IMPROVEMENT SKILLS CONSULTING LTD.

"Simply, improvement…"

Project Management for "real people"

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This is not a textbook on Project Management; it brings together a number of our articles on the subject, plus guidance produced for a wide variety of training programmes and workshops. If you need more information or details of specific tools and approaches, please contact us.

Everyone needs to be a Project Manager

"At some point, planning needs to degenerate into real work".

Today's environment of change

Change is all around us and we work in an increasingly complex environment. Projects in one part of an organisation can often have a major impact on other parts of the organisation. Not so long ago, business planning was typically based on assumptions of reasonable stability and an expectation that next year would be pretty much like this year, plus or minus a few percent. Predictability underpinned many management decisions and it was easy to take "standard" approaches off the shelf and apply them to new situations.

Today's world is much more turbulent and unpredictable, resulting in a need for agility and rapid learning to ensure "what works" can be identified and implemented.

In the "old world", projects were typically managed with an understanding of the "QCT Triangle": Quality, Cost and Time were the three parameters that had to be managed.

Managing projects in the "new world" is far more complex. There needs to be a far greater awareness of the importance of Stakeholders (those people who can influence a project's success). Projects can no longer be disconnected from business objectives; resources are too scarce and projects need to be aligned with key priorities.

Additionally, people's time is constantly under pressure. Project teams may have to be "virtual", with no opportunity to "meet" other than electronically.

Within this context, we have to be more focussed on delivering performance improvements, on time and within budget.

Anyone, at any level, may be asked to lead a project team, or be a project team member. And, increasingly, there are aspects of most people's "day jobs" that require project management skills. The challenge is how to give people those skills, plus the confidence to use them and deliver successful projects.

Project Management is difficult!

Oh no, it's not, despite what many "professional" Project Managers might want you to believe!

Over the past few years our consultants have been facilitating projects and delivering Project skill-development workshops in a variety of organisations in both the private and public sectors. The one thing that characterises all these workshops, irrespective of the client, is the focus on learning new skills by working on real, live projects.

We firmly believe that learning about project management should not be a theoretical exercise, nor should it become a memory test aimed at passing an exam.

We have found there has been an enormous demand in both the public and private sectors to give people, at all levels, practical skills to manage projects (big and small), so that changes can be implemented effectively. This needs to be done in a way that doesn't stifle creativity, yet provides some structure and control – a difficult balance to strike.

Here we want to describe the approach we have developed and how it has engaged, motivated and built project capabilities across hundreds of people, at all levels.

The approach draws on many examples of good practice in the field of Project Management, adapted to meet specific clients' needs. We're not obsessed with a particular methodology; we're more interested in what is likely to work in a given situation, recognising the prevailing culture, capabilities and improvement objectives.

What do people need to learn?

All our skill-development assignments start with a definition of the desired Learning Objectives.

For Project Management, these usually include the following. People should be able to:

- Explain what a Project is and the characteristics of successful projects
- Describe the key stages in a typical Project life-cycle
- Explain the roles and responsibilities of a Project Manager and how to manage a Project Team, within an overall project governance framework
- Develop a definition and scoping document for a Project
- Identify key stakeholders and plan how to manage those relationships
- Apply Change Control and Risk Management to a Project
- Use some basic project planning and control tools
- Understand and apply the leadership and behavioural skills needed for projects to succeed

The challenge is to create a learning and workshop process that demonstrates the benefits of a structured approach to Project Management by allowing people to work creatively on their own projects. Everyone should come out of the process

having moved their projects on and with the confidence to sustain its momentum through to the point of delivering tangible benefits.

We do have one key principle that we suggest clients should apply as a pre-requisite for anyone attending workshops. Everyone should have a live project to work on, or should be starting one very soon. The design of the learning process assumes that participants will be able to work on, and add value to, their own live projects, during the workshops.

A second principle that we apply is that there should be as much emphasis on the soft skills required for successful project management (e.g. leadership, communications, teamwork) as on the "technical" skills (planning, managing risk, change control). This means we are able to avoid the pitfalls of many other "project training courses" where the focus often seems to be on "process" and choosing the right templates to fill in.

The learning process for a typical approach with 3 workshop days involves the following stages:

- pre-work: identifying a current project and gathering available information on it
- days 1 and 2: learning the project approach and applying some basic tools to define and plan the project
- practice: a 4-week gap, back at work, to apply the learning to the project
- day 3: presenting back the achievements, building some of the soft skills and learning further tools for managing the project
- return to work: implementing the action plan developed during the workshop days and completing delivery of the project

What about the methodology?

We've already said that we're not obsessed with a particular methodology, but we do adopt recognised good practices to help people deliver successful projects.

We always introduce the principles of a Project Life-cycle (the typical stages through which every project progresses). We've designed 4, 5 and 6 stage life-cycle models to meet different client needs. The number of stages doesn't really matter; it's the principles that are important and the activities that need to be carried out to progress to a successful outcome.

Our life-cycle models cover:

- Initiating a project: taking a project idea and turning it into something viable
- Defining a project: developing a clear statement of objectives and scope, along with initial analysis of stakeholders and risks
- Planning a project: turning the definition into a detailed plan, with the help of a team
- Implementing a project: turning the plan into action and actually delivering what is required
- Closing a project: ensuring the implemented solution is handed over to "business as usual" and that benefits are being realised
- Reviewing a project: identifying and sharing the learning points so that future projects can be run more effectively

Within each of the project life-cycle stages, we introduce relevant, practical tools and techniques to help people with the "technical" aspects of running their projects and the "people" skills required to ensure all stakeholders are engaged and supportive.

In our experience, it's sometimes the simplest of tools that make the biggest difference. For example, spending time to understand the difference between a project objective and a project deliverable is almost always important. We have met many people who think that deliverables are actually objectives! So, it's not surprising then that their projects fail to identify, or measure, desired outcomes and real business benefits. (IT projects often fall into that trap).

