

Monograph Series: PM Methods Improvement Plan

The Project Management (PM) Methods Improvement Plan is part of a series of Monographs (focused whitepapers) published by Stacy Goff. We provide it for Customers of our project management methods, training, competence coaching, and consulting practices. We also use these methods to help our Customers adapt their own PM Methods, or our proprietary methods, such as **the Small Project Guide™** (our universal business improvement and project management method). Starting in 1999, we also made this monograph available to the public.

This document is more than a plan; it is a methodology for improving your project methods. You can use it to help improve your own PM Methods and processes, or in the selection of a public or commercial approach. It has helped thousands of companies in these two ways since 1987. For additional information about this plan, our *methods improvement* services, or our Project Management consulting and training services, contact:

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1. Overview

The Problem

Organizations implement new or modified PM Methods to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their project delivery. Yet, most implementations fail to provide all the expected benefits. Given that the total cost of updating your PM Methods can range from \$2,000 for small changes for a small organization to over \$8,000,000 for a larger one, it is crucial to make the most of that implementation. This monograph's purpose is to help you gain all the benefits you deserve.

A method consists of a methodology (repeatable process), and the competences, skills and tools needed to use it effectively. The right set of PM Methods can help to improve the quality, speed and PM Performance of your organization. But to implement new methods, you must plan well if you expect to gain the needed benefits. The Critical Success Factors listed below, together with use of this PM Methods Improvement Plan, will increase your success with your new methods.

In an era when many organizations are performing the majority of their work as projects, and a few have achieved the status of effective Project Performing Enterprises, improvement of PM Methods may be your strategic advantage.

The Myths

The greatest myths we've heard in methods improvement include:

- We bought our new methodology last week. Projects should be better by now.
 - I bought them the latest tools; they can learn to use them in their spare time.
 - We got them training. Why do you think they need support too?
 - My staff will use it – if they know what's good for them!
 - It's the best-rated and most-published approach, it must be good.
 - Our customer doesn't care about the way our Project Teams do things.
 - I've spent all I can afford just to buy the darn thing!
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Critical Success Factors

The Critical Success Factors for implementing **any** new set of PM Methods are:

- Understand your organization's PM effectiveness, using a maturity model, or other performance assessment, such as PRO, IPMA-USA's Performance Rated Organization assessment.
 - Establish baseline measures of productivity and customer satisfaction.
 - Clarify the roles, responsibilities, and rewards for your Sponsor, Customers, Resource Managers, Project Teams, and Project Management Office.
 - Select PM Methods that meet both current and future needs.
 - Evaluate and purchase appropriate automated tools that support the new processes you are implementing; then, provide coaching and support in them.
 - Schedule training in the use of all related topics: Business Analysis; the actual Methods; Project Management for all stakeholders; and related support tools.
 - Regularly evaluate and enhance the methods, provide updates and advanced topics training, and maintain mentoring, coaching and consulting support.
 - Maintain awareness at Executive and internal Customer Management levels about the purpose of the methods, and their expected benefits.
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The Promise

The purpose of this PM Methods Improvement Plan is to explode the myths and exploit your potential for improved Project effectiveness.

2. Prerequisites

Establish Re-requirements

Before you begin to implement any new PM Methods, you should identify and evaluate your requirements so you can be sure to select the right methods. **What results must they accomplish for you?** The evaluation and selection process is out of scope for this monograph, but is mentioned here because a successful implementation depends on it. Determine what your requirements are for new methods, and evaluate how different products meet those requirements.

Once you decide which methods meet your requirements, the next step is to ask if your organization is ready for the changes they require. If not, you would probably benefit more from coaching, consulting and training than from implementing any new methods.

Technology-Driven Dangers

One of the worst reasons for implementing new PM Methods is because you want to apply new technology; a current favorite is some sort of new project server, that (magically) provides complete enterprise-wide project status information, in the absence of any repeatable process, viable plans, or reliable status tracking. Beware!

Qualification

We use a series of qualification questions to assure that our Customers are ready to successfully implement new methods. Our aim is to assure that you will be successful in your implementation. Answer the questions below. Your responses help determine **whether** you are ready to implement new methods, or **which part** of your organization will be most successful in doing so.

- Are Managers committed to improving project success?
- Do you consistently use your existing methods?
- Do you have (internal) Customer participation and ownership in projects?
- Will Project Managers and team members agree (and change) to a different way of doing business?
- Is your project climate healthy, with open communication and a can-do attitude?

If you meet all these criteria, you have already overcome the reasons most organizations fail to implement their new methods. If you failed one or two, you can still be successful; consulting services can still help you through the implementation.

For organizations that fail more than two criteria, we recommend a combination of consulting and training before even trying to implement new PM Methods.

Note that answering these questions not only shows you where your strengths and weaknesses are. They also satisfy several of the Critical Success Factors, mentioned in the Overview. Or, you can use the questions to decide *which part* of your organization has the greatest chances of success in methods improvement.

Appropriate Sequence

Many organizations attempt to improve PM Performance by buying new technology tools. So many times, we've taken calls, asked questions, finding that they've bought the tools, and ran into problems "getting them to work." In the 1980s we developed the sequence for the appropriate sequence for implementation of PM improvements.

