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Project Management Tips: How to Build a Work Breakdown Structure.

Most all project schedules are built using a Work Structure (WBS). The WBS is a project management tool designed to capture project tasks in a visual, organized manner. The WBS is developed by starting with the end objective and successively subdividing it into manageable components in terms of size, duration, and responsibility which include all steps necessary to achieve the objective. One of the most important Work Breakdown Structure design principles is called the 100% Rule. This rule states that the WBS includes 100% of the work defined by the project scope and captures all deliverables in terms of the work to be completed, including project management.



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A quarterly journal that brings information on modern project management methods, practices, and tools

1. Project Management Competencies

Competency is defined as the ability of an individual to perform a job properly. Competency is the combination of knowledge, skills, and behavior used to improve performance; or, having the ability to perform a specific role. A competency model identifies the competencies needed to perform a specific role in a job, organization, or profession. Simply put, a competency model helps define what people need to know and do to be successful.

For instance, project management competencies might include systems, emotional intelligence, negotiation, analytical, and persuasion skills.

A competent project manager needs to be able to analyze a situation within different contexts and create different action routes. Regardless of formal training, the competencies grow with experience and the degree of flexibility to learning and adapting.

A competency model usually has different levels as a way to identify potential areas of improvement; so that, people can work on building the skills that they lack of. A competency model also includes areas designed to group the different competencies into similar areas that can help identify the skills, behaviors, and knowledge required.

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2. Development Project Management Maturity Model

Created by PM4DEV, the Development Project Management Maturity Model (DPM₃[™]) is a framework used for the progressive development of an organization-wide project management capability. It determines how an organization is using project management. Organizations vary on their maturity levels based on their specific goals, strategies, resource capabilities, scope, and needs. The DPM₃[™] levels are:

Level 1 — Awareness: PM practices and processes are ad hoc. Management is aware of Project Management Methodology (PMM), but it has not taken the necessary steps to formalize it.

Level 2 — Understanding: Basic processes are defined but not utilized in all projects which results in varying results. Management understands the value of a PMM and begins to formalize it.

Level 3 — Adoption: Processes are repeatable and standard for all projects. Management is implementing a standard, repeatable

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PM4DEV has developed a simple competency model that describes the competency areas and levels.

Competency Areas:

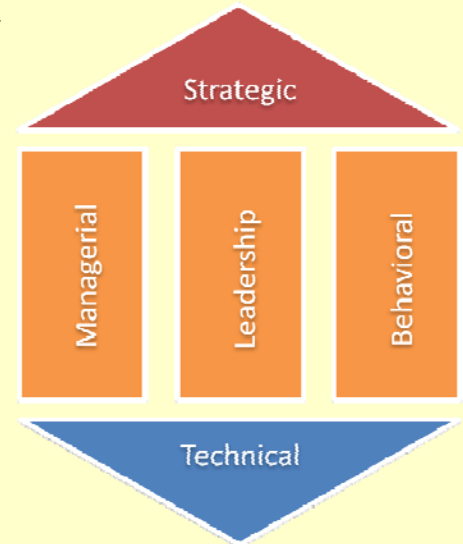
Technical: Knowledge of methods, metrics, tools, and techniques of Project Management Process Reengineering.

Behavioral: Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy, develops and maintains relationships, deals with difficult people, relates well to people from varied backgrounds, is sensitive to individual differences.

Managerial: Knowledge of the principles, methods, or tools for developing, scheduling, coordinating, and managing projects and resources including monitoring and inspecting costs, work, and contractor performance.

Leadership: skills required to influence, motivate, and challenge others including the ability to adapt leadership styles into a variety of situations.

Strategic: critical skills that enable project managers to link any given project to the strategy, goals, vision, and mission of their organization.



Competency Levels:

Novice: At this level a person begins its career in project management, most of the work assigned is rule-based. Requires limited behavioral skills, and little or no flexibility to move from the norm. Typical role: Project Assistant

Apprentice: At this level the person is building experience, guided by a mentor. Type of work is routine with small assignments and responsibilities. Typical role: Project Coordinator

Practitioner: At this level the person can take on small projects with small risks performing along defined expectations with long-term goals and plans. Typical role: Project Administrator

Knowledgeable: At this level the person is able to manage larger and complex projects, can see the situation as a whole, and acts from personal conviction whenever there is a need to deviate from the norm. Typical role: Project Manager

