**The Four Phases of Project Management**

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**Introduction**

Project management operates as a disciplined structure which allows organizations to reach their targets through specific processes combined with tools and techniques across project periods. Any project finds success through strategic implementation of its life cycle which consists of four essential phases beginning with Initiation followed by Planning then Implementation and finally Closure according to Watt (2020). Project evolution from ideas to outcomes depends on each stage through which they progress because these stages enable value delivery to stakeholders. This paper examines the project management phases in detail drawing from Adrienne Watt’s Project Management (2nd Edition) while incorporating relevant practical examples and real-world scenarios.

**Initiation Phase**

An organization begins its project development through the foundational Initiation Phase. The official project start begins after identifying an organizational demand together with its challenges or growth possibilities. The project objective definition and the feasibility study evaluation for technical along with financial and operational feasibility of proposed solutions take place during this phase. The business case development marks the phase conclusion which leads to project manager appointment for leading the initiative (Watt, 2020).

The project needs to undergo proper definition at this stage. The project will face challenges with scope creep and delayed timelines and exceed budget when the project objective is unclear or imprecise. A business case presents both the reasons behind starting the project along with predicted advantages. The project objectives might result in various organizational advantages that combine operational improvements with economic savings with enhanced customer experiences along with strategic market leadership opportunities.

Project requirements gathering and understanding stand as crucial elements during this phase. Requirements determine both the output of the project along with its achievement benchmarks. Project requirements during this phase include functional aspects about how the system operates as well as non-functional elements regarding performance standards and usability requirements. Early inaccurate requirements collection will create substantial changes to the implementation process that lead to increased costs.

Project success indicators must receive detailed definition during the initiation phase. Project performance can be assessed by using established benchmarks obtained from these metrics. Sharp measures of project efficiency need to be specified clearly during the initiation phase where a 30% reduction in customer service response duration becomes the target metric to achieve within six months after project completion. Project approval of the project charter marks the ending phase when organizational resources become committed for project advancement.  
As an illustration we can study the construction of a copper mine in Argentina by a U.S. company described in the textbook. At the initiation phase their main goal focused on developing an efficient project team and setting up offices across different regions. The feasibility study from their standpoint demonstrated that building in a remote location was technically possible and ensured they resolved regulatory framework items as well as cultural requirements in a timely way (Watt 2020).

The initiation phase determines all future aspects of the project. A well-detailed and deliberate initiation process enhances the probability of obtaining desired project results.

**Planning Phase**

Projects experience their most difficult and essential development through the Planning Phase within their lifecycle. The conversion of ambitious targets with requirements creates an operative roadmap during this phase. Presently the work breakdown structure (WBS) and project schedule along with resource allocation plan and cost estimates define this phase according to Watt (2020). Models for quality management and risk management join acceptance criteria and stakeholder communication plans as phase elements during this period.

Substantial focus should be directed toward this stage which creates groundwork for every following project step. During planning scope management receives its final formal definition to establish which project components will be included and which ones will remain excluded. During this phase the team must create defined tasks with matching assignments together with specified deadlines and activity relationship definitions.

The developmental phase requires a project budgeting process to be essential. Budget development includes expenses for labor force with their costs and materials and equipment tools; it also includes funds for unexpected situations. Financial control remains achievable for an entire project through the use of this budgeting tool. An appropriately designed budget stops projects from getting out of financial control and protects their viability.  
Planning requires risk management to operate effectively. The planning process discovers problems with high threat potential which results in establishing mitigation strategies. To prevent delayed critical deliveries from key suppliers the organization implements backup suppliers and creates buffer inventory. The identification of potential threats at an early stage enables teams to prevent complications that will threaten the success of the project.

The project requires proper stakeholder analysis together with sound communication planning. The project stays aligned by knowing who the stakeholders are and what their expectations are together with information delivery methods. Communication plans consist of producing weekly reports along with stakeholder meetings and enabling access to project dashboards.

Within the quality plan all quality targets exist together with assurance procedures and control mechanisms. Delivery products are developed to surpass stakeholder expectations through the quality plan process. Project acceptance criteria receive final definition to determine client recognitions regarding project results.

The planning group used a copper mine project to create an extensive schedule which united design work with procurement activities while managing construction operations. Budgeting enabled effective cost tracking by the company and the synchronized project arms were possible through their detailed planning procedures (Watt, 2020).

Planning Phase demands thorough work that needs significant emphasis on precise details. The duration spent on this phase directly affects project success because it establishes the direction which the implementation team will use.

**Implementation Phase**

During the Implementation Phase which also functions as "Execution Phase" strategic plans from Planning Phase get activated through proper execution. The work execution process occurs during this phase to achieve project targets and create all specified deliverables. This stage necessitates teamwork between human resources and material assets alongside stakeholder expectation control while delivering activities strictly following the developed plan.