We help people cut through the jargon and get to the heart of running successful projects.

The benefits

Because participants come to our workshops with a current (or planned) project and make real progress with it during the learning process, the feedback is invariably very positive. People feel they have really achieved something, either in clarifying what they need to do and planning to get it done, or identifying and addressing the issues that have been hindering progress so far.

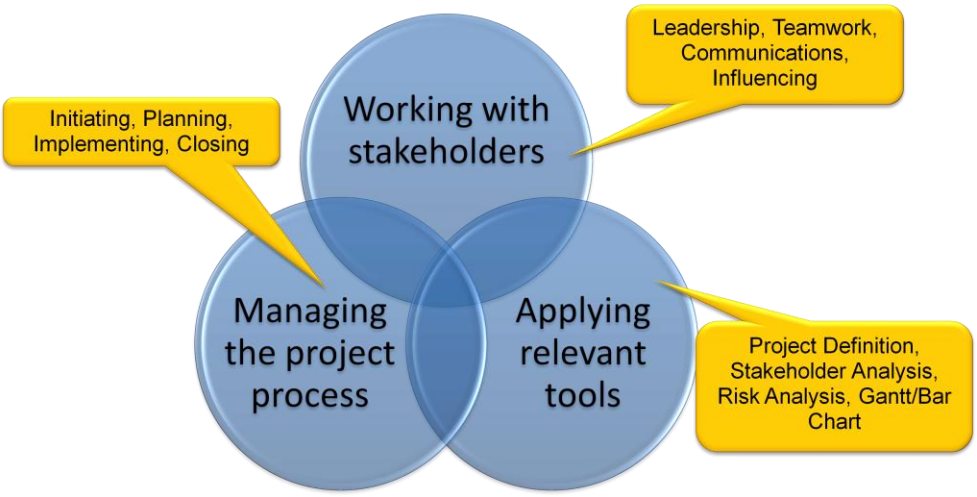
It might not be true to say that "everyone needs to be a Project Manager". However, it's certainly our experience that people who have been given some basic understanding of project skills and had the opportunity to apply them can be significantly more effective in carrying out their jobs. After all, defining what you need to achieve, setting a plan and managing resources, are relevant skills in most jobs.

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).

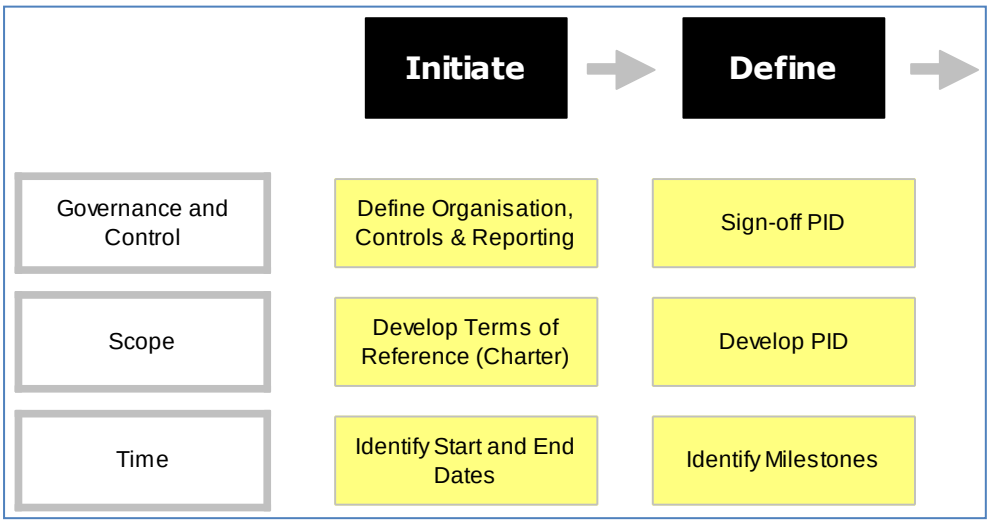
Project Processes

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.

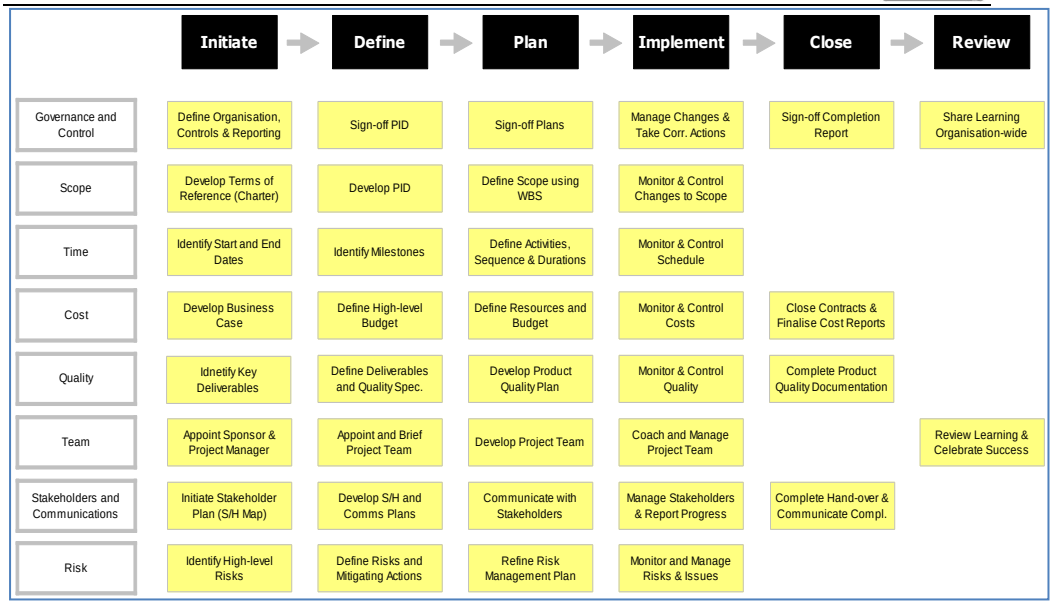
The eight strands of activity are:

- Establish governance and control
- Define and manage scope
- Define and manage time
- Define and manage cost
- Define and manage quality
- Develop and manage the project team
- Manage stakeholders and communication
- Identify and manage risk

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	Idnetify 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 Board	Owner	Project Mgr	Team	Cust-omer	Users
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 section: "*People plus Process equals Performance*".

