

Closing Projects

COMP6204: Software Project Management and Secure
Development

Dr A. Rezazadeh (Reza)

Email: ra3@ecs.soton.ac.uk or ar4k06@soton.ac.uk

November 24

Overview

- Introduction
- What is project closure?
- Common Ways to Close or Terminate a Project
- Types of Project Closure
- Importance of closing a project
- Closing Processes Activities
- Project Closure Meeting
- Project Closure Report
- Closing Agile/Hybrid Projects

Objectives

- Understand the actions taken during project closure
- Describe common ways to close or terminate projects
- Discuss the process of closing a project
- Discuss unique aspects of closing agile/hybrid projects

Introduction

- **Closing** projects or phases involves **finalising all activities** and bringing the project or phase to an end
- It includes **archiving** project information, ensuring the planned work is **complete**, and releasing organisational resources.
- It often includes a **final presentation and report**
- It is also important to *reflect on what can be learned* to improve future projects.
 - As philosopher George Santayana said, “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*”
- It is also important to **plan** for and **execute** a **smooth** transition of the project into the **normal operations** of the company

What is project closure?

- This is the **stage** where all **deliverables** are finalised and formally transferred, and all **documentation** is signed off, approved, and archived.
- The project **closure process** ensures that:
 - All **work** has been **completed** according to the **project plan** and **scope**.
 - All **project management processes** have been **executed**.
 - You have received **final sign-off** and approval from all Stakeholders.
- The project management **closure process** also gives the team the opportunity to **review** and **evaluate** the project's **performance** to ensure future projects' success.

Common Ways to Close or Terminate a Project

- *Integration*: A project is completed, and products and services created are integrated into *operations*; most *common approach*
- *Addition*: A project creates a *new product* or *service* that results in a *new unit* in the organisation, such as a department, division, or company
- *Extinction*: A project ends because it was successful and achieved its goals, or it was *unsuccessful* or *superseded*; *termination by murder* is when there is a sudden end to a project.
- *Starvation*: A project ends by *decreasing its budget* or suddenly ending funding; also known as *withdrawal* of life support

Types of Project Closure

1. **Normal Closure:** This is the standard and most common type of project closure, where the project is **completed as planned**, **all deliverables** are **produced**, and all **objectives** and **goals** are **achieved**.
2. **Premature Closure:** Some projects are **closed** before they can get off the ground. When a project is **canceled** as it's about to start, it's known as **premature closure**.
3. **Suspension Closure:** If a project needs to be **temporarily suspended** due to **external factors** or **operational constraints**, a suspension closure is performed. The project is put on hold until the circumstances allow it to resume.
4. **Failed Closure:** Unfortunately, not all projects succeed. A failed closure occurs when a project is **unable to achieve its objectives** or **deliver the desired outcomes**. In such cases, the project is closed **without accomplishing the intended goals**.

Importance of closing a project

- Without a **formal closing process**, you **risk** letting **crucial details** fall through the cracks, which can result in **confusion**, a **never-ending project**, **dissatisfied** clients, and even liability issues.
- Project closure helps avoid:
 - **Repeating mistakes** on future projects and objectives
 - **Having final products** or **deliverables** without dedicated **support** and **resources**
 - **Failing to identify the team** or individuals who will **own** and **maintain** the solution following final delivery
 - **Creating liability issues** resulting from incomplete payments, contracts, or deliverables

Why is Project Closure Important?

- Project closure involves answering a handful of questions to ensure everything is wrapped up, including:
 1. Have the goals and objectives been met?
 2. Is the client happy with the project documentation and deliverables?
 3. Was the project properly completed on time and on budget?
 4. Are there **takeaway lessons** from any **bottlenecks** or mid-process problems that would be helpful for future project teams?
 5. Are senior leaders and **managers** or other **stakeholders happy** with the project outcomes?

Why is Project Closure Important? – Cont.

