PROJECT MANAGEMENT
BOOK OF LISTS

Project Management Book of Lists
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Initiate the Project

Three Ways to Manage Projects Step-by-Step

You have a choice in how you manage projects. If you manage in an *unstructured* fashion, then much of your time will be spent fire fighting and trying to control the project scope. This is known as "project chaos".

Instead, if you manage in a more structured *step-by-step* fashion, then you can control the project delivery and ensure it proceeds according to plan. So here's how to do it...

1. **Define the Project Roadmap**

At the start of the project you need to define the *Roadmap*. This is a diagram that shows the major steps that need to be taken to deliver the project from start to finish. Another name for this is the "Project Life Cycle". Every step is clearly defined and the steps are placed in a logical order, from Project Initiation to Project Closure.

After creating your Project Roadmap, get buy-in from your Project Sponsor and then clearly communicate the steps to your team. That way, everyone knows what has to be done to deliver the project, from start to finish.

2. **Base your Plan on your Roadmap**

If you haven't done so already, create a detailed Project Plan that lists all of the tasks needed to complete the steps in your Roadmap. If you have already created your plan, then review it to ensure that all of the roadmap steps are listed in your plan and that your plan is perfectly aligned with your Roadmap.

That way, by following the steps listed in your plan you can ensure that you follow the roadmap and never deviate off track. You can then avoid lengthy delays and costly overruns, which are common with projects.

3. **Use your Roadmap to Keep Control**

Print your Roadmap out and put it in a visible place so that your team can see it. Every time a change is raised, refer back to your roadmap to determine whether it should really be implemented.

By constantly referring to your Step-by-Step Roadmap, you can easily identify the impact of changes, risks and issues on the project. And you can see at a glance whether they are going to impact on your ability to deliver your project on time.

A clear step-by-step roadmap helps you make decisions on the fly, while still remaining focused on the end objective. And you can use it to report on your project progress to your project sponsors. It also helps you show your team the progress of your project to date to boost motivation and morale.

So take the first steps by getting your team together and creating a Project Roadmap which lists the major steps that need to be completed to deliver your project. Then plan your project based on your roadmap, print it out and stick to it. By doing this, you'll help your team remain focused on the tasks at hand and improve productivity.

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The MPMM Methodology (www.MPMM.com) and TenStep Methodology (www.TenStepPM.com) include a complete Roadmap for projects to help you get started. Every step in the roadmap is defined in depth, so you know what has to be done and when, to deliver projects from start to finish.

Three Steps to Prioritize Projects

Why should you prioritize your projects - don't they all have to be delivered on time and within budget? Yes, but any smart Project Manager will recognize that they only have limited time, resources and budget available to do it. So they need to set priorities, to ensure that their most important projects don't run out of time, people or money when they need them.

So here are 3 steps to help you prioritize projects quickly and easily...

Step 1: Define your Criteria

The first step is to define your criteria for ranking one project over another. And the best criteria for determining project priority are the fit between your project and the overall business strategy. If one project is taken to achieve a critical part of your business strategy, then it may be marked as a higher priority than one that's not related to the business strategy at all.

If you have no clear business strategy from which to prioritize, then use other factors, such as the: level of project risk, the amount of resource consumed, the extent to which other projects are dependent on this one, or simply the likelihood of success.

Step 2: Match your Projects

With a clear set of criteria defined, the next step is to match your projects against those criteria. You will need to identify the extent to which each project matches the criteria set out, and identify any gaps.

This is the most important step, as projects that you thought would be a perfect fit against your criteria may not end up being so. And projects that you didn't think were that important may end up meeting many of the criteria and therefore be marked as high priority.

Note: Make sure that your personal preferences don't influence the exercise. It's easy to make the "fun" projects the ones that receive all of the priority. Unless they are critical to the business, they should always be the "icing on the cake". It's often the more mundane projects that are critical to the strategy for the business.

Step 3: Define the Priorities

Ok, so you now have a list of projects that are each ranked according to their fit with your criteria. You now need to define their priorities.

We suggest you keep it simple. Group them into A, B and C (with A being "high priority", B "moderate priority" and C "low priority"). Decide now how you are going to manage each priority grouping differently. You may decide for instance, to spend more time on your "Group A" projects than your Groups B & C. You might drive them harder than the rest, report on them at a more detailed level than the rest and always allocate spare resource to them, over the rest.

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And there you have it. By taking these 3 steps, you'll prioritize projects faster and more efficiently than before, boosting your chances of delivering your high priority projects on time and under budget.

Three Steps to Improve your Project Processes

Everybody talks about them, but what are they? Project Management Processes are defined by MPMM (www.MPMM.com) as "the methods taken to complete a project". Put simply, they are the sets of activities that a Project Manager completes to initiate, plan, execute and close projects.

