



Unleash the Value of Project Management in Your Organization

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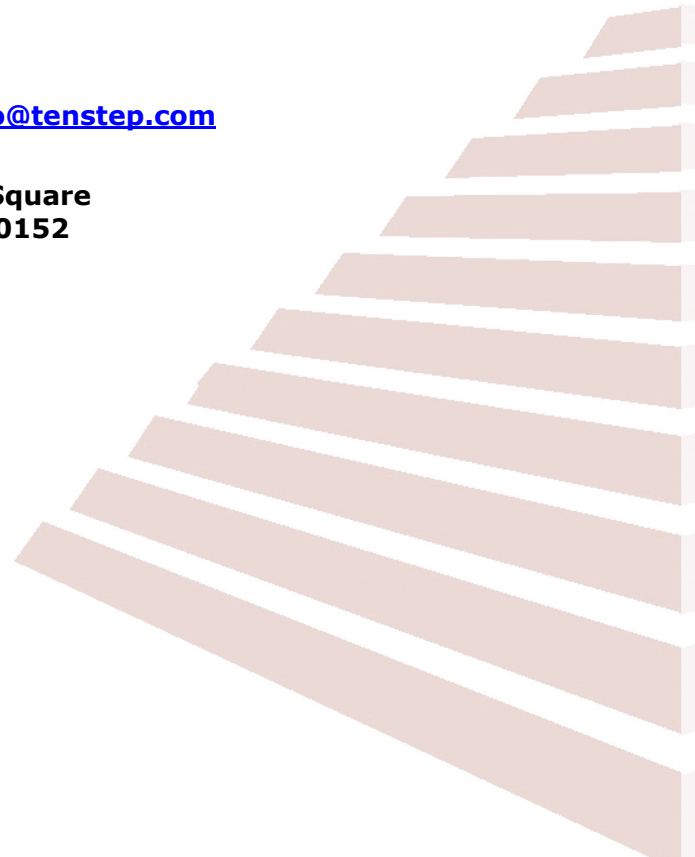
Unleash the Value of Project Management in Your Organization

A TenStep White Paper

Contact us at info@tenstep.com

TenStep, Inc.
2363 St. Davids Square
Kennesaw, GA. 30152

877.536.8434
770.795.9097



Unleash the Value of Project Management in Your Organization

You are probably aware that every organization is trying to be better at managing projects. Project management is no longer a leading edge concept. In fact, companies that are not doing well at project management are at a competitive disadvantage versus their counterparts that can consistently complete projects within expectations.

There is no question that a common set of project management processes provides value to an organization. Even if your organization utilizes "light" methodologies, there is still value in implementing a common set of "light" project management processes that everyone can use on similar projects.

Even though most managers understand there is value to project management, most have a hard time articulating the value proposition. If you can't describe the value, you are going to have a hard time convincing executives and sponsors that this is an area where you need to focus. The exact argument for deploying common project management practices is going to be different from company to company because every company has a unique culture and unique problems. However, the general value proposition for project management is described in this white paper.

The majority of organizations have a spotty reputation for delivering projects within expectations. Characteristics of these organizations include:

- Consistently completing projects late, overbudget, or not meeting agreed upon requirements

- Weak standard processes and techniques used inconsistently by project managers
- Project management is usually applied in a reactive manner and not seen as providing value
- The time required to manage projects proactively is not built into the workplan and is considered 'overhead'
- Projects are 'successful' in spite of a lack of planning and project management, through heavy stress and overtime work throughout the life cycle

Good project management discipline is the way to overcome these shortcomings. Having good project management skills does not mean you have no problems. It does not mean that risks go away. It does not mean that there are no surprises. The value of good project management is that you have a proactive mindset and standard processes in place to deal with all of these events.

Project management processes and techniques are used to coordinate resources to achieve predictable results. The value proposition for project management goes something like this:

Implementing a common set of project management processes takes effort and resources. However, the value of project management to the organization is much greater, and includes:

- *Better expectation-setting though up-front estimating, planning and project definition.*
- *Faster execution through the reuse of common processes and templates.*

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- *Fewer project problems encountered utilizing proactive project management processes.*
- *Better organizational decision-making through more effective project communication.*
- *Higher client satisfaction and less rework by building a higher quality product the first time.*

Let's look at each of these areas in more detail.