Project Initiation: Keeping it simple!

"We try to fall behind in our projects as soon as we can. That way, we have longer to catch up." [Anon.]

Designed to fail?

Why is it that so many organisations fail to set up their change and improvement projects in a way that improves the chances of delivering something useful?

We've worked with numerous clients and been asked to help get projects kicked off effectively, or get them back on track after they've stalled. Often it's the simplest elements of setting up a Project that cause the most confusion.

Most organisations these days have a project methodology, or lifecycle model, that they use to run projects. In the public sector PRINCE2 is popular, but there are plenty of other perfectly good models.

All these models typically take projects through lifecycle stages that include:

- Initiation – setting up the project at its inception
- Definition – creating a clear statement of what needs to be achieved, by when, with what resources
- Planning – detailed development of plans (time, resources, quality requirements)
- Implementation – the "doing" stage
- Close-out – wrapping up the project and transferring solutions to "business as usual"
- Review – identifying learning points to build into future projects

In this section we want to focus on some of the basics to help ensure a project is initiated successfully.

Let's set up a project!

Those who come up with the bright idea for a project may not be the people who have to run it and deliver solutions. So, the ability to turn the bright idea into something that can be run as a project (by someone else) is a critical stage.

It's not unusual to need two separate stages of "Initiation" and "Definition", unless there is sufficient information available right at the start for a clear definition to be produced. You might know the initiation stage document as a Project Charter, Project Mandate, or Terms of Reference. For the purposes of this section we will refer to it as a Project Initiation Document (PID). The more detail you can provide, the more likely it is to be a Project Definition Document. In some ways

the name doesn't matter: it's not about filling in forms, it's about being clear about what the project has to achieve.

At this stage, you need clarity and focus. A 20 page PID is not going to be read by many people and, in our experience, it's likely that project sponsors or managers will be too confused by excessive project jargon to produce anything of value. Here's what you need and some examples of where people go wrong.

Project Objectives

Write a one line statement (or a few concise bullets) that specifies what the project is trying to achieve. Objectives should begin with the word "To…"; e.g.

- To reduce time to respond to complaints by 50%, by November 2008
- To increase income by £50k, by 31/03/09

Ideally, they should be SMART, or be capable of being made SMART once further definition work has been done. SMART = Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. If you can track achievement against the objective on a graph, then it's probably a SMART objective.

They don't contain words such as *"optimise", "maximise", "minimise"* and they don't have deadlines such as *"Autumn"* or *"Quarter 3"*. They certainly aren't *"ongoing"*.

They should **not** describe what you plan to do, how you plan to do it, or what you plan to produce.

The only type of project where you probably cannot write a SMART objective is a scoping, or feasibility project, where the aim is to deliver a recommendation or report.

So, objectives must define desired benefits, outcomes or performance improvements that you expect from the project. What you need to measure on your project will naturally fall out of the definition of good objectives.

For some advice on setting objectives in a Policy-making environment, see the notes at the end of this section.

What's the problem?

Sometimes, a good place to start on a PID is a definition of the organisational problem you are trying to solve. It can be easier than going straight to objective setting. Identify the current performance issues that have caused the project to be initiated in the first place. Not all projects set out to solve problems, so if you're working on an opportunity, describe that instead.

You can then use these statements to focus on setting SMART objectives (what would "good" look like?").

Project Deliverables

These may also be called "outputs" or "products". Too many Project Initiation Documents specify Deliverables as their objectives. Deliverables are only produced in order to enable achievement of the objectives.

An objective "To implement a new xyz IT system" is not an objective. What is the expected organisational benefit here? If you can see it, feel it, file it, trip over it, or put it on a shelf, it's probably a deliverable, not an objective! You won't be able to draw it on a graph.

Many IT and Facilities projects suffer from having deliverables expressed as objectives. The result is that the focus of the project is on delivering "stuff", rather than improving organisational performance.

One PID that I saw in a public sector organisation only had one deliverable listed: "A PID". That rather misses the point, doesn't it, and suggests an obsession with "process", rather than achievement.

A Sponsor

Every project should have a single, named individual as a Sponsor. Their role is to be a champion for the project, set its overall direction and to help unblock any problems. The Sponsor may also represent the project at any governance groups (Project Board, Steering Group).

Without a Sponsor, you may struggle to get the support of senior stakeholders or to engage those who need to be actively involved.

Project Manager

Who will lead the project on a day-to-day basis?

At the initiation stage you may not know who will be on the project team; often that will be a task for the Project Manager to work through, with agreement if necessary from the Sponsor and Steering Group.

Stakeholder Analysis

At the PID stage, an initial identification of the project's stakeholders is useful to identify those who are likely to be supportive and those who might be less positive. Categorising stakeholders on a *Power and Interest Matrix* will help focus on who is really important and requires one-to-one engagement, who needs to be kept happy and who simply needs to be kept informed.

Remember, stakeholders' views change as the project progresses and new ones may emerge, so Stakeholder Analysis should not be a one-off initiation stage activity.