Project managers at this stage need to handle workflow management while checking project pace against timelines while resolving any detected schedule adjustments in real-time. Implementation consume most of a project manager’s resources because they must maintain consistent alignment between team members and project goals (Watt, 2020).

The team members present updates about their work during scheduled meeting sessions. Through these updates the project manager can check key performance indicators (KPIs) that help measure them against their initial project plan. The project requires implementation of corrective measures in case deviations occur. The project manager needs to shift resources to different tasks or change the timing schedule and specific task focus. Having project flexibility and keeping focus on direction plays an essential role at this stage of project execution.

Most projects encounter unavoidable setbacks that occur. Project managers who wish to be effective masters must demonstrate quick adaptability. Different types of challenges such as resource issues or delayed supply chains and technological problems or modified stakeholder requirements can occur during project execution. Proficient assessment of the effects created by these situations must occur to determine their consequences on both timetable expectations and budget as well as deliverable quality. The evaluation results should lead to documented modifications that need to be communicated to involved stakeholders.  
Communication functions as the central element for successful implementation of projects. The project’s status requires regular updates from both project sponsors and stakeholders. The updates normally contain performance results alongside deviations from plans and facing problems and predicted schedules and cost projections. The strength of trust between parties emerges from open communication while honest conversation ensures ongoing backing.

During the implementation stage of the copper mine construction project the team started physical work by hiring personnel and transporting equipment to the building site. Watt (2020) describes the project team response to arising challenges through schedule adjustments while managing site training steps alongside transparent documentation of all modifications.

Through this phase the planned objectives become reality. The Implementation Phase needs powerful leadership together with quick communication systems and ongoing monitoring to succeed. A properly executed implementation phase guides project teams through processes that result in project completion success.

**Closing Phase**

Completion Phase corresponds to Closing Phase with regard to the project management life cycle and represents its final stage. Project execution ends through complete deliverable completion and resource release steps that officially conclude project activities. The Closing Phase offers significant importance in project management because it allows proper documentation of essential insights for upcoming projects and verifies complete project completion.

The main goal during this phase is to provide the end product or service to clients and verify that all established acceptance requirements have been fulfilled. The project comes to an official conclusion with client and stakeholder formal approval that follows project completion.

Project records must be documented and properly archived as a key task within the closing phase. All project-related original documents as well as budget reports and change requests and performance reports and additional relevant documentation need to be documented and archived. Created project records function both as references for future projects and create transparency needed for audits.

Contract closure stands as one of the important responsibilities in this management process. The complete closure of supplier contracts requires payment settlements to be final and deliverables acceptance and payments to be captured while fulfilling all legal obligations. After completion of duties vendors along with contractors receive formal discharge.

Project teams gain maximum value when they conduct lessons learned sessions as one of their closing activities. As a retrospective examination this analysis permits team members to review successful aspects while assessing necessary areas of improvement and establishing better methods for future similar situations. This activity ensures continuous quality improvement while creating valuable organizational knowledge.

The success or failure evaluation of a project depends on project managers and stakeholders tracking existing success metrics they previously established. The project team evaluates responses by assessing scope completion and budget management alongside time frame fulfillment and quality standards and client pleasure and investment returns. The project initiative qualifies as successful when all previously defined success metrics show either meeting or surpassing their specified benchmarks.

The closing phase received attention through plant transfer to the client as well as office closure activities and report documentation and archival work in the copper mine project. Following the final punch list completion the project manager began another assignment (Watt, 2020).

The closing phase serves a vital purpose in project management since ignoring it results in confusion and failed payments as well as unidentified risks and lost important understanding. Organizations that place closing stage activities first will achieve the full value potential of their projects.  
**Conclusion**

The Initiation and Planning and Implementation and Closing phases work together to support the successful development of projects from start to finish. Background development occurs in the Initialization phase via feasibility assessments that lead to objective definition which the Planning phase transforms into coordinated strategic planning with project timelines and stakeholder involvement and budget allocations. A plan goes into implementation during this phase through team collaboration and real-time changes monitoring combined with clear communication. During the Closing Phase all deliverables reach completion through finalization before contracts are settled while capturing lessons for project enhancement. Each phase in the project execution requires thorough completion to generate both current project success and long-term organizational value. According to the results from the copper mine case study as well as Watt’s framework understanding these phases has become vital for current project managers to achieve impactful results with assurance.

**References**

Watt, A., Barron, M., & Barron, A. (2020). *Project management* (2nd ed.). BCcampus. https://opentextbc.ca/projectmanagement/