Expert: At this level the person has an intuitive understanding of the situation, has the ability to create new conditions to adapt to complex situations, manages multiple projects or programs ensuring that all are interrelated to generate the expected benefits. Typical role: Project Director

Each level is built on the previous level. As the levels go up so does the competency areas needed. A Project Management Competency model is a powerful tool that can help development organizations to identify the critical skill set requirements, hire more highly qualified people, and create effective development plans that best meet the needs of the organization. The benefits translate into the ability to manage all projects more efficiently, increase project impact, improve effectiveness, and increase the rate of successful projects. The model enables organizations to:

- Create job profiles that meet the requirements and help select the right resources for the project.
- Assess individual skills and organizational needs to develop the required training goals
- Customize capacity building efforts to meet organizational needs and measure the effectiveness of trainings.

It is common for development organizations to think that project management is a skill and that it is just for project managers. The reality is that project management is an organizational competency. If the organizational strategy implies strategic changes and those changes are executed as projects, project management must be an organizational capability rather than a job skill. If project management is an organizational competency, it is required to define a training program within the organization to develop everyone's project management knowledge and abilities.

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methodology across the organization.

Level 4 — Execution: PM processes are integrated with organizational processes. Management uses the established PMM to measure efficiencies and to obtain consistent results.

Level 5 — Performance: The focus is on achieving effectiveness. Management uses PMM to make strategic decisions and predict future results.

Level 6 – Excellence: Is achieving leadership and innovation in the industry. Management practices continuous improvement of its PMM.

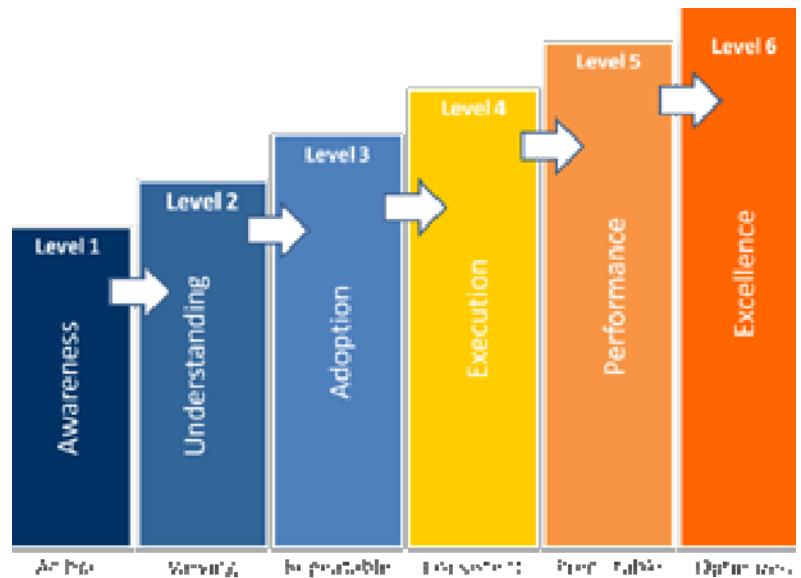
Where an organization stands on the maturity model is one of the biggest key factors determining the chances of success. The DPM3 tool helps identify strategic strengths and weaknesses which are then used to develop a detailed action plan for improving the capabilities of project management practices.

The main benefits of a structured maturity assessment is not necessarily in understanding the current level at which the organization is performing; but rather, in setting direction, prioritizing actions, and beginning a cultural change.

An organizational project management maturity model serves as a guide to articulate and measure project success, to measure project performance against organization goals, and to make the delivery of projects more predictable.

Benefits from using the DPM3 as a basis for process improvement are:

- Improved schedule and budget predictability
- Increased productivity
- Improved quality
- Increased stakeholder satisfaction
- Improved staff morale
- Increased impact



A project management maturity model is a progressive process during which organizations experience notable improvements at different stages of development. Those that follow the DPM3 will notice valuable results, such as , better control of project costs, and improved management decision-making , better coordination of resources, increased job satisfaction and more visibility and recognition by project partners and donors regarding the capacity to manage projects.

To find out how your organization can benefit from a complete assessment of its project management capabilities, visit our webs site and download our DPM3 brochure at : [\(link\)](#)

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3. Marketing your Project

The goal of marketing your project is to raise awareness about it and build stakeholder support to it, by saying how your project is unique. The use of a distinctive name or an image to promote public awareness of your work is called branding.

The Five Building Blocks to branding and marketing your project are:

- **What** - What the project will do?
- **How** - How the project will do this?
- **Why** - Why is the project important?
- **When** - When will the project start and end?
- **Who** - Who is the project target?