Timescales

Define the start and end dates for the project. You may also want to identify any known Milestones – key points in time at which something either needs to have finished, or be ready to start.

Scope

One of the potential problems with projects is that the scope may "creep" as different stakeholders ask for different, or additional, features of the outputs. Scope may be specified in terms of:

- Geography (e.g. sites, offices, locations)
- Products, services or processes
- People (e.g. grade, role)

It's usually helpful to define, based on early discussions with key stakeholders both what is in scope and what is out of scope. Agreeing what is out of scope helps you to manage expectations about what the project won't actually deliver.

Risks

At the initiation stage it's unlikely that much more than a few high-level (and obvious) risks can be identified and flagged up with any associated mitigating actions. The Project Manager and team will need to carry out a more rigorous Risk Analysis later.

Resources

If there is a fixed budget known at this stage, ensure it is recorded. More likely, there will only be an indicative budget which will need to be firmed up and agreed later.

Identify any other specific resource requirements such as equipment, facilities or people that may be required during the project.

Assumptions

If you've made any assumptions, write them down. They will help readers of the PID understand some of the rationale for what you're proposing. They can be tested and revised later.

Project Initiation Document	
Project Name:	
Project Objectives:	
Problem to be solved (or opportunity):	
Project Deliverables:	Scope (inside/outside):
Assumptions:	Key Stakeholders:
Project Sponsor:	Project Manager:
Team Members:	
Key Milestones:	Date:
Risks:	
Budget, Resources or Constraints:	
Project Approval Date:	
Signed:	

The KISS Principle

KISS = Keep it simple, stupid. Writing a PID should follow that principle and it's clearly a case of "less is more".

The aim should be to get a clear statement of what the project needs to achieve, with what resources, by when. This should be in a format that aids understanding and enables those who may need to approve the project to have the information they need, concisely.

Objective-setting in a Policy environment

Having worked on projects in a variety of Policy areas across the public sector we feel it worth commenting on how the initiation and definition of such projects differs from projects run in an operational or back-office area.

Most organisations try to adopt the principle of SMART Objectives when initiating projects. This can be readily applied to operational and back-office processes where a project's purpose is usually directly related to a measurable performance parameter, such as cost, time or quality. In other words, it's easy to set a SMART Objective such as "To reduce the error rate in the ABC process by 15% by dd/mm/yy".

However, in a Policy environment, projects rarely result in direct performance improvement; their focus is on producing an output (a deliverable such as a new Policy, a set of Recommendations, or even a set of appraised Options). Performance improvement ONLY happens if somebody else, usually outside the Policy-making organisation, adopts the output and implements it.

Therefore SMART Objective thinking needs to be adapted for the Policy environment. This usually means significantly more effort is required at the scoping stage, in order to establish clear stakeholder requirements and expectations. These can then be used as a basis for defining "what would success look like" for this Policy project. So, rather than SMART Objectives specifying "measurable" levels of performance, they typically have to focus on aspects such as "acceptance", "approval", "adoptability" and "compliance" (by a given deadline).

We strongly believe one of the main challenges for people managing projects in a Policy environment is how well they engage with the potential users of their outputs and how well they understand how these people are likely to use them and for what benefit.

Identifying Objectives & Measurements

"No matter how many times you weigh the pig, it won't get fatter." [Anon.]

What should I measure?

We are asked regularly to help Project Sponsors, Managers and teams with their approach to measurement of improvement and benefits. For some reason people seem to find it hard to decide what they need to measure. The basic principle for choosing measurements is:

- First, decide what you're trying to achieve, then decide what you need to measure

The point is that measurements should track achievement against your objectives; it's not simply about identifying things you could measure. It's also worth remembering the following rules:

- Don't identify a list of possible measurements unless you have a way of gathering and recording the data
- Don't gather the data unless you are going to analyse them to understand what they tell you about current performance, trends and variations
- Don't analyse the data unless you plan to act on the analysis to improve performance

This article is not about how to design or use a Balanced Scorecard, but it discusses how the framework can be used as a basis for deciding what to measure, for example when you are setting up a project. The approach is equally applicable to problem solving, improvement and innovation projects. Furthermore, the principles can be really helpful when thinking through and identifying possible benefits that might result from a project.

Balanced Measurement

The Balanced Scorecard is a framework for performance management and one element of that is the identification of performance indicators (measurements). The "classic" Balanced Scorecard has four perspectives in which an organisation might set its objectives…

Using the framework at an organisational level requires a balanced set of objectives and measurements across all four perspectives, comprising both leading and lagging indicators.

However, at a much simpler level, it can also be used to help identify what you might need to measure for any project. It can provide a helpful "starter for ten" checklist covering all the main areas for potential measurements. Let's look at each measurement area…

Financial Measures

These, unsurprisingly, boil down to two main areas for measurement:

- Revenue
- Cost

Every other financial measure is really just a different way of stratifying one of these, or is a calculation based on them. Some examples:

	Example measurements	Example stratification or calculation
Revenue	Sales (£) Sales Growth Rate (£ p.a.)	- By Customer, Segment, Market, Risk-exposure type - By Product, Service
Cost	Fixed, Variable (£) Direct, Indirect (£)	- By Cost type - Per Unit, or per transaction - As % of Revenue
Profit	ROI, ROCE Cash-to-cash Cycle Time	- Working Capital ratios (Debtors, Creditors, Stocks, WIP) - Payback, Rate of Return

So, most projects with financial objectives would need to measure either revenue, cost or profit benefits.

Customer Measures

These are measures of "Effectiveness" – assessing whether or not you are doing the right thing, compared with Financial measures which are more likely to focus on "Efficiency" – doing things right.

The generic measures here are:

- Customer Satisfaction (with product, service and relationship; including Complaints)
- Customer Acquisition/Retention/Attrition
- Customer (Market) Share
- Reputation/Brand/Image
- Product/Service Performance (e.g. vs. specification)

While many of the Customer Satisfaction and Reputation measures will often be perception-based, the majority of the others will be objective.