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2. Prerequisites, continued

Appropriate Sequence, continued

1. **Establish Enabling Policies**, that maximize PM Performance. Examples include those that tie portfolio management to organization strategies, establish the priority of projects, guide the allocation of talent to top-priority projects, and in some of the best cases, identify how key project participants' ongoing work responsibilities will be handled by others for the project duration.
2. **Set Clear Roles and Responsibilities**: Assure involvement of the right internal customers in the right activities and results, at the right time of the project. Identify responsibilities of Middle Managers; we find that "managers in the middle" who follow through on their responsibilities in a timely way are a differentiator for performing project organizations.
3. **Apply Appropriate Process**: Here is where methods or methodologies can help. But note, this is the third step, not the first. See our article, *What Is A PM Methodology? A Search for Efficiency, Consistency, and Performance*, for an entire range of recommendations for making this step work for you.
4. **Add Enabling Technology**. Note that this should be the last step. While it is essential (teams will not adapt to new roles and processes without some accelerating aid), it is important to assure that you end with this step, rather than beginning with it. This does not necessarily mean that you ignore this step until the end; you should collect your requirements and investigate options from the beginning of the sequence.

We explore this appropriate sequence of implementation improvements below.

1. Enabling Policies

Here is an example of a key enabling policy: *All projects of a certain size and greater shall have a viable project plan, with a schedule that is appropriately staffed, has precedent relationships for each activity, and that the team will use as a baseline for tracking.*

Here are a few more, from our coaching sessions for WiSDM internal consultants:

1. Projects will not begin until the IT and Business team members are available at the right level of effort (as recommended in WiSDM for the size, Small Medium and Large, of project).
2. Large Projects have full-time involvement from key team members, and the Project Manager has input into team member evaluation. The Project Manager can move team members to an offsite control room.
3. All project team members, including business associates, will complete time sheets on a daily basis, submitted weekly. Hours spent shall be reported at the project/activity assignment level. Technical experts who are not assigned to teams, but review project results will also post their time to the project/activity.
4. Each phase of projects larger than 1000 hours shall have a Change Budget, in a range from 5% to 10% of phase effort. Effort or cost consumed in evaluating and implementing Change Requests shall be charged to this Change Budget, and when it is exhausted, no additional requests can be processed until Phase end.

The result of enabling policies: A project environment that encourages success.

2. Prerequisites, continued

2. Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Too often we see methods that fail to identify the responsibilities of each role. Some fail to even include such crucial roles as Sponsor (or Project Executive), key managers who make prioritization and allocation decisions, and internal and external Customers or Clients. In reviewing project plans we continually point out the risk/threats these omissions present.

How do these stakeholders know what is expected of them? How much time it will take? Unless they are very experienced, they don't, and become a failure point. Thus your methods must identify all the responsibilities each person filling one or more roles should sign up for. The list below shows the Sponsor responsibilities from our universal PM method:

See the effective Sponsor's Responsibilities, in the left column of Appendix A. Do your Sponsors consistently "sign up" for these responsibilities? Will your other key stakeholders commit, and then follow through on theirs? Our experience is that the levels of management above the project team has more impact on project (and methods improvement) success than all steps the project teams can take.

This is just one key example; but it shows that a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of key project stakeholders can be a great Risk Assessment/Risk Management approach.

3. Acquired, Adapted Processes

A Project Management Methodology does not produce project success. It merely provides the platform for competent Project Managers and key Stakeholders and Team Members to succeed. Yet there are a handful of characteristics that consistently differentiate effective and efficient methods from ineffective and weak or bloated ones. See our characteristics in the right column on Appendix A.

After reviewing the list, you might compare your current PM Methods to this list, and evaluate how well they demonstrate these characteristics. We are also interested in your suggestions for additions to the list. After all, most long-life methods are designed for tomorrow's needs, not just to correct the sins of the past.

Who is the user of today's PM Methodology? Stakeholders include Project Managers, Team Members, internal/external Customers, Project Management Offices, Sponsors, and Managers. In this list, each has some level of appropriate use. But the primary target for any methodology is those who perform work on the project, whether in managing it, making key decisions about it, or delivering the results.

And here is an irony: Even with the best methodologies, many target users tend to use it in full just the first 3-5 times. And the first several of those times, they are still learning it and not effectively applying it. After the fifth (or so) time they use it, most people have fully integrated the philosophy and approach. Thus the ideal PM Method should have approachable process explanations for beginners (and not overwhelming), yet be accessible enough for easy reference once each user, from new team members to Project Sponsor has used it several times, and has climbed the learning curve to Skills and Mastery (Competence).

2. Prerequisites, continued

4. Accelerating Technology Only after you have considered and evaluated the above steps should you look at the tools, or technology solutions you will apply, to accelerate use of your adopted methods. It is not that the tools are unimportant – they are essential. And, you need more than scheduling tools. You need portfolio planning tools, resource management tools, estimating tools, systems engineering tools, requirements and testing traceability tools, and many others.

The Accelerating Technology is important; but only in its correct sequence. And yet, as we wrote in Chapter 9 of Project Management Institute's book, *Project Management Circa 2025*, the vast majority of organizations are barely using the features of the leading edge PM tools from 25 years ago.

