback.

Defining When Support Should Transition to New Project

One of the most common sustainment challenges is knowing when a request exceeds operational support and requires formal governance authorization to proceed. Establishing quantifiable criteria removes ambiguity and accelerates decision-making. The criteria should consider:

- Effort – total labor hours including decision making, meeting time, development, testing, education and communication, and adoption support
- Complexity level
- Impact to existing processes, functionality and downstream systems
- Resources (people and technology) required to be involved
- Cost and budget parameters
- Criticality or dependency on other initiatives



Continuous Learning, Validation, and Feedback

Sustainment is not static. As users change, workflows evolve, and systems are updated, organizations must continuously reinforce education and validation.

Ongoing end-user education programs supported by shared workflow documentation and executable scripts help maintain training competency and confidence. With enterprise tools like [MAKE Solutions' TransIT](#), that go beyond project delivery to ensure operational sustainment, organizations can:

- Share standardized workflows enterprise-wide
- Validate routine updates, patches, and configuration changes quickly
- Refresh training without rebuilding materials from scratch
- Capture documentation and issues that inform optimization and future project selection

Feedback loops that compare user expectations with real-world experience are particularly powerful, ensuring sustained buy-in and guiding future project investments.

9 Questions Every Sustainment Plan Must Answer

An effective operational sustainment plan should clearly address:

1. Who owns the transition and communication from project to operational ownership?
2. How will unresolved risks and issues be managed post-handoff? What will be the process to ensure outstanding project issues and risks do not impede handoff to operations?
3. How will adoption continue to be encouraged and monitored? How will adoption of the change continue to be fostered as part of operational practice?
4. How will workflow and system education be embedded into onboarding and ongoing training? How will education of the workflow and technical functionality be incorporated into new hire and standard education pathways?
5. How do users request support, maintenance, or enhancements? How do end-users log requests for support and changes (operational and project)?
6. What types of change requests will qualify as operational support and what will indicate a request is a project requiring governance authorization to proceed (Break/fix, education, standard or routine change and maintenance vs. Project effort)?
7. What is the planned IT support structure – team(s) and continued support education?



8. What governance process determines when a request becomes a project? What is the governance process for reviewing and selecting requested projects?
9. What KPIs signal declining value or adoption and trigger reassessment? Will there be a threshold limit for value and adoption KPIs to indicate a new project is needed?

How MAKE Can Help

Long-term value is determined not by how well a project is delivered, but by how deliberately it is sustained, governed, and continuously optimized once it becomes operational.

Organizations that understand the real return on investment is determined not at go-live, but in the ability to sustain adoption, validate ongoing change, and continuously optimize will more consistently realize long-term benefits.

Therefore, sustainment demands structure and tools that track decisions, maintain workflows, and make change validation repeatable. By embedding sustainment planning into delivery and equipping project and operational teams with shared tools, organizations improve support practices, ongoing adoption, and value realization.

[MAKE Solutions' TransIT tool](#) provides a practical, enterprise-ready way to document workflows, validate changes, educate users, and monitor benefits realization over time. When sustainment is supported by tools designed for both delivery and operations organizations are far better positioned to protect their investments, adapt with confidence, and realize the full value of change long after the project has closed.

Contact [MAKE Solutions](#) today to explore how a sustainment approach enabled by TransIT can help your organization protect and extend the value of its investments.

