

IMPROVEMENT SKILLS CONSULTING LTD.

“Simply, improvement...”



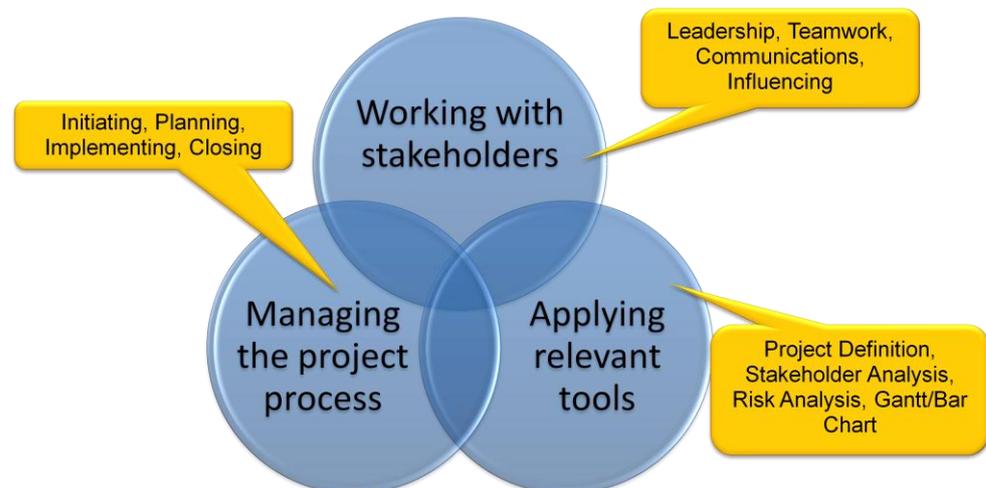
Project Processes Joined-up Thinking

Project Processes: Joined-up Thinking

“People plus Process equals Performance.”

Project Skills

There are three sets of skills people need in order to be able to manage projects successfully:



You need to be able to understand and work through a project life-cycle (process), using appropriate tools and techniques. This has to be done in conjunction with stakeholders, so good interpersonal skills are needed to build effective working relationships and to “bring people with you”.

Many organisations are “immature” in their ability to apply these skills and it’s all too easy for them to over-emphasise the process and tools. They end up being “methodologists” and lose sight of the people dimension.

Having said that, there is clearly a need for a methodology and there is a real need to make this accessible and understandable for people involved in project activity. There is a real dilemma here in that most projects do not follow a simple A to Z process and yet people need to understand what to do and in what order to do them. A process does not replace common sense (and experience).

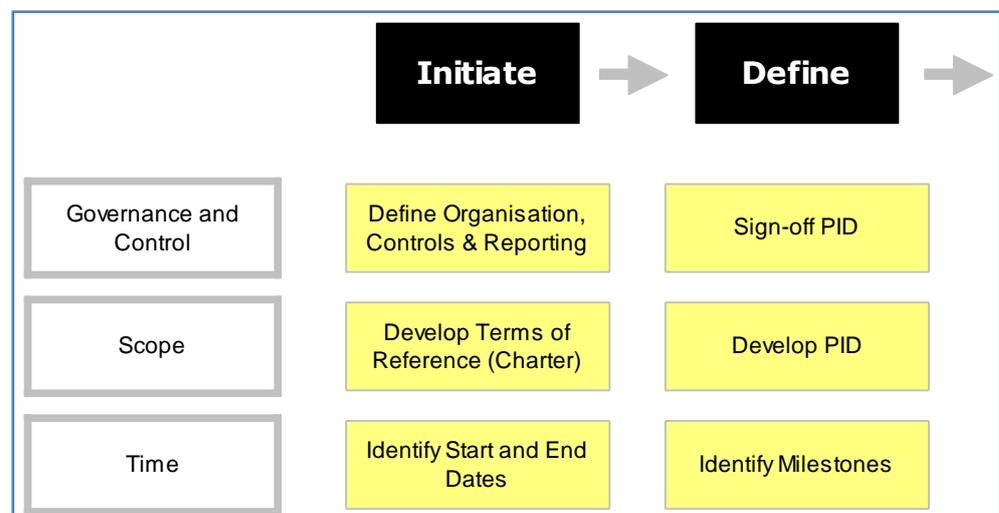
Project Processes

One way of considering all the things that need to be done from start to end of a project is to create a process model. But, to make it more useful, we can present this as a two-dimensional picture of process steps linking project lifecycle stages and key strands of activity.