Why is this so? Because of their failure, in many cases, to consider Policies, Roles and Responsibilities, and Processes, before jumping into tools. For greater insight, see our book chapter, *Visions for the PM Software Industry*, at: https://stacygoff.com/assets/Visions_For_PM_Software. (one chapter in a book published by PMI, and reproduced on our website with their permission).

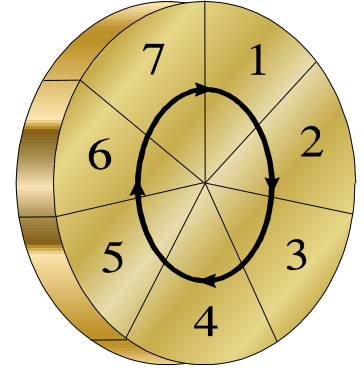
Once Qualified Once you qualify your organization (or a part of it), the next step is to develop a *plan* to maximize the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of your organization as you implement the methods improvement plan. That implementation is the focus of the remainder of this article.

3. The Process

The Big Picture

Methods improvement is a specialized type of project with a unique Phase Structure and activity list. The Methods Improvement Phases we suggest are:

1. Assess Your Organization
2. Acquire and Tune the Methods
3. Do Pilot Training
4. Run Pilot Projects
5. Do Rollout Training
6. Rollout Projects
7. Implement Advanced Applications and Support



You should modify and/or combine the Phases depending on the size of your organization. A 25 person Marketing start-up may have a different planning framework than a 500 person Aerospace Engineering organization. And just as with any project, you need to tailor the activities to meet your specific needs.

For each Phase, the PM Methods Improvement Plan presents an overview, highlights of the phase, sample problems you may encounter, and the suggested Critical Success Factors for each Phase. See Appendix B for the full Work Breakdown Structure for the PM Methods Improvement Plan.

Surprised?

Some people are surprised that we treat PM Methods Improvement as a project. Well, “we eat our own dog food.” Or, stated differently, we practice what we preach. And, this is not just because we are project managers. We are also change agents, and the organizational changes you are making are significant.

We have stated, in prior engagements, that the type of organizational change that we assist in, especially when it moves beyond just process implementation, to evaluate and improve overall PM Performance, can easily improve measured performance, thruput, or whatever your objective, by an order of magnitude. That’s 10X. But, that type of change takes (as a rule of thumb) 1 year per level, for all levels between the people doing the work, and your CEO. We’ve seen some Executives count off on their fingers, then start looking at their feet for more digits.

This type of organizational improvement deserves the type of attention you would apply to your most strategic, most-competitive, most regulatory project –because it drives your future. Yes, this is a project, and you should manage it like one.

Phase 1.0 Assess Your Organization

Purpose This Phase builds the business case and project plan, while baselining your current productivity and determining readiness for process improvement.

1.0 Assess Your Organization

- 1.1 Charter the Project: Business Need and Improvement Objectives
 - 1.2 Define Project Scope: Extent of Organization Involved
 - 1.3 Establish Baseline Metrics for Productivity and Satisfaction
 - 1.4 Evaluate Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Methods and Climate
 - 1.5 Assess the Organization Using a PM Maturity Model
 - 1.6 Define the Requirements for Improved Methods
 - 1.7 Identify Strategies for Improvement
 - 1.8 Develop a Plan for the Methods Improvement Project
 - 1.9 Develop Next Phase Plan
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Phase Highlights

This Phase produces a Project Charter, establishes an understanding of the current situation, defines the business case and objectives, and establishes a project plan. Unique items are the baseline metrics and assessment of the organization’s maturity, using a PM Maturity Model.

Baseline Metrics

You can’t manage what you can’t measure. In this activity, identify the primary processes you perform, their distinguishing attributes, and current performance ranges. For example, 4-5 hours for an experienced copywriter to produce a typical new-product tear-sheet. A small handful of the right Baseline Metrics give you the “before” snapshot to track against as you implement improvement methods.

PM Maturity Model

A natural sequence of process improvement opportunities fall out of the currently-popular Project Management Maturity Models. (Search the web; they are pretty common). Failing to put in place earlier (level 2) maturity model prerequisites wastes money on advanced (level 4) improvement opportunities.

Example: Implementing Defect Tracking while Requirements remain poor.

Potential Problems

These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Not understanding (and compensating for) your strengths and weaknesses
 - Failing to set up baseline measures
 - An unprepared organization acquiring leading-edge methods
 - No planning: just haphazard, incremental implementation of new methods!
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Critical Success Factors

These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Find the right Sponsor and develop a Project Charter
 - Get top Management commitment to a “Successful Project Climate”
 - Thoroughly evaluate your method and process needs
 - Critically analyze current methods’ role and impact in your organization
 - Establish Baseline measures and PM Process Maturity
 - Comprehensively analyze support tool requirements.
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Phase 2.0 Acquire and Tune the Methods

Purpose This Phase includes establishing your methods infrastructure and support processes, and selecting the new methods and any supporting software tools. It also includes steps to tune the methods to your environment.