Process Measures

Given that we have already covered cost in the Financial checklist and product/service quality is covered under Customers, the main areas for measurement here are:

Measurement type	Examples
Volume	- Input volume (e.g. Demand) - Output volume (e.g. Yield) - Capacity/Throughput
Time	- Processing time (e.g. per step) - Cycle-time (e.g. end-to-end) - Response Time (e.g. Mean Time to Repair)
Quality	- Accuracy/Error Rate/Right First Time/Re-work/Mean Time Between Failures/DPMO - Process Capability/Sigma Level

Learning and Growth Measures

These measures relate to an organisation's capability to innovate, learn, grow and develop. There are four main areas for potential measurement:

- People (satisfaction, motivation, alignment and capability)
- Knowledge and Information (availability, usage, accuracy, security)
- Technology (availability, usage, reliability)
- Innovation (quantity, value, rate)

Many of the People measures will be perception-based, but the majority of the rest are likely to be objective.

Using the framework

The four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard provide an ideal starting point to consider what you might need to measure if you want to track improvement and benefits resulting from your projects. There is obviously a danger of trying to measure too many things and it is important to recognise that there is a cost associated with measurement.

Our advice to Project Managers is to try to focus on one or two key objectives, each of which must have a clearly defined means of measurement. A project's objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound); using the Scorecard framework helps make them measureable. There may be a wide range of other potential benefits expected from a project and it is essential to be realistic about what these might be, how they can be measured and how they will be realised. The range of other benefits expected from a project may well cover all four of the Scorecard perspectives. In summary, the Balanced Scorecard provides a useful framework to help project teams to identify their objectives and measurements, plus develop a clear understanding of the range of expected benefits.

Project Organisation and Leadership

Project Organisation

A Project is a temporary organisation set up to achieve specific outcomes at a defined point in time, with agreed resources. As such, it requires some key roles to be defined, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities.

You may hear a number of slightly different terms being used and it will be worth clarifying what your role is in any project which you have been asked to participate in.

If there are many projects running together, you may also have a Project or Programme Board, who are responsible for co-ordination between each project and overall governance. This might include:

- Setting priorities and balancing resources between projects
- Monitoring progress based on regular reports from the Sponsor and Manager
- Giving approvals to progress between project stages
- Assessing risks and issues across multiple projects and taking an organisational, strategic perspective of them and what needs to be done

<u>The Project Sponsor:</u>

- Is the driving force behind a project
- Is someone with the "clout" to make it happen
- Has overall accountability for the project's success
- Represents the project at the Project Board (or at Management level)
- Provides leadership and guidance to the Project Manager and Team

<u>The Project Manager:</u>

- Leads the project on a day-to-day basis
- Is responsible for ensuring the project delivers against its objectives and plans
- Motivates, coaches and manages the individual team members
- Reports progress to the Sponsor

If you're the Project Manager, key questions to ask are:

- Who do you need to report to?
  - Stakeholders?
  - Project Sponsor?
  - Project Board?

- What do you need to report?
  - Progress/Achievements
  - Exceptions/Variances
  - Changes/Issues/Risks
- How often?
- In what format?

Project Management vs. Line Management

What is the difference between the two?

Probably the main difference is that when you are managing a project you may not have any line authority over the stakeholders or team members. Therefore, getting their buy-in and co-operation can be more challenging.

The Project Team:

- Apply their knowledge, skills and capabilities to ensure the success of the project
- Are individuals who work co-operatively to achieve the project's objectives by carrying out its activities, on time and to budget

Project Team Selection

As a Project Manager, you may have the "luxury" of being able to select your own team, but more commonly you will find that certain people are "given" to you, or are available. It helps to understand what an effective team looks like and how to select one.

Effective teams:

- Achieve high performance vs. the project's objectives
- Are creative and innovative
- Are committed to achieve results and to the team
- Communicate effectively, internally and externally
- Trust each other and resolve conflicts
- Have clear roles and effective leadership
- Have high energy and high morale
- Learn and develop, while working together on the project

Many people will have heard of the research work of Dr. Meredith Belbin who identified a number of "Team Roles" which are required in successful teams. A Team Role is a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way. Belbin identified nine Team Roles:

- **Action-oriented roles**
  - Shaper – driver and challenger
  - Implementer – turns ideas into actions
  - Completer Finisher – gets things done
- **People-oriented roles**
  - Co-ordinator – good chair-person
  - Team-worker – helps the team work together
  - Resource Investigator – networker and researcher
- **Cerebral roles**
  - Plant – creative, idea generators
  - Monitor Evaluator – assesses options, good judge
  - Specialist – provides particular knowledge or skills

Belbin's view is that effective teams require a mixture of all nine roles in order to be successful. That doesn't mean you need nine people on your project team, but you ought to have people who can cover all nine roles. You can find out more about Team Roles and how to assess your own and other people's preferred roles at www.belbin.com.

You may want to use a Team Selection Matrix to help identify who you need on your team and what skills they bring. List the knowledge and skills needed on one side and the potential team members on the other side; then match people with skills.

It is also helpful to recognise that teams don't automatically start working well together. They evolve through a series of well-recognised stages:

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

Teams come together (Forming), often unclear about their task and individual roles, but move into a "Storming" stage where people try to get their views across about what they think should be done. Eventually, norms of behaviour and working emerge, which then enables the team to "perform" and get the task done together. Finally, at the end of a project, the team disbands and people go back to their other roles, or move on to new projects.

Each of the stages demands a different leadership style, where the focus on people and task varies. At the Forming stage, people need clear direction from the project manager. During Storming, the project manager has to sell, influence and persuade. By the time the team has established norms and is performing successfully, the project manager's role changes to more participation and delegation.

