

People who complain that project management is a lot of 'overhead' miss the point. All projects are managed. The question is how effectively they are managed. For instance:

- Projects are going to face issues. Will those issues be proactively resolved or will they be “figured out” along the way?
- Projects will face potential risks. Will those risks be resolved “proactively” or will they be addressed after the problems arise?
- Will communications be proactive or will the team experience conflict and uncertainty caused by a lack of project information?
- Will the scope be managed effectively or will the project experience cost and deadline overruns caused by doing more work than should be included in the project?
- Will quality be built into the processes or will problems be fixed later when they become more costly to resolve?

The characteristics of projects are not 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 reactively or proactively?

Generally, it is believed that organizations that follow good processes are more successful than organizations that do not. These organizations tend to get more work done and focus on the work that is of most value.

The following reasons highlight why organizations do not implement, or encounter issues when establishing, a sound project management methodology:

- **Requires an upfront investment of time and effort.** Many people consider themselves to be 'doers'. They might also be comfortable with their planning skills. Many times there is a tendency to discuss a problem, and then go out and fix it. This works when you have a five-hour change request. It doesn't work on a 5,000-hour project. Resist the urge to jump right in. The project will be completed sooner if you properly plan it first and then have the discipline to manage the project effectively.
- **Organization is not committed.** It is difficult to be a good project manager in an organization that doesn't value project management skills. For instance, if you take the time to create a Project Charter document and your customer asks why you were wasting your time doing it, you probably are not going to be very excited about the planning process on your next project. To be most effective, the entire organization must support a common project management process.
- **Don't have the right people skills.** Managing projects requires both good technical skills and people skills. Ineffective project management processes may not be a matter of will, but more a matter of skill. Sometimes people with good technical skills are asked to manage projects, but they lack effective people skills as a result of lack of training or experience. In those cases, they struggle to manage projects effectively.
- **Senior managers think that project management is a tool.** When you discuss project management with some managers, they initially think you are trying to implement a tool that allows you to be a better project manager. Actually, if it were a tool, you might have more luck convincing them of the value. Even though some aspects of project management, like the creation and management of the schedule, may utilize a tool, that is not where the value of project management is. The value is in the disciplined utilization of sound, consistent processes.
- **Project Management adds unnecessary overhead.** 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. A common criticism of methodology is that it is cumbersome, paper intensive and takes too much focus away from the work at hand. The value is in the disciplined utilization of sound, consistent processes.
- **Fear of control from team members.** Many people like to be able to do their jobs creatively and with a minimum of supervision. They fear that formal project management techniques will result in tight controls that will take the

creativity and fun out of the work. To a certain extent they are right. However, common processes and procedures eliminate some of the creativity in areas where you probably don't want it in the first place. You don't need to be creative when dealing with scope change, for instance. You just need to follow the standard processes that are already in place.

- **Fear of the loss of control from management.** If you want to effectively implement a project management discipline in your organization, you must give a level of control and authority to the project manager. Some organizations and middle managers do not want to lose that control. These middle managers may want project managers to coordinate the projects, but the middle manager wants to make all the decisions and exercise all the control. Formal project management will not be possible in organizations where this fear is prevalent.

<http://www.tenstep.com/open/A1ValueofPM.html>