Better Estimating, Planning and Project Definition

How many times have you heard about or been involved in a project that failed miserably? Or perhaps it just was not as successful as it needed to be. Did you ever spend time looking back to see what caused the project to go wrong? If you did, chances are that you said, "You know, we should have spent more time planning."

Project management focuses first on planning. This is a vital discipline, and allows the project team and the client to have common perceptions of what the project is going to deliver, when it will be complete, what it will cost, who will do the work and how the work will be done. This includes:

- Understanding and gaining agreement on project objectives, deliverables, scope, risk, cost, approach, etc.
- Determining if the original business case is still valid. For instance, a project that requires 10,000 effort hours might make business sense. If the more detailed planning process determines that the effort is really 20,000 hours, the project may not make sense any more.
- Making sure the resources you need are available when you need them.

- Providing a high-level baseline from which progress can be compared and measured.
- Working with your client ahead of time on the processes used to manage the project.

Value statement: Utilizing a common definition and planning process sets common expectations and makes sure that only the right work gets done. It can also result in the cancellation of projects without a viable business case (which is a good thing).

Reuse of Processes and Templates

People intuitively understand that it is faster and cheaper to reuse something that already exists rather than to build something similar from scratch. If your organization creates a set of project management processes and templates that are used consistently from project to project, each instance represents a savings of time that would otherwise have been spent on building the processes from scratch.

Value statement: Utilizing common project management processes and templates will result in cost and time savings associated with having to otherwise develop them from scratch on each project.

Proactive Project Management Processes

People who complain that project management is a lot of 'overhead' forget the point. Your project is going to face issues. The question is whether you will proactively resolve them or figure them out as you go. Your project will face potential risks. Will you try to resolve them before they happen, or wait until the problems arise? Are you going to communicate proactively or deal with misunderstandings caused by lack of project information?

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The characteristics of the project are not all going to change whether you use a formal project management process or not. What changes is how the events are dealt with when the project is in progress. Are they dealt with haphazardly and reactively, or proactively with a smoothly running process?

Value statement: Having proactive and consistent processes in place will ultimately help projects run faster, cheaper and at a higher quality level.

More Effective Communication

Properly communicating on a project is a critical success factor for managing the expectations of the client and the stakeholders. If these people are not kept well informed of the project progress, there is a much greater chance of problems and difficulties due to differing levels of expectations. In fact, in many cases where conflicts arise, it is not because of the actual problem, but because the client or manager was surprised.

Value statement: Proactive communication allows you to better manage expectations and avoid misunderstandings and conflict, and it provides better information for decision-making.

Building a Higher Quality Product the First Time

Quality management is about putting processes in place to ensure that your work is of high quality the first time through. By practicing some simple quality management processes, you can deliver a higher level of quality and avoid the expense and time of having to fix things after the fact. Many project teams think they are in great shape until they get toward the end and start seeing problems in their deliverables. Then they realize that

they have a lot of rework to do, and suddenly the schedule is shot.

Value statement: Quality management helps you build your deliverables correctly the first time and saves costs overall by discovering problems as early in the project as possible.

What is Holding You Back?

After reading this paper so far, you might wonder why everyone does not utilize good project management techniques. Or you might ask yourself - why aren't you using them? There are usually a couple reasons.

1. **It requires resources and long-term focus.** Too many managers think that if they provide project management training to their staff, the fire will burn brightly afterwards as if by magic. I have bad news for you - it ain't gonna happen! Project management is a culture change initiative and needs to be deployed in a methodical, multi-faceted and long-term manner. If you are like most managers and think deploying project management is a quick hit initiative - think again. If you think the value of project management is so obvious that everyone will jump on board - think again. If your organization cannot keep focus on a change initiative for longer than three months - think again.
2. **Your organization is not committed.** It's hard to be a good project manager in an organization that doesn't value project management skills. Your entire organization must support a common project management process. You must also make sure your business clients and sponsors are on-board as well. Otherwise you are wasting your time trying to implement in a silo.