Managing Risks

Risks are the things that might go wrong during a project, causing it to fail to achieve its objectives. All projects have risks associated with them. Risk Analysis attempts to identify the major risks and put in place plans to avoid them, or minimise their impact. You will never be able to identify every possible risk, or be able to deal with every single one that you do identify. You may need to repeat your Risk Analysis at key times throughout the Project Lifecycle (and you may already have had to do one in the Initiation Stage).

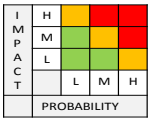
There is a whole range of potential risk areas which may be relevant a project:

- Reputation/Brand
- Product Liability
- Technical
- Business/Financial
- People
- Health & Safety
- Environmental
- Security
- Political

The key steps in carrying out a Risk Analysis are shown below. It's well worth involving a range of stakeholders in Risk Analysis; they will often haven a good view of what might go wrong (based on past experience!!!).

1. Identify things that might go wrong during the project
    - Typically, generate a list of potential failures
2. Evaluate these by assessing both their Probability and Impact on a scale of 0 – 10, or High-Medium-Low.
    - Draw on your own past experience and that of other people/organisations
3. Identify the likely root causes of the highest risks
    - Focus on the high risks first
4. Identify actions to avoid, reduce, control or transfer the risks identified
    - Develop Preventative actions
    - Produce Contingency Plans

Risk/Potential Failure	Prob. H/M/L	Impact H/M/L	Overall Risk	Preventative Actions/ Contingency Plans
Technical interfaces don't work	*M*	*H*	Red	*Early pilot/testing*
Supplier misses key delivery milestone	*L*	*H*	Amber	*Regular reviews of progress vs. plan*
Staff drop out of training events	*M*	*L*	Green	*Schedule catch-up sessions*
Key staff get pulled off project	*L*	*M*	Green	*Identify deputies*
etc.				



Your risk management plan should describe what you plan to do to prevent the identified risks from happening (if you can), as well actions to deal with the risks if they do occur.

Project Planning

You can plan in any way that suits you:

- A "To Do" List
- Bar Charts
- Mind Mapping
- Flipcharts and Yellow Sticky notes
- The back of an envelope

But, if you want to communicate it to others, use something that is visual and easy to understand.

There is always a range of levels at which you can plan. During the Initiation Stage of a project, you are planning, but at a very high level. As the project progresses, the level of detail increases and additional tools and techniques can be used to help.

Key tasks and milestones can be identified from the Project Definition. These need to be defined in terms of when they must happen and if there are any inter-dependencies. Finally, detailed activities can be planned, together with the specific resources required to achieve them.

Milestone Planning

Milestones are important, defined, events which either have to start at a particular time, or have to end at a particular time. Therefore, they can be used to produce an overall view of key project timescales. This might be as simple as a Milestone Chart where you list the milestones, who is responsible for achieving them and their planned and actual dates. This provides a fairly simple way of reporting progress to Sponsors and senior managers.

Milestone	Resp.	Original Date	Forecast Date	Actual Date
Business Requirements Agreed	NK	30/10	30/10	30/10
ITT Issued	AL	3/11	3/11	3/11
Supplier Selected	KL	15/12	7/1	
Pilot Launched	JT	20/2	28/2	
Roll-out Completed	NK	30/6	14/7	
Performance Reviewed	AL	15/9	30/9	

Milestones should be expressed in the form: Noun plus Verb (past tense); i.e. "stuff done". Milestone Planning:

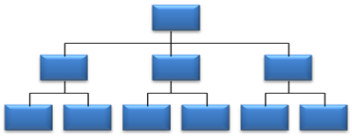
- Gives an overview of the project, at a high level
- Focuses on important start, completion, or decision points

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)

Milestones tell you "when" something must have happened and a Work Breakdown Structure enables you to describe "what" tasks have to be done to get you to a Milestone.

You can break the tasks down to lower levels of detail (activities) – 3 levels are often enough. Level 1 is the name of your project, Level 2 sets out the main chunks of work and Level 3 lists the "packages" of work that could be delegated.

1. Implement New Finance System
    - 1.1 Develop Requirements
        - 1.1.1 Identify Business Requirements
        - 1.1.2 Identify User Requirements
    - 1.2 Procure System
    - 1.3 Plan Implementation
        - 1.3.1 Run Pilot
        - 1.3.2 Review Pilot
        - 1.3.3 Plan Roll-out
    - 1.4 Implement System
        - 1.4.1 Roll-out System
        - 1.4.2 Monitor Implementation
        - 1.4.3 Review Performance



The WBS can be used to allocate "work packages" to individuals, or teams, who will do that piece of work. Each package can then be monitored and controlled as a separate area of responsibility.

Note, however, that the WBS still does not show any dependencies between different packages. For that, you need a Project Bar Chart (Gantt Chart).

Resourcing

Resources are often scarce (People, money, equipment, facilities). You may need the same resource to work on activities that could be done in parallel. Consider:

- What resources do you need in order to deliver the Work Breakdown Structure?
- When are those resources available?
- Where are those resources available?
- What resource or task conflicts are there?
- What influence do Stakeholders have on resource availability?