An important reminder in this Phase: remember that buying technology alone does not provide lasting benefits. Our experience with managing organizational change shows that four crucial ingredients must occur in the proper sequence: Policies, Responsibilities, Procedures *and then* Technology.

2.0 Acquire and Tune the Methods

- 2.1 Establish Enabling Policies and Responsibilities
 - 2.2 Institute a Project Management Office with Clear Lines of Accountability
 - 2.3 Evaluate and Purchase (or Develop) the PM Improvement Methods
 - 2.4 Evaluate and Purchase Any Needed Tools, e.g.: PM Software
 - 2.5 Tune the Methods' Project Templates to Your Process Needs
 - 2.6 Develop Needed Infrastructure Support (i.e., networks, intranet, wireless)
 - 2.8 Tune Automated Support Tools and Re-usable Templates
 - 2.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan
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Phase Highlights This Phase has activities that failing projects often skip. Every one is essential to your success. However, let's highlight the role of the Project Management Office.

The Project Management Office

We've worked with two styles of Project Management Offices: *Cops* and *Coaches*. While the *Cops* approach may be appropriate in a very large Aerospace Program contract, today's more effective Project Management Office is a *Coach*. Ideally, she or he is your coach for a winning team, improving PM competence, skill-building, and re-usable history with metrics, lessons learned, and an independent audit.

Potential Problems These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Not assigning support responsibilities, or assigning them to the wrong people
- Assigning responsibilities but not providing authority or resources
- Getting the wrong methods; or, getting the right methods for the wrong reasons
- Letting technology drive the new methods, rather than support them
- Excessively customizing the WBS, Templates and terminology
- Inadequate staffing (by number or skills) of the Program Management Office
- Attempting to use the new methods without the right automated support tools.

Critical Success Factors These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Identify rewards and recognition as part of the enabling policies
- Establish the Project Management Office as a support and process focus group
- Involve Managers and the Project Team in making the selections
- Make sure the organization understands the impact of the changes you'll make
- Adapt the methods to the unique requirements of your organization
- Assign support roles to key Managers; turn them into evangelists and mentors.

Major Milestone: PM Methods In Place

Phase 3.0 Do Pilot Training

Purpose The primary purpose of this Phase is to select and test the needed training and coaching, plus method enhancements before general organization rollout. Pilot Training should be oriented toward moderate-visibility, low-risk projects. You can run several pilot projects with 3-4 month durations at the same time. Participants should be *representative* of your organization, rather than an exceptional group.

Small organizations may choose to combine this Phase with the Phase 5 Rollout Training, but even in that case, if you have major customization of proven training, you should perform at least a walk-through before rolling it out to all staff.

3.0 Do Pilot Training

3.1 Select Pilot Project Areas

3.2 Establish Competence Model and Assess Training Needs

3.3 Provide Business Analysis Training

3.4 Provide Project Management Training

3.5 Provide Project Estimating Training, if needed

3.6 Provide Management and Customer Overviews

3.7 Fine-tune the New Methods, Based on Pilot Findings

3.8 Coach in Needed Competence Development Areas

3.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan

Phase Highlights

The chicken-and-egg dilemma: Many organizations that embark on PM Methods improvement do so to improve project estimating. This Phase introduces training on estimating. However, any estimating workshop relies on three prerequisites:

- A repeatable process
- Metrics and attributes that distinguish that process
- Skill and experience with that repeatable process.

These prerequisites do not yet exist! However, they can be an outcome of this and the next Phase. Preliminary results of the Pilot Training Phase include corrections to fine-tune the process, and data that can be used to begin your metrics collection.

Potential Problems

These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Selecting the wrong pilot projects: too long, too visible, too many, or high risk
 - Using “sheep-dip” marathon training (use multiple shorter sessions, instead)
 - Economizing on training: viewing training as a cost, not an investment
 - Failing to capture metrics and organizational learning: “Lessons Learned”
 - Not appropriately involving Managers and your Customers.
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Critical Success Factors

These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Obtain or develop a Competence Model for each skill area
 - Assess Stakeholders using the Competence models to target best use of training
 - Get Management and your Customers involved in assessing training needs
 - Do training in the methods, underlying foundations, and automated tools
 - Try to perform training or coaching when needed, or “Just in time.”
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Phase 4.0 Run Pilot Projects

Purpose and Timing The key outputs of this Phase are fine-tuned methods, supportive coaching in them, the tuned Project templates, preliminary process metrics, and automated re-usable models. You can also begin to collect good example outputs that “ feel” like your organization, rather than someone else’s. You can often run this Phase in parallel with the pilot training. This strategy depends on effective use of good Competence Models together with implemented Competence Development Plans.

4.0 Run Pilot Projects

- 4.1 Plan Pilot Projects
 - 4.2 Develop Pilot Systems
 - 4.3 Evaluate Pilot Results
 - 4.4 Tune Templates and Models
 - 4.5 Collect and Assemble The Sample Set
 - 4.8 Provide Ongoing Coaching and Support to Pilot Projects
 - 4.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan
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Phase Highlights During this Phase the most important thing to do is to provide ongoing coaching and support to the pilot teams. After all, most real learning occurs on the job after the class (a key difference between mere knowledge, skill, and competence. And because all change takes time, you need to make sure you relax the timelines a bit (but not too much!). Make sure you keep visibility high on the pilot projects. One good way is to establish the objectives of the project to include the measurable learning of the participants. Make sure you capture the history accurately, so you have a start on your project metrics database.