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3. **You don't have the right skills.** You may find that the lack of project management processes is not a matter of will, but a matter of skill. Sometimes people are asked to manage projects without the training or the experience necessary. In those cases, they struggle without the right tools or training to manage projects effectively.
4. **No one is responsible for project management.** Project management competency doesn't spring up by magic. Someone needs to own the initiative and be held accountable for it. This could be a senior manager of a Project Management Office (PMO). The bottom line is that is the initiative to deploy project management is important, and if you are not successful, someone or some group needs to be dinged (or fired).
5. **You were burned with methodology in the past.** When you start talking about processes, best practices and templates, some managers immediately start to think about overhead, delay and paperwork. They fail to immediately connect with the value that a methodology brings. Sometimes this criticism is a legitimate concern, but this is a problem caused by misapplying the methodology – not by the methodology itself. If you are the sponsor or senior manager and people complain about “paperwork” don't buy it – educate them instead.

Options for Obtaining a Methodology

To successfully implement a project management methodology, first

convince yourself that there is value if the processes are applied and utilized correctly. In fact, all projects use a mixture of processes, procedures and templates. If you don't think you have any, it really means that you have poor and informal ones.

If you need a good project management methodology, there are two major sources.

- **Build one yourself.** You can build a custom methodology that perfectly reflects the philosophy and best practices of your organization. Many companies continue to do this today.
- **Buy one.** If you build a methodology, you might be surprised to learn that it ultimately looks similar to most other project management methodologies that people use. No matter how you structure it, you still need to plan, build a workplan, manage scope and risks, communicate, etc. Therefore, many companies choose to buy or license a pre-existing methodology. These pre-built methodologies usually have everything your organization needs to be successful.

Of course, if you buy a methodology, you still may need to customize it to meet the specific needs of your organization. This gives you the benefits of option 1, while also taking less effort and cost, which is the major benefit of option 2.

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Implementing project management does not have to be a daunting task.

We have done it before.

Contact us for more information.

info@tenstep.com
877.536.8434 / 770.795.9097

About TenStep

TenStep, Inc. (www.TenStep.com) is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia (USA), and specializes in developing, consulting and training in business methodologies. The company's flagship product is the TenStep Project Management Process®, which has been licensed to thousands of companies and individuals around the world. In addition, TenStep has training, consulting and business methodology products covering Project Management Offices, portfolio management, software development and application support.

The TenStep process is translated into 14 languages, allowing it to be utilized by organizations in most parts of the world.

TenStep meets the needs of local businesses with a network of offices in the USA and around the world.

Our training classes include:

- **Project Management (advanced and basic)**
- Preparing for the PMP Exam

- Earned Value Management
- Setting up and Running Project Management Offices
- Setting up and Running Portfolios
- Gathering Business Requirements
- Many, many more

Our consulting services include:

- Project management deployment and customization
- Project Quickstarts
- Setting up PMOs
- Project management coaching, auditing documentation review
- Managing your projects
- Many more

About the Author:

Tom Mochal, PMP is the president of TenStep, Inc. (www.TenStep.com), a methodology development, consulting and training company. He is also the head of The TenStep Group, a network of TenStep offices supporting the TenStep process in numerous languages and countries around the world.

Mochal is author of a book on managing people called "Lessons in People Management" and a companion book on project management called "Lesson in Project Management". Mochal also authored all of the TenStep methodology products.

Mochal recently won the **Distinguished Contribution Award** from the Project Management Institute for his work spreading knowledge of project management around the world.

Mochal is a speaker, lecturer, instructor and consultant to companies and organizations around the world.

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He is a member of the Atlanta, Georgia (USA) chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI), the American Management Association (AMA), the American Society for the Advancement of Project Management (asapm®), and is a partner in The Management Mentors, a group dedicated to building knowledge in project management, IT management and leadership/personal development.

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