A Project Sponsor's Warp-Speed Guide:
Improving project performance

Glossary

Acceptance criteria: A list of conditions that must be satisfied before a deliverable can be accepted or viewed as complete.

Activity: A term that describes vaguely-defined work unrelated to any planned deliverable. This term is deliberately minimized in this book. The solution to overcoming vagueness is to improve the definition of the work, define a task and link it to a planned deliverable. Often, vaguely-defined work hints that an entire deliverable is missing from the project plan and should be recognized.

Allowance for change orders: An amount in the project budget to recognize that the approval of some change orders is unavoidable.

Bias for action: A leadership behaviour that encourages making decisions and taking action, even when faced with uncertainty. Project success is greatly enhanced when the project sponsor and project manager exhibit this leadership behaviour. Some individuals exhibit the opposite behaviour: they freeze and can't decide for fear of getting it wrong and being held accountable for poor decisions. The culture of organizations tends to encourage one behaviour or the other.

Business case: A justification for undertaking a project. It evaluates the benefits or value, costs and risks of alternative actions. It concludes with a rationale for the recommended project. The

evaluation includes tangible and intangible benefits but gives the most weight to tangible benefits.

Business policy: An approved or widely accepted policy or rule that often determines the description of related Business procedures and Business processes.

Business procedure: A business procedure description describes the details of how the business process is being performed or will be performed.

Projects avoid documenting current or proposed business procedures. There are important exceptions to this guidance, such as:

1. When the stakeholders cannot achieve a consensus on the future-state business process description, it becomes useful or necessary to work out the associated procedural details.
2. When designing how systems will be used or designing detailed manufacturing steps.

Also, see Business process.

Business process: Business process descriptions:

1. Describe what work is currently being performed or will be performed in some aspect of the business within the project's scope.
2. Form much of the content of the business requirements deliverable.

A process description focuses on what is to be done. A business process description avoids describing how the work is to be performed. See Business procedure.

On projects, business process descriptions with supporting swim-lane diagrams are essential to:

1. Clarifying business requirements.

2. Achieving a consensus on business requirements within the team and with project stakeholders.

3. Describing the future state of the business once the project is complete.

4. Lay a foundation for design deliverables.

Also, see Business procedure.

Change request: A document describing a request to change the project's scope. When project managers minimize the approval of change requests, they increase the likelihood of on-schedule project completion. Use change requests as the basis for defining the scope of the follow-on project.

Contingency reserve: An amount in the project budget to cover the following:

a. Cost of underestimated task effort.

b. Cost for missed items[1].

c. Cost of mitigating high-likelihood and high-impact risks.

Decision record: A written record of a project decision. The records are valuable to building and maintaining project and organization memory. Revising a decision record later in a project almost always triggers a change request. Decision records help the team:

1. Clarify the meaning of the project goal and related objectives.

2. Set priorities when competing requirements from different stakeholders arise.

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[1] It's impossible to avoid missing some costs during the budgeting process.

3. Define the content and scope of deliverables in more detail as requirements work progresses.

4. Defend against those who later claim a decision was not made or concluded differently.

5. Avoid having to review many minutes of meetings to recollect decisions.

Deliverable: A product component or piece of the overall project.

Internal politics: Politics arise due to divergent interests, ambition and the reality of limited resources. Positive politics are behaviours that influence others to advance the project's goal while advancing the individual's standing. Negative politics are behaviours that achieve personal gain at the project's and others' expense. Examples of political behaviour that is unhelpful to project progress and morale include:

1. Assigning blame for project near-misses and failures.

2. Claiming credit for project successes without actually being involved.

3. Arguing among stakeholders about priorities.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI): A quantifiable rate used to evaluate the work's progress to complete a deliverable. An example is percent complete.

KPI: See Key Performance Indicator.

Lessons learned register: A running list of the knowledge gained during the project.

Management reserve: An amount in the project budget to cover unanticipated costs such as strikes, weather or material shortages.

Measure: See Metric**.**

Metric: A standard unit of measure used to express the size or amount of a resource used to advance work on a deliverable. The units that project management deals with include effort, dollars, and machine hours.

Milestone: A significant moment in the project schedule. Typically, the completion of a critical deliverable or phase.

People change management: A structured process and supporting tools for leading people through the change required to achieve the desired outcome. Implementing the people change is often critical to the success of projects.

PMBOK® Guide: *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK® Guide), published by the Project Management Institute.