Potential Problems These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Non-representative pilot projects or groups selected
- Piloted methods skipped, ignored or participants inadequately coached
- Pilot does not receive needed methods and tools support, because Project Management Office responsibility, authority and staff are not yet assigned
- Customers are not involved because policies and roles are not yet clear
- Team does not produce good examples because of deadline pressures
- Pilots lack access to needed consulting and coaching support.

Critical Success Factors These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Select Project Managers based on both interpersonal and technical skills
- Provide coaching and consulting for problems and project optimization
- Conduct periodic, positive reviews of strong and weak pilot experiences
- Maintain frequent progress reports to Managers and your Customer
- Provide flexibility in the schedule while keeping a sense of urgency
- Provide reward and recognition for pilot team members
- Allow time after the pilot projects for the team members to update the methods, templates and models, and evaluate the PM Methods improvement to date.

Major Milestone: Pilots Complete

Phase 5.0 Do Rollout Training

Purpose This Phase provides needed training to the rest of your organization. For larger organizations, (150+ people) consider “train the trainer” programs, unless you intend to accelerate the training, and prefer to rely on the depth of outside resources.

5.0 Do Rollout Training

- 5.1 Target Rollout Groups
 - 5.2 Assess Training Needs Against Competence Models
 - 5.3 Certify In-House Trainers
 - 5.4 Provide Business Process Improvement Training
 - 5.5 Provide Project Management Training
 - 5.6 Provide Project Estimating Training
 - 5.7 Provide Management and Customer Overviews
 - 5.8 Follow-up Training with Skill and Competence Coaching
 - 5.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan
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Phase Highlights

This rollout-training period should occur in “waves” of work groups, and might last three months for smaller companies and up to two years for larger companies. Our experience is that the best type of training is with intact teams, working in-class Case Study exercises on their own projects, or at least, ones they can relate to. The least effective method is training participants who are scattered all over the organization. A work group begins to benefit from new PM Methods when at least 25% of the group has been in recent sessions.

We’ve found that allowing Managers to “bid” for rollout, based on planned benefit to their group, is an effective way to prioritize the rollout. It can also unmask the unbelievers, and hold the heroes (early innovating Managers) to their word.

Potential Problems

These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Obtaining cheap, rather than effective training, or skipping training totally
 - Poor needs assessment resulting in “demand” training to rectify errors
 - Too much training, sooner than people will use it
 - Ignoring the human factors; failing to overcome resistance to change
 - Skipping training in interpersonal skills or improving communication skills
 - Omitting Customer and Management training, thus not getting their help.
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Critical Success Factors

The Critical Success Factors for the Pilot Training Phase apply to this Phase as well; in addition, these factors also affect your success with this Phase:

- Engage Business Process Improvement techniques and Project Management training and coaching that is compatible with the new methods
 - Set workshop learning objectives and post-workshop follow-through assessments to measure the impact of training on actual work performance
 - Communicate enabling Policies, Responsibilities and Procedures support
 - Keep your Sponsor informed about results, problems, solutions, and planned actions.
 - Maintain the currency of assessments against the Competence Model.
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Phase 6.0 Rollout Projects

Purpose and Timing This Phase typically lasts one to two years, and is complete when all teams have successfully implemented two or three projects under the new PM Methods. The first part of the Phase can overlap the Rollout Training if well coordinated.

In addition to the critical success factors listed below, four key strategies during this Phase contribute to success:

- Maintain ongoing communication with Customers and Executive Managers
- Provide internal consulting support
- Reward project teams for good results
- Have project teams promote their results: in this way you continue to build support for this better way of doing business.

Rollout is also the time to begin full collection of the estimating history for the metrics database. Use this history after the first year to improve your estimating.

6.0 Rollout Projects

6.1 Identify Support and Consulting Roles

6.2 Finalize Methods Tailoring

6.3 Distribute Methods Manuals and Support Tools for Online Use

6.4 Implement Enabling Policies and Procedures

6.5 Participate and Coach in Planning Rollout Projects

6.6 Provide Support and Consulting Services

6.7 Evaluate Results and Demonstrate The Benefits to Management

6.8 Re-Assess the Organization Using the PM Maturity Model

6.9 Plan Follow-on and Support

Potential Problems These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Shortchanging teams in hardware/software needed to improve results
- Losing momentum and interest once the pilots are successful
- Thinking the learning is done once training has ended; it has only begun
- A key problem: skipping training in interpersonal skills earlier hurts most here
- Failing to keep Management and Customers informed, and losing their interest
- Cutting back on Project Management Office support once projects are underway.

Critical Success Factors These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Provide methods support staff: at least 1 support person for each 50-100 staff practitioners; this support staff can be located in your Project Management Office or distributed to the workgroups
- Showcase achieved business benefits to Managers and your Customers
- Reward Managers for performance improvement in their areas
- Identify and deliver rewards for successful demonstration of the new methods.