6. What **return on investment** can be expected, or what return on investment will the client experience after closing a project?
 7. For future reference—was it worth the **time**, **effort**, and **money** invested?
 8. Now that it has been **delivered**, are stakeholders and staff who will use the **deliverable** (e.g., a new software application) aware of it and trained?
- How you answer these questions depends on whether you're delivering a project **internally** or for a **client**. Each party will approach this project management process differently.

Closing Processes Activities

- Obtain **acceptance** of the project deliverables.
- Hand off **operations** and **support** responsibilities.
- Document the **lessons learned** over the course of the project.
- Formalise closure.
- Obtain sign-off from project sponsor and project manager.

Steps to Closing a Project

- The closing phase of project management involves **several steps**.
- Work through the following **checklist** to ensure your project is successfully completed.
 1. Formally **transfer** all **deliverables**
 - The first step to closing out your project is to **finalise and transfer** the project **deliverables** to the client.
 - Go through your project plan to **identify all deliverables** and make sure they have been fully completed and handed off.

Steps to Closing a Project – Cont.

2. Confirm project completion

- It's not enough to **declare** a project done **yourself**.
- **Each stakeholder** involved needs to **agree** on the project's completion before you can formally close it out and move on.
- If you skip this step, you may continue to receive (and be charged for) change requests by the client.
- To confirm the project's completion, obtain approvals for the project deliverables (i.e., all stakeholders must agree that you delivered on all parts of the project plan) with official sign-offs from the project stakeholders.
- Be sure to document this step so you have proof that the project close was formally signed off.

Steps to Closing a Project – Cont.

3. Review all contracts and documentation

- Once you have completed the project hand-off and received approvals from the clients, you can begin closing out your contracts.
- Review all the project documentation to ensure all parties have been paid for the work and there are no outstanding invoices.

4. Release resources

- Formally release resources from the project, including suppliers, contractors, team members, and any other partners.
- Notify them of the end of the project, confirm any final payments or obligations, and officially release them so they are free to work on other projects.

Steps to Closing a Project – Cont.

5. Document the **lessons learned** over the course of the project.
 - Project **review** is one of the most valuable steps of the project closure process.
 - This is a time to **review** the **successes**, **failures**, and **challenges** of the project and identify opportunities for improvement going forward.
 - Consider these questions:
 - Did you stay on **budget**?
 - Did the team members manage their time wisely?
 - Were there issues with the quality or **compromises** made along the way?
 - How closely did the project meet the **customer's needs**?

Steps to Closing a Project – Cont.

6. Archive documentation

- Once you've completed your project review, you can finalise all documentation (contracts, project plans, scope outline, costs, schedule, etc.) and index them in the company archives for later reference.
- Be sure to keep clear notes on the project's performance and improvement opportunities so you can easily reference and implement them on similar projects in the future.
- Documentation is not only important as a resource for future reference but also provides a clear paper trail for the processes, decisions, and actions taken during the project, which may be required by legal, HR, or future leadership.

Project Closure Meeting

- The Project Manager should schedule and facilitate a **Project Closure Meeting** with the **Project Sponsor**, **Project Owner** and the entire **Project Team**.
- The questions that should be answered in the **Project Closure Meeting** are:
- If the project work is completed:
 1. Did we accomplish all of the agreed upon objectives in this project?
 - Has this been communicated to all project stakeholders?
 2. What follow up work will be required of future projects?

Project Closure Meeting – Cont.

3. How do we "operationalise" the project, so that on-going support is provided (if necessary)?
 - At the end of the Closing Phase which operations group will take over the support or administration of the product or service?
 4. What lessons did we learn from this project?
 5. Does the project team know that their hard work was appreciated?
- If the project has been cancelled or suspended:
 1. What are the reasons for cancelling or suspending the project?
 2. Are there any plans to reactivate the project in the future?