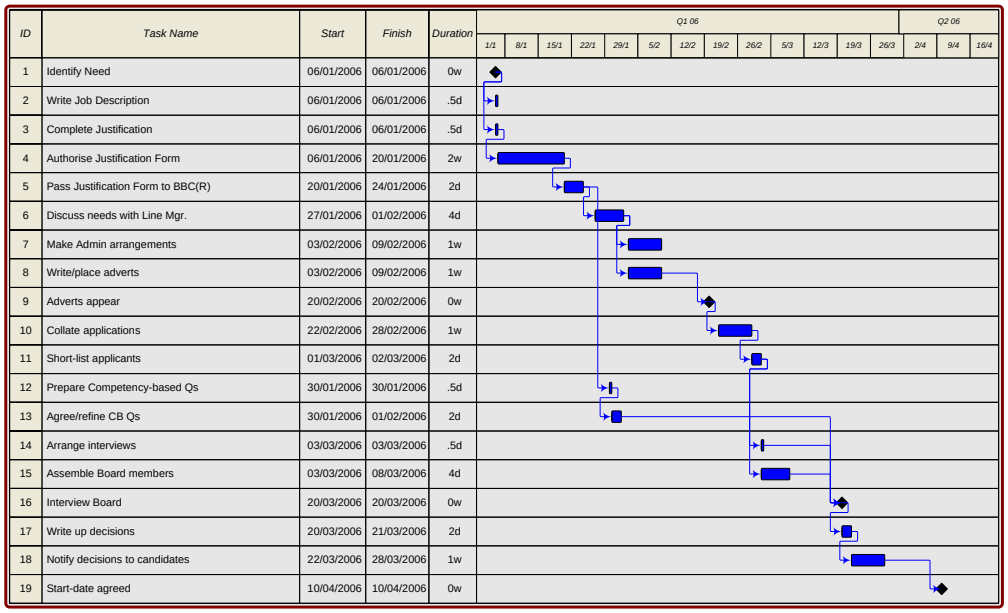
For each activity:

- Identify the specific resource(s) it will need
- Estimate its duration (how long will it take to do it?)
- Identify whether or not it is dependent on another activity

- Decide when its earliest possible start time would be
- Decide when its latest possible finish time must be

Gantt or Bar Charts

Most projects will need a Bar Chart to show what activities need to be done and when they need to be done.



ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Duration
1	Identify Need	06/01/2006	06/01/2006	0w
2	Write Job Description	06/01/2006	06/01/2006	.5d
3	Complete Justification	06/01/2006	06/01/2006	.5d
4	Authorise Justification Form	06/01/2006	20/01/2006	2w
5	Pass Justification Form to BBC(R)	20/01/2006	24/01/2006	2d
6	Discuss needs with Line Mgr.	27/01/2006	01/02/2006	4d
7	Make Admin arrangements	03/02/2006	09/02/2006	1w
8	Write/place adverts	03/02/2006	09/02/2006	1w
9	Adverts appear	20/02/2006	20/02/2006	0w
10	Collate applications	22/02/2006	28/02/2006	1w
11	Short-list applicants	01/03/2006	02/03/2006	2d
12	Prepare Competency-based Qs	30/01/2006	30/01/2006	.5d
13	Agree/refine CB Qs	30/01/2006	01/02/2006	2d
14	Arrange interviews	03/03/2006	03/03/2006	.5d
15	Assemble Board members	03/03/2006	08/03/2006	4d
16	Interview Board	20/03/2006	20/03/2006	0w
17	Write up decisions	20/03/2006	21/03/2006	2d
18	Notify decisions to candidates	22/03/2006	28/03/2006	1w
19	Start-date agreed	10/04/2006	10/04/2006	0w

In this example, the activities are listed in the "Task Name" column and bars are drawn to represent the start, duration and end times for each activity. Milestones appear as a "Diamond" shape as they have zero duration. For many relatively simple projects, Microsoft Excel is a suitable tool to use to produce a Bar Chart.

Some activities may have a dependency on other activities. For example, in the WBS example earlier, you can't "review the pilot" until you have "run the pilot". In many cases, the dependency will be like this: one activity can't start until another one has ended. There may be cases though where activities have to start in parallel, or finish at the same time. The arrows connecting activities on a Bar Chart indicate dependencies.

For many projects you will need to plan from "End to Start" – you know the deadline and therefore all the work has to be fitted in to achieve that date. Use your known Milestones to plan in other "fixed" points and then schedule the activities around these (subject to available resources).

Share the project plan with appropriate stakeholders so they understand what will happen and when. This is particularly important if you are working with external partners and suppliers. They need to know how their work fits with other people's and the impact of any slippage.

Managing Implementation

Tracking progress

The Project Manager has overall responsibility for monitoring and controlling what happens during the implementation stage of the project. Key questions to ask include:

- Are deliverables being produced when they are needed?
- Are they performing as required?
- Are budgets being over, or under-spent?
- Are budgets being spent when they were planned to?
- Are suppliers and partners doing what they are expected to?
- Are project team members doing what they are expected to?

You can use the Milestone Plan and Bar Chart to track progress of activities and production of deliverables. Use your Budget to track planned and actual costs.

You will probably be required to produce regular progress reports to the Project Owner and to key stakeholders (e.g. Project Board, if there is one). Ideally, you will want to report achievements as well as progress against plans. If you set clear objectives and identified the expected tangible benefits, it's more likely that you will be able to demonstrate graphically, the new levels of performance being achieved as a result of the project.