Phase 7.0 Support and Enhance the Methods

Purpose and Timing The purpose of this Phase is to provide the ongoing support needed to institutionalize the new PM Methods. Without this support, your effort could be in danger of being “just another fad of the month”. This Phase begins at the same time as Rollout. It prepares for ongoing operation and adaptation of the new methods.

The test of success for this Phase is whether the methods adapt and flex with changes in the business climate, or whether they stagnate and become obsolete within several years.

7.0 Support and Enhance the Methods

- 7.1 Target Advanced Opportunities (Virtual Collaboration, Increased Re-use)
 - 7.2 Continue Competence Development Planning and Coaching
 - 7.3 Maintain Methods Content, Materials and Samples
 - 7.4 Collect Project History for Metrics Data Base
 - 7.5 Track Defect Discovery Rates and Apply Prevention Approaches
 - 7.6 Provide Skills Maintenance and Update Training
 - 7.7 Provide Support and Consulting Services
 - 7.8 Monitor Use and Review for Improvement Opportunities
 - 7.9 Perform Periodic Reviews to Improve the Process
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Phase Highlights

The highlights of this Phase include two types of events to watch for:

- When Managers “catch someone doing something right”, and acknowledge it.
 - When certain Team Members start being recognized by their peers as informal experts in the various Competences needed for the PM Methods to work well.
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Potential Problems

These are the problems to which organizations typically fall victim in this Phase:

- Allowing the methods to become out of date as guardianship passes to the next generation of support staff
 - Failing to capture project history to improve estimates
 - Becoming distracted by the next big thing and letting this initiative suffer
 - Cutting the Project Management Office in tough times
 - Lapsing on refresher and new-hire training
 - Reverting to a deadline-driven, process mentality in times of stress.
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Critical Success Factors

These are the Critical Success Factors for this Phase:

- Implement all prior Phases properly and provide rewards for good results
 - Monitor and promote improvements in productivity and quality
 - Maintain Defect Discovery Rate measures and continue process improvement
 - Capture all Lessons Learned, and research them at startup in each new project
 - Periodically catch someone doing something right, and make an example of it.
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4. Case Histories

Disclaimer

Here are *composite* case histories (composite because we changed them to disguise the client; and in some cases they are drawn from multiple clients) to show model implementations and not-so-model implementations of methods improvement. If the case histories bear some resemblance to organizations you are familiar with, it is probably intentional.

Developed In-House

A & B Corporation developed new PM Methods in-house, and targeted them on their large projects. The Quality Assurance group spearheaded the effort, and involved staff from the 400+ person engineering group. Training in the new PM Methods spanned from the Executive Management team and Customer Management on down to the graphics artist.

Four years later, the QA group maintains the methods, and provides support and training. Despite the group’s original success, Management has lost track of the benefits, and has not kept support staffing consistent with growth.

Projects are starting to slip because although the PM Methods provide better requirements, deadlines are set without the benefit of good estimates. Teams are overrunning schedules and budgets, and pressure is on to reduce scope or quality to meet deadlines (although no Manager will admit this). Morale is dropping and support for the “extra work” of the new method is waning.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good initial use of PM Methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not institutionalized; used in large projects only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient ongoing public relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial Management and Customer training is great 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support staff limit is false economy

The Trojan Horse

Tanzania Bell brought in a very large, powerful PM methodology offered by one of the “Big Five” accounting firms. Executive Management committed to improving project responsiveness and cost control, so strict use of the method was mandated throughout the company. Training was not provided in either the methodology or the underlying structured methods.

Fortunately, the accounting firm could supply staff who understood the methodology and could complete the necessary forms. Today the company relies heavily on outside consultants for most projects, and internal resources serve primarily a maintenance role. The partner who sold the methodology is now the CFO.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good Executive commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No staff training in methodology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management has better cost and schedule control now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No training in foundation skills ▪ Projects cost more
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outside resources are available for crash projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff morale is low ▪ No leveraging of staff skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No staff ownership of methodology

4. Case Histories (continued)

Second Generation

Apex Controls developed an in-house PM methodology to complete projects faster and improve cost control. They didn't bother much with the front half of the Life Cycle, including better requirements definition, because their staff resisted drawing pictures and talking to "users". Besides, they already wrote reams of narrative requirements. When project changes got out of hand, they tightened reporting periods to weekly and imposed a change control system.

As resulting projects failed, Quality Assurance began restrictive, detailed reviews to enforce the use of the method. When the Project Management Office still could not control costs, a reorganization assigned the entire group to Finance. A year later, all their business processes were outsourced to one of the big India firms.

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Good control, after the fact	▪ Efficient, but not effective orientation

Can't Win 'Em All

Nevermore, Inc. was a world-class Public Relations organization, with stellar artists, multimedia content geniuses and an internet-based development methodology. Their strategic positioning ensured that their work results consistently developed new Customers in their industry. During the Far East Stock Market Crash, the company was acquired by China Bank & Trust Holding Company; they were victimized by a 45% cutback, and dropped off the face of the earth.

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Former staff provide competitive advantage to their new companies	▪ Tragic waste of momentum

Moral: Even the best methods can't help an organization in unstable times.

