



Project Management Methodology

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A project is a temporary endeavor, having a defined beginning and end, constrained by cost, time, and scope, undertaken to meet particular goals and objectives, usually to bring about beneficial change or added value. The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast to business as usual, which is repetitive, permanent or semi-permanent functional work to produce products or services. In practice, the management of these two systems is often found to be quite different, and as such requires the development of distinct technical skills and the adoption of separate management. Below is a methodology that works well for projects to help ensure they are completed on time, on budget, and to specifications.

Phase I: Discussion

Stakeholders explore ideas, gather information, and consider alternatives. When all discussions are complete, they determine whether to move on to the planning phase or abandon the ideas.

Phase II: Planning

A project manager is assigned, a team is assembled, and meetings are held to create a project plan.

Possible team members

Project Manager: organizes and leads the team to a successful project conclusion

Requester: the person who initiated the idea and who has important input

Executive sponsor: an interested high-level stakeholder who has agreed to help

Other stakeholders: faculty, staff, or students interested in the project's success who can help

Vendors: people from manufacturers or service providers who are contracted to help

Sections of the project plan:

Executive summary: 1-2 sentences that capture the essence of the project

Business rationale: how the project will help the school

Outcomes: what this project will achieve

Scope: exactly what the project includes and excludes

Resources: all items that will be used or purchased, and how they will be acquired

Timeline: chronological list of every action that needs to be taken (including testing and training)

Budget: analysis showing the full financial impact of the project (may include R.O.I., etc.)

Risk analysis: description of all relevant risks and how they will be addressed

Links to other processes: how the project relates to action plans, budgets, POs, CERs, etc.

Communications: who needs what information, how they will get it, and when

Phase III: Approval

The project plan is reviewed and approved by the appropriate individuals or groups. Depending on the scope and financial impact, the project may require approval from the requester, certain department managers, the SGFs, the CFO, the President, or some combination of people and groups. If all necessary approvals are not gained, the project may be cancelled, or may return to the planning phase.

Phase IV: Execution

The project manager coordinates the activities of the team according to the approved plan. Rarely, changes to the plan may be made to react to events beyond the team's control.

Phase V: Closing

All closeout documentation is completed, and a wrap-up meeting is held to learn from the project. Lessons learned may lead to changes to improve future projects.