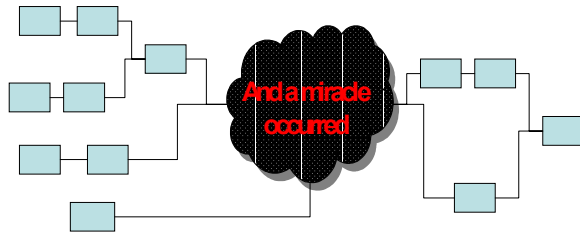


Who Needs a Methodology?

In the third in his series of articles on exploring ways to improve project and programme delivery, Allen Ruddock of Transformis Consulting discusses the need for a methodology and how best to implement it.



The miracle.....

You start with the best of intentions and you know what you want at the end, but somewhere along the line you need that miracle to occur. The one that translates your sketchy requirements and broad view of the

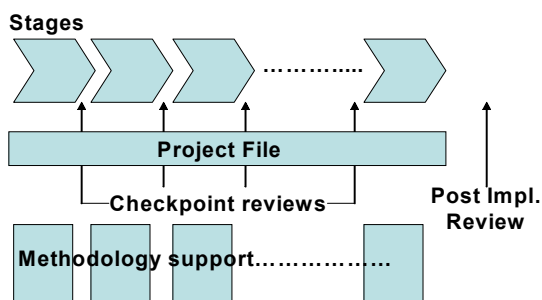
benefits into the reality of an implemented process or system that delivers real value to your organisation. In today's cost conscious world where 'return on investment' is the key phrase, nobody is going to give you any money, let alone a blank cheque, unless you can demonstrate how you will deliver in a structured way. So, you need a methodology.

The bureaucracy.....

But a methodology conjures up all sorts of nightmare visions of reams of documentation and untold bureaucracy. Many myths abound of the cupboards full of dusty methodology manuals that only the spiders have read! These are surpassed only by the yards of documentation produced by the sheep-like analysts who follow the method by rote, never having the temerity to question validity or value. So what do you do, settle down for sleepless nights in front of the PC or saddle up the horse and take the cowboy approach by doing everything on the hoof? There is another way.



I've been on a
Method XX
Course!



The solution.....

There is nothing wrong with most of the methodologies available today. What is wrong is how they are applied! All methodologies are based on a framework. This is designed to break the project down into manageable chunks or stages that can be estimated reasonably accurately. The end of each stage provides a natural review point at which

progress to-date can be assessed and the validity of continuing evaluated. Each stage will have a series of suggested activities. A good project manager uses those he needs, discards those he doesn't, and introduces special activities to cover things peculiar to his project. The detailed methodology provides task level support to the PM and his team to accomplish the activities, as, when and only if they need it. So which one should you use? There are many good methodologies around, but why pay the earth when Prince 2, which ranks among the best, is virtually free. Remember, it's the implementation that counts!

The keys to success.....

So you've decided to adopt a methodology. How do you make it successful? Here are some of the key considerations:

- **Organisational culture:** The most successful organisations embrace change as part of their culture and the methodology is embedded in this. The framework becomes part of the programme and project governance structure. It provides a way to handle exceptions so the PM can step outside the framework when appropriate and if approved. It defines everyone's role in the project lifecycle, including crucially the sponsor, so they understand where they fit and what is expected of them. Finally, it recognises that stopping a project that isn't going to deliver real benefits is a success, not a failure.
- **Front-end focus:** Too often projects rush to deliver without adequate consideration of the requirements to be met and the problems to be solved. Money spent up front defining the right project pays handsome dividends. This front-end focus improves effective execution thus reducing delivery timescales, identifying and addressing issues early, avoiding re-working and meeting, rather than dashing, expectations.
- **Benefits, benefits, benefits:** Investments require returns. Clearly define those benefits upfront in the Business Case. Build in the ability to measure the delivery of the benefits as part of the project. Re-assess the benefits throughout the life of the project and check on delivery after it's finished.
- **Independent reviews:** A methodology provides natural review points. Use them to get an independent assessment of how the project is going. Surveys show that independent reviews keep projects on track to deliver their benefits.

In summary, a properly implemented methodology provides the platform for effective project delivery as part of an overall change culture. Attention paid to the key success criteria will increase the effectiveness of the implementation improving the sustainability of the benefits.