The eight strands of activity are:



An example (extract) from the top-left corner of the matrix is shown below. This example shows that, at the Initiation Stage, to meet a project's requirements for Governance and Control, you need to define the project organisation, reporting requirements and controls needed. You must also develop clear terms of reference and establish the project's start and end dates.



The full matrix is shown below using a six stage lifecycle model.

	Initiate	Define	Plan	Implement	Close	Review
Governance and Control	Define Organisation, Controls & Reporting	Sign-off PID	Sign-off Plans	Manage Changes & Take Corr. Actions	Sign-off Completion Report	Share Learning Organisation-wide
Scope	Develop Terms of Reference (Charter)	Develop PID	Define Scope using WBS	Monitor & Control Changes to Scope		
Time	Identify Start and End Dates	Identify Milestones	Define Activities, Sequence & Durations	Monitor & Control Schedule		
Cost	Develop Business Case	Define High-level Budget	Define Resources and Budget	Monitor & Control Costs	Close Contracts & Finalise Cost Reports	
Quality	Identify Key Deliverables	Define Deliverables and Quality Spec.	Develop Product Quality Plan	Monitor & Control Quality	Complete Product Quality Documentation	
Team	Appoint Sponsor & Project Manager	Appoint and Brief Project Team	Develop Project Team	Coach and Manage Project Team		Review Learning & Celebrate Success
Stakeholders and Communications	Initiate Stakeholder Plan (S/H Map)	Develop S/H and Comms Plans	Communicate with Stakeholders	Manage Stakeholders & Report Progress	Complete Hand-over & Communicate Compl.	
Risk	Identify High-level Risks	Define Risks and Mitigating Actions	Refine Risk Management Plan	Monitor and Manage Risks & Issues		

While the matrix doesn't explicitly define the order in which each of the activities has to be carried out, some are clearly sequential. There will inevitably be a degree of iteration between them, within each of the lifecycle stages.

You can use the model to provide a:

- Big picture view of required project activity
- Checklist to help manage progress in each lifecycle stage
- Framework for planning and delivering coaching and training to people involved in projects (different people will need skills appropriate to their role and dependent on the nature of the project)

The matrix shows how increasing levels of detail are added to plans as the life-cycle progresses and how the project moves from planning into monitoring and controlling.

Making it useful

For many people, process thinking isn't necessarily their most natural way of working, so you need to find ways to help them make use of tools such as the Project Process Model.

Very often, for training and workshops we convert the matrix into Stage Gate Checklists. For example, in the Initiation Stage the checklist might include:

Have you...	Yes	No	Comments
Defined the necessary organisation, controls and reporting needed by your project?			
Developed clear Terms of Reference?			
Specified the project's start and end dates?			
etc. etc.			

Another approach is to use the principles of the RACI Matrix to ensure everyone is clear who should be doing the activities at each stage. **RACI** defines who is **Responsible**, who is **Accountable**, who needs to be **Consulted** and who should be **Informed**. This can be set up in Word or Excel and might look like the following example:

Activity	Project	Owner	Project	Team	Cust-omer	Users
	Board		Mgr			
Define the necessary organisation, controls and reporting needed by your project	A	R			I	
Develop clear Terms of Reference		A, R	R		C	
Specify the project's start and end dates		A, R	C		C	

Note that only one person can be accountable (only one "A" in a row), but several may have responsibility for "doing" an activity (multiple "R"s).

Whatever you adopt it should be appropriate to the maturity of your organisation's approach to project management. Very mature, experienced and capable organisations are more likely to be able to take a strong process view. Less mature organisations may have to simplify how they enable people to see a project's processes and how they interact.

Remember, it's not about becoming a "process or project anorak", but there is a need for whole system thinking, particularly to ensure the right stakeholders are fully engaged at the right times.

So, our final challenge is "do you understand, and can you explain to the people involved, how your project processes fit together to help you deliver successful project outcomes"?

And, this takes us back to the quote at the top of this article: "*People plus Process equals Performance*".

Our track record

Our consultants have been helping organisations in the private and public sectors to manage and improve the way they set up and manage their projects for nearly two decades. We have supported a wide range of public and private sector clients to increase their project capabilities.

We are not wedded to a particular project methodology. We help clients identify their improvement goals and then develop an approach to achieve these; invariably ensuring their people develop the skills to make further improvements themselves.

Please contact us for more information about how we can help you to manage and improve your project capability.

SIMPLY, IMPROVEMENT...

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© 2009 Improvement Skills Consulting Ltd.
204 Blind Lane, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe HP10 9LE
Phone 07850 728506 • Fax 0871 221 5638
E info@improvement-skills.co.uk • W www.improvement-skills.co.uk