Close to Ideal

Bank of York training Manager's mission was to implement improved PM skills throughout the company. After implementing the curriculum, she decided that there was a lack of consistency, so she acquired a PM methodology. After successfully rolling out the methodology through internal consultants, she determined that the organization's Project Management skills were still weak, so she acquired a PM Competence Model, had her staff trained in its uses, and began assessing competence and establishing Competence Development Plans.

Key Managers became strong advocates of the new program, and began first by serving as Coaches and Mentors for those who were working on their Competence Development Plans. They became PM evangelists, creating enthusiasm and rewards for appropriate use. Executives and Customers were briefed about the program, and committed to their role in continuing success. After three years, each of the involved Managers received promotions and the program was assigned to new staff members who were given appropriate time and authority to maintain and enhance the program.

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Good incremental strategy	▪ Weak in up-front commitment
▪ Excellent rollout support	▪ May depend too much on personalities
▪ Good hand-off to next generation	

5. Summary

Benefits

As mentioned in the overview, any new method should improve the quality, speed of delivery, and cost-effectiveness of information technology projects. However, the benefits of a well-executed PM Methods improvement project reach far beyond the easily measured budget and schedule metrics.

The impact of successful PM Methods improvement is also often measured in:

- Higher Return-On-Investment (ROI) business processes for less cost
- Improved measurability, leading to better Management decisions
- A more entrepreneurial culture, quick-to-respond to business needs
- Reduced risk and increased satisfaction on the part of your Customer
- More challenged, productive project teams, with a can-do attitude.

Thus the company with challenged, entrepreneurial, rewarded project teams runs circles around lesser competition.

Costs

You should, however, understand the full costs of implementing such a program. Then, in a good analysis, you can evaluate not only the benefit/cost ratio of PM Methods improvement; you can also see the opportunity cost of poorly implemented methods.

Our experience with PM Methods enhancement in organizations of all sizes leads us to the following predictions:

- You will spend up to two years to integrate any new methods and supporting technology into your environment – if you manage it well. Poorly managed, it will tend to fizzle out before the end of the second year.
- You will notice that rather than projects taking less time and costing less, they will actually be longer and costlier, until project teams have overcome the learning curve. However, return on Investment should be greater. And, you will be more aware of both these impacts because now you have better ways to measure status and results.
- Your cost to install most PM Methods, supporting hardware and software, needed training, internal support and external consulting will come to at least \$6K - \$12K per practitioner over the first two years (and some, that rely on extensive software suites, may cost twice or four times that). Organizations that attempt to economize in the wrong ways often spend more and receive less.

Of course, you may say, “I’ve got a smaller company, with a smaller shop.” For you, the unit costs may be even higher, because you cannot benefit from economies of scale. Your PM Methods Improvement Plan controls a fairly large project. Can you afford to begin it without a strategy for success?

Summary

We believe that anything worth doing is worth doing well. Our goal in producing this monograph is to assist you to be as successful as possible in implementing your improvement methods. Your secret for success: treat it as a project, manage it well, and apply competent resources, aided by appropriate tools and providers.

6. About the Author

Stacy A. Goff, the *PM Performance Coach*[™], has coached and inspired tens of thousands of project and program managers, and hundreds of organizations, on five continents, for over forty years. A Project Management practitioner since 1970 and consultant since 1982, he has also been a strong contributor to professional organizations such as IPMA® and PMI® since 1983.

He is a co-founder and past-president of IPMA-USA, and 2011-2014 Vice President of Marketing & Events for IPMA, the International Project Management Association. In September, 2015, he was named an IPMA Honorary Fellow.

Goff's interest in project competence and performance began with establishing a PM Competency Center for a nuclear power plant in the early 1980s. It continued with international engagements during the 1980s and 90s as he helped organizations assess and improve their project and program performance. Today, he coaches, speaks and performs keynote speeches at major project-related events. And, he continues to pursue his interest in individual, project team, organization, and national and international PM performance.

Mr. Goff brings a results-oriented approach to Project Management coaching, consulting, and training. His insight for the needed PM Competences, and his delivery of effective training translate to improved project performance. In his working life, he combines his Project experience with sensitivity for the interpersonal skills areas—the human aspects of projects.

In his papers, presentations, workshops or in consulting, he combines his project experience with strategic linkage for all projects and programs. His insights and experience have provided competitive advantage for his clients for over 40 years. His business result: measurably increased **PM Performance**.

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Appendix A

Responsibilities of a Project Sponsor

The effective Sponsor's Responsibilities include (add more, as needed). We suggest that you use this list as a checklist when engaging your Project Sponsors.

- Establish and maintain the project vision
- Fund the project or negotiate for funding
- Produce or sign off on the Project Charter
- Approve and communicate the business case
- Assure the project meets business needs, at startup, throughout, and at closure
- Represent the project to your Enterprise Executives, keeping them informed and in support of the project effort
- Define the Project Manager's authority, and Empower the Project Team
- Assure availability of the right Resources, with the right competences, the right amount of time, especially from the project's Customers
- Serve as project spokesperson for all communication outside the Team
- Eliminate roadblocks outside the control of the Project Manager and Core Team
- Ramrod or speed approvals (develop a sense of urgency-by-example)
- Arbitrate disputes, when needed
- Provide significant rewards for the Project Team

Traits of a Useful Methodology

We've worked with dozens of commercial and in-house-developed project management methods (methodologies) over the years, and have developed several of our own, that we have offered to our clients for over 32 years.