Of course, most Project Managers use their own processes to manage a project - but these processes need to be continually refined, to ensure that every project is delivered on time and within budget.

So to get the most out of your project delivery, we've listed below the steps you need to take to continually review and refine your project management processes.

Step 1: Identify Your Processes

The first step to take is to review your current project processes and determine whether they're operating efficiently, by answering the following types of questions:

- Which processes do I have in place to manage my projects?

- Do these processes result in the desired outcome, every time?

- Who manages these processes, have any issues been identified?

- Are my processes operating efficiently, without hassle?

- Can I identify any weaknesses or areas for improvement?

Ideally, each process should result in the desired project outcome every time, without hassle. If you're not achieving this, then you will want to implement a suite of improvements to perfect them.

Step 2: Identify Process Improvements

With a clear understanding of the state of your current project processes, the next step is to identify any areas for improvement. The easiest way to do this is to compare your processes against a project management best practice or standard. Here is one way to do it:

List your processes and rank them in terms of efficiency

Clearly mark the processes which require improvement

Compare those processes against the processes defined in the best practice project management methodology MPMM

List the differences between your and MPMM's processes and identify a new approach based on the comparison made.

By comparing your current processes against a best practice methodology such as MPMM, you can easily identify the areas for improvement.

Here are some examples of best practice project management processes:

- Time Management Process

- Cost Management Process

- Quality Management Process

- Change Management Process

- Risk Management Process

- Issue Management Process

- Procurement Process

- Acceptance Process

- Communications Process

Step 3: Implement Process Improvements

Now that you have identified the process improvements, you will want to carefully think about how to implement them. You'll need to:

- Prioritize your improvements based on the intended benefits

- Schedule the improvements based on the status of your projects

- Communicate the improvements to your project team

- Implement the improvements according to your schedule

- Measure the improvements to see if they've had the desired effect

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Performing process improvement is not as easy as you might think. It takes time, diligence and patience to implement process improvements which help you to manage projects successfully every time.

Top Project Managers continuously review their processes, to make sure that their projects are completed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Regardless of your current level of experience and knowledge, you will gain substantial benefit from performing continuous process improvement. It will certainly help you to achieve project management success.

Four Steps to Creating a Project Business Case

The purpose of a Business Case is to justify the project expenditure by identifying the business benefits you're going to deliver. Here's how to create a Business Case in 4 simple steps:

Indentify the Business Problem	→	Identify the Alternative Solutions	→	Recommend a Preferred Solution	→	Describe the Implementation Approach
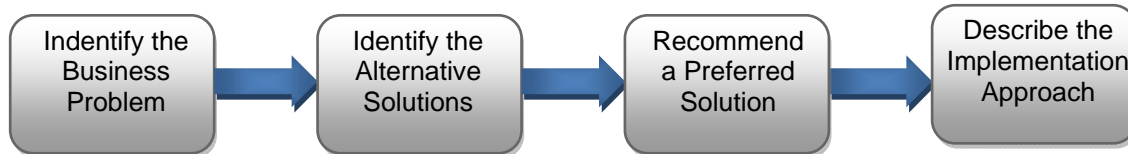
Step 1: Identify the Business Problem

Usually, projects are taken to solve a particular business problem or opportunity. So you need to investigate that business problem or opportunity and describe what it is, how it's come about and the timeframes in which it needs to be addressed. Only with this knowledge, will you truly understand the purpose of the project and the timeframes for delivery. Without this knowledge, it's like building a house without a solid foundation.

Step 2: Identify the Alternative Solutions

Now that you understand the business problem/opportunity in depth, it's time to identify a solution to address it. To ensure that you choose the right solution, take these steps:

- Identify the alternative solutions
- Quantify the benefits of implementing each solution
- Forecast the costs of implementing each solution
- Assess the feasibility of implementing each solution
- Identify the risks and issues associated with each solution
- Document all of this, in your Business Case

Step 3: Recommend a Preferred Solution

Before you rank the solutions, set out the criteria for ranking them and choose a scoring mechanism as well. For instance, you may decide to:

- Score each solution from 1-10, based on their costs and benefits
- Weight each based on criteria which are important to you
- Use a more complicated scoring mechanism

Then go ahead and score your solutions to identify the best solution. Make sure you document the entire process in your Business Case.

Step 4: Describe the Implementation Approach

By now, you have selected a solution and you have confirmed its benefits and costs. The next step is to convince your Project Sponsors that you have thought through the approach for implementing it. So document the steps you're going to take to build the solution for your client. Remember, only with a clearly defined Business Case will you ensure you deliver the business benefits expected by your customer.

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And that is your four steps to creating a project business case that will benefit your delivery.