PMO: See Project Management Office.

Politics: See Internal politics.

Product: An item that is either a component of the project or the project's main deliverable.

Program: A group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually. PMI, 2009.

Project: A time-limited endeavour where the result is a new process, product, or service.

Project - research and development: A project that produces research and development deliverables that are often reports. The project does not place any products into production for routine operation.

Project budget: The financial resources allocated to the project.

Project charter: See Appendix F – Project charter table of contents for an extended description.

Project management: The application of methods, skills, knowledge, experience, tools and techniques to achieve a specific project goal and supporting objectives. See Appendix D – Value of competent project management for a more extensive discussion.

Project Management Office (PMO): An organizational group that standardizes the project-related governance processes and facilitates the sharing of resources, methodologies, tools, and techniques. The responsibilities of a PMO can range from providing project management support functions to the direct management of one or more projects.

Project management plan: See Appendix G – Project management plan table of contents for an extended description.

Project manager: The person responsible for directing the project work to completion. See Appendix C – Characteristics of a successful project manager for a more detailed discussion.

Project phase: A collection of logically related deliverables within a project. Each phase advances the project and ends at a milestone. Every phase will contain both product and project management deliverables. The typical project phases are further described in Appendix E – Phases of projects.

Project schedule: A detailed description of the timeframe of the project. Typically includes the sequences of work, important milestones, and what resources are required when.

Project scope: The work on deliverables that needs to be completed to meet the project goal and objectives.

Project sponsor: Look in the mirror. The person is typically a senior manager or executive with overall accountability for the project. See Appendix A – Role of project sponsors for a more detailed discussion.

Project Steering Committee: A group of senior employees who are stakeholders that provide direction to the project team.

Quality Assurance (QA): An after-the-fact assurance process that provides confidence that quality requirements defined for the deliverable have been fulfilled.

Quality Control (QC): A quality process performed as the deliverable is being produced to maintain quality.

Requirements – functional: Describe what the product must do. These requirements consist of product features.

Requirements – non-functional: Describe how the product will be implemented, must perform, and its planned life. These requirements consist of product properties, especially quality.

Risk: Positive and negative events that can occur during the project that will affect its success. Please read Appendix H – Severe project risk situations for a more detailed discussion of project risk.

Risk register: A list of project risks that the team has identified. A risk register contains the following:

1. A detailed description of each risk.

2. A likelihood and impact judgment for each risk.

3. A mitigation plan for high-likelihood and high-impact risks.

4. The name of a single team member who is assigned to each risk.

Root cause analysis: The process of determining the point of failure. Most often, one apparent discovery contributes most significantly to the failure. There will also be other events that contributed to the significant failure.

Scope: A list of features and functions of the product that the project is expected to deliver. Requirements are more detailed descriptions that elaborate on the project scope.

Scope creep: Aka project death. Scope creep occurs when items keep getting added to the scope of the project work.

SME: See Subject Matter Expert.

Stakeholder: Anybody or any group affected by the project. Stakeholder management is an essential component of practical project scoping and management because stakeholders have the power to undermine project completion through neglect or active opposition.

For most projects, the stakeholders are workgroups and departments within the organization. The stakeholders can include suppliers, customers, and even the general public on larger projects.

Subject Matter Expert (SME): An expert in a specific domain of knowledge who plays a vital role on many projects by ensuring project deliverables align with known technical knowledge.

Task: A single unit of work that contributes to advancing the completion of a deliverable.

Triple constraint: Consists of time, scope, and cost that every project must manage to ensure project success. Read Appendix I – Triple constraint for a more detailed discussion.

Warp-speed: Warp-speed is the rapid speed at which most project sponsors want to learn their role. Warp-speed is also the speed at which most organizations want their projects to proceed. Warp-speed is a speed many orders of magnitude greater than the speed of light. Warp drive is a science fiction propulsion system that enables a spacecraft to travel at warp-speed.

Warp-speed project assessment: An assessment that contains a series of observations for common project topics to assess project risk. Project sponsors complete the assessment to focus their understanding of project risk in preparation for actions to reduce the risk. The warp-speed project assessment is located in chapter 4 above.

WBS: See Work breakdown structure.

Work breakdown structure (WBS): A deliverable-oriented hierarchical decomposition of the project team's work. Read Appendix J – Work breakdown structure (WBS) for a more extensive discussion.