



Running A Tight Project

- An independent Project Assurance function ensures the project remains business focused.
- This is an ideal role for an outside organisation
- At the end of a project ensure that all the lessons learned are noted and acted upon



Rowallan Software Services

Rowallan Software Services Ltd was established in 1994 in response to a need for realistic and practicable advice for busy IT departments and, in particular, development teams.

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Project Assurance

by David Williams

If you are an IT Director or a Software Development Manager how well do you know the status of each of your projects? Is the upwards reporting accurate and fit for purpose?

No matter how trusting you might be of your subordinate management, you are likely to be too busy yourself to spend much time checking. You can never be truly certain that things are as your managers and team leaders say they are.

The only real way around this dilemma is to get a third party to check for you. Enter stage right the Project Assurance Manager. Most of the well known formal project management methodologies call for this kind of approach, although terminology might differ.

The role of the Project Assurance Manager is basically to ensure, on a continuing basis, that the project represents value for money and that it will deliver real value to the business.

The Project Assurance Manager should be independent of the rest of the project team, reporting in at the highest level e.g. the Project Executive in a PRINCE2 managed project. Indeed, a 'new broom' philosophy makes this an ideal sub-contract role.

The Project Assurance Manager is responsible for regularly monitoring a number of key project indicators including:

- ♦ The project meets user needs
- ♦ The project offers value for money
- ♦ The business case remains valid
- ♦ The project remains viable
- ♦ The solution being developed is acceptable
- ♦ Quality goals are being met

Project assurance can be as light or as heavy a touch as you want it to be. In a well run organisation it is certainly a part time project role. For a large project seen to be in trouble the role could easily extend to involve more than one person.

At The End Of A Project

by David Williams

The code is written, the testing is complete, all the stakeholders are happy, the software is ready for sale or deployment. Now what?

Most software teams I know would celebrate the event and move on to the next project. However, are we missing an opportunity here?

At the end of a project there is a lot of accumulated information and knowledge available. Some of this can be of use to subsequent projects. Plan to take some time out at the end of a project to analyse what happened and add the results into a project completion log kept for just such a purpose.

Try to identify lessons that can be taken into subsequent projects.

Ask yourself questions like the following:

- ♦ What were the final effort costs and how did they compare to the original estimates? Look for patterns, especially a factor that can be used to scale estimates.
- ♦ How well did the final software satisfy the requirements? Did the requirements capture process truly reflect user needs, or was there significant re-work?
- ♦ Did the users really know what they wanted anyway? Would an Agile approach have been better?
- ♦ Was the quality of the software going into system test adequate, or does there appear to have been too many problems leaking past the development phase?

None of this takes long to do - and it could lead to very significant savings in successor projects.