



DISCUSSION PAPER

CONFIDENTIALITY: LEVEL 2 – DISTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL MEMBER GROUPS ALLOWED

DP 182: STANDARDS MAINTENANCE RELEASE PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

SUMMARY:

Annual budget cycles, and the necessity for thorough impact analysis of standards change requests, may require timing and process adjustment to the Standards Release process. This paper presents the key problems and questions for discussion, with the intention of proposing an ER for December 2014 recommending changes to the process.

Governance: SWIFT Securities Committee on 25 September 2014
Banking & Payments Committee on 26 September 2014

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1. BACKGROUND

The annual MT Standards Release follows a well-established process according to a rigid timetable:

1. 1 June yyyy, deadline for Change Requests (CRs) for Standards MT Release (SR) yyyy+1
2. Early June yyyy, BPC and SSC approve SR outline yyyy+1
3. Late July yyyy, high-level information about all the CRs is published
4. End August yyyy, Maintenance Working Groups (MWGs) meet to validate CRs
5. Mid-September yyyy, BPC and SSC endorse the MWG decisions and full details are circulated to User Group Chairpersons (UGCs)
6. Mid-September to late October yyyy, SWIFT community participates in country vote; documentation for the country vote includes details of changes for SR yyyy+1
7. Early December yyyy, BPC and SSC ratify the country vote
8. Mid December yyyy, Standards Release Guide (SRG) is published
9. End February yyyy+1, Updates to the SRG are published (if needed)
10. Third week of November yyyy+1, Standards MT release goes live

At the June 2014 Board, Standards received feedback from both business committees highlighting areas of concern with the process:

1. Members' development budgets for the following year are typically agreed in June/July, so it can be problematic to wait until the end of October for reliable details on the standards release;
2. Some countries have indicated that the current process does not allow enough time for consultation within the country to assess the impact of proposed changes, either in the period between CRs being received and maintenance working group meetings, or the period between send-out and closing of the country vote;
3. The process does not formally distinguish between critical (urgent) and non-critical changes;
4. The process does not provide a formal mechanism to 'skip' a standards release for a given message category or business domain.

2. OPTIONS

This paper proposes measures to address the issues described above, followed by some key questions for discussion within the SWIFT community.



Option A: Start the process 3 months earlier

Start all activities up to and including the issue of release contents to UGCs three months earlier. Thus, the deadline for change requests for Standards Release yyyy+1 would move from 1 June yyyy, to 1 March yyyy.

A1. End-May deadline for MWG meetings

Present Dates	Proposed Dates	Activities
1 June Y1	1 March Y1	Deadline for change requests
mid-July Y1	mid-April Y1	Publish High-Level Information
before end August Y1	Before end May Y1	Maintenance Working groups
mid-September Y1	June Board Y1	BPC and SSC endorse CRs
mid-September to late Oct Y1	mid-June to mid-Sep Y1	Country voting 13 weeks (was 6 weeks)
early December Y1	Sep Board Y1	Board ratifies the country vote
mid December Y1	3rd week Sep Y1	Publish Standards Release Guide (SRG) 12 weeks earlier
end February Y2	1st week Dec Y1	Updates to the SRG 11 weeks earlier
3 rd week November Y2		Standards MT Release Y2 Live

The principal advantage of A1 is that the probable scope of the standards release is known by June, in time for budget planning and giving the community thirteen weeks to review the impact as compared with the current six weeks. Note though, that by June the scope will not be absolutely final; there remains a chance that country vote or the Board might reject a change request.



A2. End-June deadline for MWG meetings

Present Dates	Proposed Dates	Activities
1 June Y1	1 March Y1	Deadline for change requests
mid-July Y1	mid-April Y1	Publish High-Level Information
before end August Y1	Before end June Y1	Maintenance Working groups
mid-September Y1		BPC and SSC endorse CRs
mid-September to late Oct Y1		Country voting
early December Y1		Board ratifies the country vote
mid December Y1		Publish Standards Release Guide (SRG)
end February Y2		Updates to the SRG
3 rd week November Y2		Standards MT Release Y2 Live

The advantage of A2 is that more time is allowed for in-country consultation before maintenance working group meetings, and the likely scope of the Standards Release is known in July, for budgeting purposes. As for A1, note that the scope will not be absolutely final; there remains a chance that country vote or the Board might reject a change request.



Option B: Two-speed process

Each change request is categorised as “critical” or “non-critical” according to agreed criteria. This determination is made by Standards with input from the relevant maintenance working groups. Critical CRs are pushed through the process as it is today but with a slightly extended country vote period.

Implementation of non-critical CRs is deferred by one year. A second country vote for non-critical CRs runs until the end of April of the following year, which allows more time for impact analysis. The Board business committees review and approve the result of this country vote in June.

Critical CRs (SR Y2)		Non-Critical CRs (SR Y3)	
Dates	Activities	Dates	Activities
1 Jun Y1	Deadline for change requests	1 Jun Y1	Deadline for change requests
mid-Jul Y1	Publish High-Level Information		
by end Aug Y1	Maintenance Working groups	by end Oct Y1	Maintenance Working groups
Sep Board Y1	Board endorses CRs	Dec Board Y1	Board endorses CRs
end Sep to 5 Nov Y1	1 st Country vote	after Dec Board Y1	Send out Country vote
early Dec Y1	Board ratifies 1 st country vote		
mid-Dec Y1	Standards Release Guide (SRG)	30 Apr Y2	Deadline for 2 nd country vote
end Feb Y2	Updates to the SRG (if needed)	early Jun Y2	Board ratifies 2 nd country vote
3 rd week Nov Y2	Standards MT Release Y2 Live	mid-Jun Y2	Publish full details of CRs
		mid-Dec Y2	Standards Release Guide (SRG)
		end Feb Y3	Updates to the SRG (if needed)
		3 rd week Nov Y3	Standards MT Release Y3 Live

The advantage of this option is that whilst critical changes (such as those required by regulation) would have a “fast track”. Non-critical changes gain seven months for additional impact analysis, and the scope of non-critical changes for SR yyyy+2 is clear and final in advance of the budget cycle for that release. Furthermore, if no critical CRs are identified for a particular message category or business domain, a standards release for that domain can effectively be ‘skipped’ for one year.

The main disadvantage is that non-critical changes would take thirty months from submission to implementation, as opposed to eighteen months today. Also, full details of critical changes would not be final until after a June/July budgeting process. However, the community would have a clear view on the impact of non-critical CRs and a high level view of the impact of critical CRs, so a better overall view of the impact than at present.

Either or both processes could start earlier (as described in option A), but with the effect of further lengthening the overall implementation time.



3. NEXT STEPS

The community is asked for feedback on the following key questions:

- What is the biggest problem with the current process that your community faces?
- What is the impact of the problems identified in the current process on your community?
- In the light of that impact, do you believe that Standards should change the process, and if so, which of the options do you favour?
- Option B requires each CR to be categorised as 'critical' or 'non-critical'; what are objective criteria for making such a categorisation?
- Are there reasons to reject any of the options?

The outcome of this discussion, and the feedback, will be documented in the form of a proposal in an Executive Report (ER) for the December 2014 BPC and SSC meetings.

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