Project Closure Report

- After the **Project Closure Meeting** the Project Manager must produce a **Project Closure Report** using the Project Closure Report template.
- The purposes of the **Project Closure Report** are:
 - **Measures** how closely the project met customer needs
 - **Identifies** what worked well on the project and what needs improvement
 - **Documents** any deviations from the original plan and identify causes
 - **Articulates** methods for improvement
 - **Formulates** lessons learned and best practices from feedback

Project Closure Report – Cont.

- The Project **Closure Report** should document **Lessons Learned** during the project lifecycle.
- Examples of lesson learned could include but not limited to the following:
 - Project **Change Management** Process
 - Project **Estimation**
 - Project **Resources** (scope, schedule, budget, resources)
- For each lesson learned, if applicable, an **action item** should be identified within the description.
 - For example, a line item added to the project plan template to prevent recurrence of the issue, a suggestion for the Project Charter, etc.

Sample Table of Contents for a Final Project Report

Project Name: Just-In-Time Training Project

1. Project Description and Summary of Results
2. Original and Actual Scope
3. Original and Actual Schedule
4. Original and Actual Budget
5. Quality Objectives, Verification, and Validation
6. Risk/Issue Summary
7. Project Assessment
8. Lessons Learned Summary
9. Transition Plan
10. Training Benefits Plan

Attachments:

- A. Key Project Management Documentation
 - Business case
 - Project charter
 - Project management plan
 - Performance reports
- B. Product-Related Documentation
 - Survey and results
 - Summary of user inputs
 - Report on research of existing training
 - Partnership agreements
 - Course materials
 - Intranet site training information
 - Summary of course evaluations

Approvals

- A project is officially completed when the **Project Closure Report** is formally **accepted and approved** by the **Project Sponsor(s)** and other designated stakeholders.
- The formal **sign-off and approval** of this document acknowledges that all of the project **deliverables** are complete, **reviewed** and **accepted**.
- The approval marks agreement among all stakeholders that the project is completed.
- This step can be viewed as the final project management **milestone**.

Advice on Closing Projects

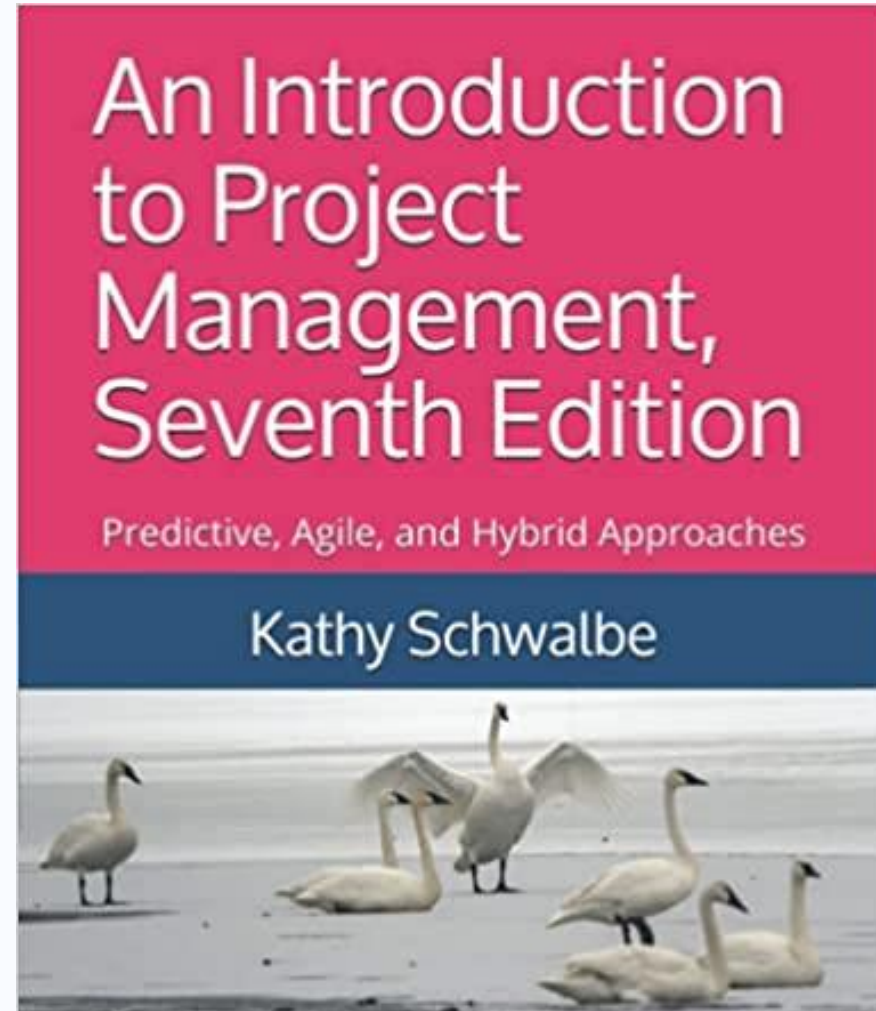
- Plan for project closing.
 - There should be **tasks** in the **WBS** and **resources allocated for closing**.
 - In agile projects, there could be a user **story for closing** the project.
- It will be much easier to close a project if the project team **captures lessons learned** and other important information required for closing as soon as possible.
- Project managers should take time to thank their team and other project stakeholders and have some type of closing celebration.

