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SOFTWARE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) organizes project phases according to its life cycle, starting with Project Initialization and ends in Project Closure.

Each phase of the project life cycle consists of specific project objectives, results, deliverables, processes, and milestones, and it grants project managers and organizations more control over the projects they handle.

What Are the 5 Phases of Project Management?

A project phase is a collection of related project management activities. Their relationship in the life cycle is often sequential, and each project phase culminates with the completion of one or more project deliverables.

The five phases of project management are the following:

Project Initiation

Project Planning

Project Execution

Project Monitoring & Control

Project Closure

Each stage of the project life cycle has a distinct focus that's different from other stages. That said, the project management skill sets, tasks, processes, stakeholders, and involved organizations for each of the project phases would differ. Still, repeating processes across all Process Groups is an excellent way to add a degree of control within each phase.

Project Initiation Phase

A team's performance during the Initiation phase can result in the authorization, delay, or discontinuation of a new project.

The main goal of the Initiation phase is to ensure that the project meets business needs and that stakeholders and project teams are aligned on the project success criteria throughout the life cycle.

For best results, it's best to involve internal and external stakeholders. This way, you can effectively align expectations and even increase the likelihood of all your deliverables in the future.

During this stage of project management, a Project Charter and a Stakeholder Register are submitted.

Project Planning Phase

Once the expectations and success criteria are clear, the next project management phase is about planning what tasks the team needs to perform to achieve them.

In the Project Planning phase, the project team members dive into specific requirements, tasks, timelines, and actions. The project scope is finalized depending on the resources available and the clients' priorities.

During the Planning phase, the Work Breakdown Structure, Project Plan, Requirements List, Communications Management Plan, and other relevant documents are created to iron out the workflow and coordination with involved parties.

As you discover more information, you may have to adjust your past planning and procedures. More complex projects will require more back-and-forth approvals for tasks. So it would be good to involve relevant stakeholders in this stage of the life cycle as well.

Project Execution Phase

The Project Execution phase is where your team follows through on your plans. At this stage, you'll spend most of your time coordinating with people, helping ensure quality work, keeping track of resources, and updating stakeholders.

Quality Assurance documentation, meeting minutes, and Work Orders are some of the documents you'll need during the Execution phase of the project management life cycle.

It's also likely that you'll discover new information that will require you to revisit and update your old project management plans. Be vigilant with change requests, and make sure that the necessary adjustments are managed.

Project Monitoring & Control Phase

The best way to ensure progress and improvement is by tracking and reviewing project performance.

As you execute a project, keep track of your change management documents, spending records, QA checklists, and team time tracking. This way, you can measure where efforts and resources go throughout the project life cycle, and crosscheck your planning.

Being diligent in recording and measuring project progress puts you in a strategic position. You'll be able to identify bottlenecks and initiate essential discussions or project management process improvements.

If additional planning, time, or resources are needed, you'll need to communicate them to relevant project stakeholders before it's too late. You'll also have the data and results to back up your requests, so you have a better chance of justifying your requests and maintaining their trust despite circumstances.

Project Closure Phase

In the last project management phase, all the activities related to its completion are concluded. These may involve the submission of a final deliverable, fulfilling contractual obligations, terminating relevant agreements, and releasing project resources.

During the project closeout, documents you'll have to turn over may include Project Documentation and other Turnover Documents.

The causes of a project closure can be completion, cancellation, termination, transfer to a new organization, and others. The documentation required to complete Project Closure will differ depending on the situation.

Regardless of the outcome of the project life cycle, however, it would be good for you to conduct a project retrospective. This way, you can process new learnings and ensure improvement in your next project management scenario.

Why Are Project Phases Important?

All projects go through each of the five phases regardless of their size.

The decision to officially divide your project into phases is an excellent way to manage your team's focus, allocate resources, and align the entire life cycle with clients and stakeholders.

While PMBOK recommends assigning project phases according to a project's life cycle, project teams can follow their own system depending on their industry, organizational policies, and other relevant factors.