Issues Management

Whereas "Risks" are problems that might arise in the future, an "issue" is a generic term for any matter which has arisen in the present and requires an answer. They may need to be tracked on an Issues Log and are evaluated in terms of their impact on Quality, Cost and Time. The Project Manager may make a decision on what action to take, or the Issue may need to be referred to the Project Sponsor (or Board). A Project Issue may be:

- A request for change
- An off-specification deliverable
- A question raised by a stakeholder
- A statement of concern

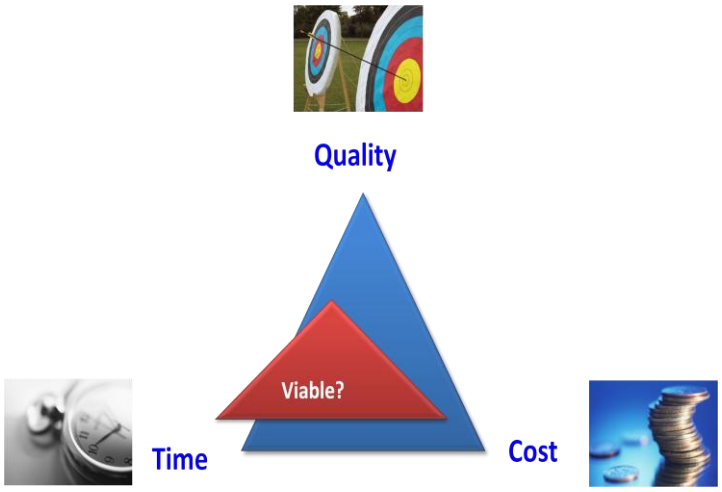
New issues may emerge throughout the project, so reviews of those already on the Issues Log and identification of new ones to add should be done regularly.

Risk Management

As a project progresses, risks emerge and the levels of threats to success may change. We have previously described the need to carry out a of Risk Analysis at the initiation and planning stages and, during implementation, it is particularly important to keep track of new or emerging risks.

Change Control

Things will inevitably change during the lifecycle of any project, so it's best to have a process to recognise, prioritise and deal with them. Change Control aims to assess the impacts of issues that arise during a project, or the effects of changes in scope, budget or schedule (Q, C, and T). If the potential changes are too great, a project may no longer be able to achieve its original objectives and may not be viable.



Closing a Project

The final elements in the project lifecycle are:

- Confirm achievement of all the desired objectives and benefits
- Confirm handover of all the planned deliverables
- Compare actual performance with your Success Criteria
- Identify learning points and share good practices and improvements for future projects
- Disband the project team/organisation
- Celebrate success

Project Handover

At the end of a project, the deliverables get handed over to the people who will have to use them on a day-to-day basis. It is they who will either make them work, or not. And, it is they who will contribute to achieving the planned benefits. If the deliverables aren't handed over in a "fit state", it is unlikely that the desired benefits will be realised. Not only that, but the success criteria of the project cannot possibly have been achieved.

To manage the handover:

- Prepare a checklist (refer to the original project plan - scope & deliverables)
- Hold a face-to-face meeting
- Identify areas of agreement
- Identify any "gaps" and a "snagging list"
- Agree a plan to address gaps, with clear responsibilities

Basically, you want to know that all the deliverables are doing what they should, that their recipients are happy with them and that there is a clear way of realising the project's desired benefits

You also need to consider documentation close-out:

- What documentation needs to be handed over to those people using your deliverables?
- What needs to be archived?
  - What retention policies need to be adopted?
- What sign-offs are required?
  - Project Board
  - Sponsor
  - Others?

Reviewing and Learning

In many cases project managers and their teams are so relieved to have "finished" their projects that they don't take the time to review the project and identify learning points for the future. You should identify:

- What went well?
- What could have been done differently/better?
- What are the lessons learnt?
- Who should you share the lessons learnt with?

Finally, celebrate success and disband the team.

Glossary

Bar Chart / Gantt Chart	A planning tool used to show the timing and dependencies of activities in a project.
Benefits	The positive impacts of changes brought about by a project. Ideally, they should be measureable. They may be financial (e.g. cost savings) or non-financial (e.g. increases in customer satisfaction).
Change Control	A means of deciding the importance of changes that occur during a project and how to deal with them (including documenting them).
Constraint	A boundary within which a project must operate (e.g. legislation).
Critical Path	The shortest path of activities from start to end of a project. Any delay on this path will delay the whole project.
Deliverable	A tangible output of a project. Final deliverables are handed over by a project to end-users (e.g. new software, a building, a redesigned process). Internal (or temporary) deliverables are created during a project (e.g. PDD, Business Case, Risk Log), often for review and approval.
Dependency	A linkage between one project and another (e.g. Project B depends on the work of Project A in order to succeed), or… A relationship between two activities within a project (e.g. Activity B can't start until Activity A has finished).
Governance	How a project will ensure benefits are delivered, stakeholders are managed, risks and issues are identified and addressed, quality is assured and resources are managed. Usually described in terms of roles/structures that need to be in place and arrangements for monitoring, reporting and controlling progress.
Issue	Something that has happened and which needs to be brought to the attention of the project (Manager or Team), to ensure it can continue to meet its objectives.
Milestone	A point in time at which some activity must start, or by when some activity must be completed. Expressed as a Noun + Verb [past tense] (e.g. Budget Approved, Hardware Installed).
Objective	What a project sets out to achieve, preferably expressed in SMART format (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). May also be called "Outcomes", or "Targets" and can be directly related to Benefits. Written in the form "To… [increase/decrease/improve/reduce…] [something]… by [amount/%]… by [dd/mm/yy].
Programme	A set of linked and aligned projects which, when managed together, deliver specific organisational benefits.

Project	A temporary organisation that is created to achieve a specific objective, at a defined point in time, using agreed resources.
Project Completion Report	Captures the learning from a project: what went well, what could be improved, how the learning could be applied to future projects.
Project Definition Document	The PDD summarises all the key information required when a project is set up. It may need to be approved before detailed planning starts.
Risk	Anything which might happen (in the future) and which would adversely affect the achievement of a project's objectives. Not to be confused with "Issues", which have already happened.
Scope	The boundaries of the project (e.g. products, processes, locations). May also define aspects which are specifically excluded from the project.
Stakeholder	Anyone (individuals or groups) who may have an interest in a project and can influence its success (positively or negatively).

Our track record

Our consultants have been helping organisations in the private and public sectors to manage projects and improve their project skills for nearly two decades.

We are not wedded to a particular 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.

It's no surprise that one of the programmes we designed is called "Managing Successful Projects". It does exactly what it says on the tin!

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

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