Here are a handful of characteristics that consistently differentiate effective and efficient PM methods from ineffective and weak or bloated ones:

1. Contains guiding processes for those who are new to project work.
2. Identifies Key Roles and their Responsibilities for all Stakeholders, including Sponsors, Resource Managers, & Customers or Clients.
3. Cites Skills or Competences needed, by Role, by Process.
4. Provides useful templates *and examples*.
5. Supplies model project Life Cycles for projects of different types, with more detailed WBS examples.
6. Offers audit checklists to assure proper process, Governance and results.
7. Is customizable by Enterprises and project teams.
8. Is scalable, to work effectively with projects of varying size and complexity.
9. Is tool-neutral. While most methods need tools, for people to be willing to use them, the methods should not demand specific tools.
10. Offers a range of rigor for different project needs.
11. Saves more effort and time than it requires.

Appendix B: PM Methods Improvement Plan Activities

This might look familiar; it is a task list, or close to a Work Breakdown Structure for a project management methods improvement project. Our suggestion is that you adapt, scale and use this as a starting point for your Methods Improvement project.

1.0 Assess Your Organization

- 1.1 Charter the Project: Business Need and Improvement Objectives
- 1.2 Define Project Scope: Extent of Organization Involved
- 1.3 Establish Baseline Metrics for Productivity and Satisfaction
- 1.4 Evaluate Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Methods and Climate
- 1.5 Assess the Organization Using the Capability Maturity Model
- 1.6 Define the Requirements for Improved Methods
- 1.7 Identify Strategies for Improvement
- 1.8 Develop a Plan for the Methods Improvement Project
- 1.9 Complete Phase Plan for the Acquire and Tune Methods Phase

2.0 Acquire and Tune the Methods

- 2.1 Establish Enabling Policies and Responsibilities
- 2.2 Institute the Project Management Office with Clear Lines of Accountability
- 2.3 Evaluate and Purchase the PM Improvement Methods
- 2.4 Evaluate and Purchase Any Needed Tools, e.g.: PM Software
- 2.5 Tune the Methods' Templates to Your Process Needs
- 2.6 Develop Needed Infrastructure Support (i.e., networks, intranet, and wireless)
- 2.8 Tune Automated Support Tools and Re-usable Templates
- 2.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan

3.0 Do Pilot Training

- 3.1 Select Pilot Project Areas
- 3.2 Establish Competence Model and Assess Training Needs
- 3.3 Provide Business Analysis Training
- 3.4 Provide Project Management Training
- 3.5 Provide Project Estimating Training, if needed
- 3.6 Provide Management and Customer Overviews
- 3.7 Fine-tune the New Methods, Based on Pilot Findings
- 3.8 Coach in Needed Competence Development Areas
- 3.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan

4.0 Run Pilot Projects

- 4.1 Plan Pilot Projects
- 4.2 Develop Pilot Projects
- 4.3 Evaluate Pilot Results

4.0 Run Pilot Projects, continued

- 4.4 Tune Templates and Models
- 4.5 Collect and Assemble the Sample Set
- 4.8 Provide Ongoing Coaching & Support to Pilot Projects
- 4.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan

5.0 Do Rollout Training

- 5.1 Target Rollout Groups
- 5.2 Assess Training Needs Against Competence Models
- 5.3 Certify In-House Trainers
- 5.4 Provide Business Process Improvement Training
- 5.5 Provide Project Management Training
- 5.6 Provide Project Estimating Training
- 5.7 Provide Management and Customer Overviews
- 5.8 Follow-up Training with Skill and Competence Coaching
- 5.9 Update Project Plan and Develop Next Phase Plan

6.0 Rollout Projects

- 6.1 Identify Support and Consulting Roles
- 6.2 Finalize Methods Tailoring
- 6.3 Distribute Methods Manuals and Support Tools for Online Use
- 6.4 Implement Enabling Policies and Procedures
- 6.5 Participate and Coach in Planning Rollout Projects
- 6.6 Provide Support and Consulting Services
- 6.7 Evaluate Results and Demonstrate the Benefits to Management
- 6.8 Re-Assess the Organization Using the Capability Maturity Model
- 6.9 Plan Follow-on and Support

7.0 Support and Enhance the Methods

- 7.1 Target Methods Opportunities (Virtual Collaboration, Increased Re-use)
- 7.2 Continue Competence Development Planning and Coaching
- 7.3 Maintain Methods Content, Materials and Samples
- 7.4 Collect Project History for Metrics Data Base
- 7.5 Track Defect Discovery Rates and Apply Prevention Approaches
- 7.6 Provide Skills Maintenance and Update Training
- 7.7 Provide Support and Consulting Services
- 7.8 Monitor Use and Review for Improvement Opportunities
- 7.9 Perform Periodic Reviews to Improve the Process