Chapter Summary

- Closing projects or phases involves finalising all activities and bringing the project or phase to an end. It includes archiving project information, ensuring the planned work is complete, and releasing organizational resources.
- Closing outputs related to integration management include project documents updates, final products, services, or result transition, a final report, and updates to organizational process assets.
- Agile/hybrid projects also include closing activities. Teams should transition work to operational groups as needed, hold a project close-out meeting, hold a final retrospective to review lessons learned for the entire project, and celebrate the project's end.
- Helpful advice for closing projects includes planning for closure, documenting lessons learned and other important information as soon as possible, and celebrating project closure.

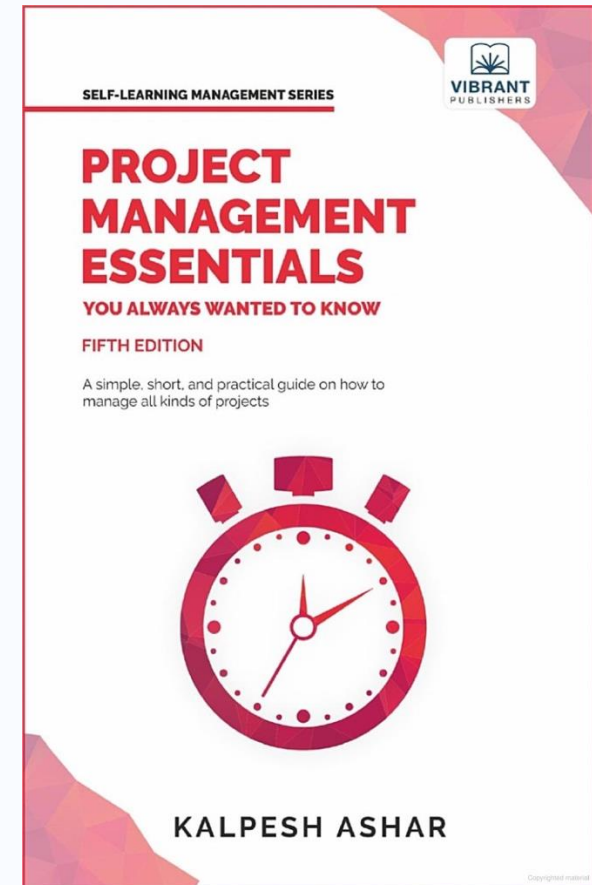
Reference

- Chapter 9: Closing Projects



Reference

- Chapter **7 Project Closure**
- Project Management Essentials You Always Wanted To Know, 5ed



YOUR QUESTIONS