

Project Management Overview

What is a Project?

Initial Release	1.0
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What is a Project?

Defining what a project is helps in understanding the project management methodology and its effectiveness for project management. Throughout this methodology, the project is referred to as a process and is defined as:

A temporary process, which has a clearly defined start and end time, a set of tasks, and a budget, that is developed to solve a well-defined goal or objective.

The project management techniques defined in this methodology require that a project exists. Typically, a project is initiated by a person (or group) who realizes that a specific problem needs resolution. When the problem is defined, an initial concept is developed around potential solutions. A true project is *not* just a set of tasks to be performed. By viewing the project in terms of a process that will achieve a desired end goal, the project manager breaks down the effort into a series of tasks. The completion of the tasks leads to the final solution or the objective of the project.

Temporary Process

A project is considered a temporary process because once the end goal is achieved, the project is completed. For this reason, the end point of a project or objective needs to be defined at the very beginning of the project to ensure successful completion. The reason some projects never end is because no one ever defines what constitutes *complete!*

The basic question for defining success criteria is, "Why are we doing this project?" Criteria for project success is quantifiable and measurable, and is expressed in terms of business value.

Well-Defined Goals

Projects require well-defined goals to determine project completion. Without well-defined goals and objectives, a project lacks purpose.

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GOAL SETTING

[Alice said] "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't know where. . ." said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

—Alice in Wonderland

by Lewis Carroll

This focus is generated in terms of milestones, deliverables, and requirements. The problem definition needs to be carefully crafted and well thought out. This will determine the project objective, focus, and the approaches for resolution. Without a clearly defined focus and a stated objective, the project often goes off course and may solve the wrong problem, go in the wrong direction, incur cost and time overruns, and ultimately fail.

Project Constraints

All projects have constraints and these need to be defined from the onset. Projects have resource limits in terms of people, money, time, and equipment. While these may be adjusted up or down, they are considered fixed resources by the project manager. These constraints form the basis for managing the project and are discussed later in the methodology.

What is Project Management?

Defining a project allows state organizations to categorize and finally execute projects. All of the processes associated with defining, planning, and executing the project are considered part of project management.

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Infrastructure Requirements

WHAT IS PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

Directing the activities associated with executing a project while controlling limited resources efficiently and effectively, ensuring that the end goal is successfully achieved.

Successful project management requires that certain infrastructure elements be in place. Among these are basic skills in people management, established processes for organizational planning and communication, availability of tools that support management processes, and a culture that values cooperation, teamwork, and planning.

Occasionally, a project succeeds in less than ideal conditions; however, success in “management hostile” environments is an exception rather than a rule.

Project management requires general management knowledge. The principles, practices, concepts, techniques, tools, and skills of general management are the foundation for project management. Within the general skills are the ability to work well with people, to take responsibility, to lead a group, and to make decisions.

This methodology provides guidelines for many of the principles, tools, and techniques for project managers.