With this information you can develop a simple project marketing plan and strategies to market it. Some of the key actions of the plan include:

- **Create a logo** embodying the project, make it simple and visually memorable. Use it consistently in all the project materials. You may choose an acronym derived from the name of the project to help simplify communications.
- **Develop the core message or "story" of the project** describing how the goals of the project will address the needs of the beneficiaries.
- **Spread awareness about the project:** Early in the life of the project identify the channels to spread information about the project.
- **Create a website** for outreach and development and to publicize the project efforts to donors and stakeholders.
- **Create a video or documentary** highlighting the project work and showcase it to the local community.
- **Create Project newsletters.** Meant for marketing purposes, newsletter should always focus on positive news.



Marketing the project is an integrated communications-based process through which beneficiaries, partners, local authorities, and communities discover that existing needs and wants may be satisfied by the products and services of the project. Marketing the project helps increase its visibility among other initiatives in the community, particularly when most communities may be receiving support from various organizations; therefore, projects compete for attention. By properly marketing the benefits of the project, the community will have better information to make decisions.

A critical element of the marketing plan is the development of a compelling simple story describing the goals of the project in a way that will get people excited about as it sounds relevant to them, and they will be able to easily remember it. This message will attract stakeholders to the project; but if the story is not appealing, people won't get involved. A good story depicting a shared purpose attracts people who share this vision and are willing to work to make it real.

Marketing is not a one time event but a continuous effort. A common mistake is project that make short marketing efforts, rather than sustainable marketing. Marketing for the long-term, and consistently engaging people with the project means that the project is always seeking ways to connect with its stakeholders all the time and not only at the start of the project. Repeated and effective marketing ensures that the project remains in the minds of its intended beneficiaries. This in the longer run would help in establishing trust. Trust is created over a long period of time and marketing is an effective way in establishing it.

As a final step, monitor the effectiveness of the marketing plan, make appropriate changes, and adjust as necessary to improve the impact of the message.

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4. Facilitating Brainstorming Sessions

Many projects have to face situations where the identification of a solution is not always easy. One method to discover good ideas is brainstorming, as the fastest way to produce many potential solutions to a problem. If conducted properly, everyone will feel like their voice has been heard, and feel like they are part of the solution. The simplest reason to hold a brainstorming meeting is to increase the volume of possible ideas. By discussing a problem amongst 5-10 people; in theory, the manager should be able to obtain a wider array of different ideas much faster; than any one person could on their own.

The quality of the ideas generated will depend largely on how the session was conducted. A poorly managed session will result in poor ideas. Here are 9 simple steps to help a project manager or a project team member conduct an effective brainstorming session:



1. **Set the tone** - Explain how brainstorming works:
 - Everyone must understand that no idea is too outrageous or far fetched to be considered.
 - Everyone must understand that all ideas will be documented regardless of their perceived relevance.
 - There will be a later time to clarify and narrow down the prospective solutions.
 - Ask the group if anyone does not understand and agree with the above statements.
2. **Review the problem definition** - Ensure that all participants have the same understanding of what they are attempting to solve.
3. **Clarify** - the goal or desired outcome of the session; define terms that will be used during the discussion; get participants in the mindset of working towards the same goal.
4. **Give participants some time to independently think of or write down ideas** - This step can take 5 minutes to 1 hour. It all depends on the scope of the problem that you are attempting to solve. This is to be independent and silent.
5. **Get a scribe or two** - It's easier to facilitate and ensure that you keep control of the meeting if you have someone else writing down people's ideas. This will allow the facilitator to focus on things like body language, group and individual interactions, etc.
6. **Open up the brainstorm** - Have people begin saying their ideas one at a time. This should be done quickly. There is no time for discussion or clarification in this part of the brainstorming session. You can have many rounds to allow new ideas to emerge. Usually new ideas are generated from another idea.
7. **Write down all the ideas** - regardless of perceived relevance. Can be written on sticky notes or a white board, big enough for everyone to see.
8. **Rank favorite ideas** - At the end of the session, you could involve participants further by asking them to flesh out the selected ideas or you might choose to have a follow-up meeting to explore the selections.
9. **Define next steps** - Agree on a timeline and assign responsibilities. Once the session ends, circulate notes, monitor and give feedback. It's crucial to develop a clear and positive outcome; so that people feel their effort and contribution was worthwhile. When people see that their efforts have resulted in action and change, they will be motivated and keen to help again.

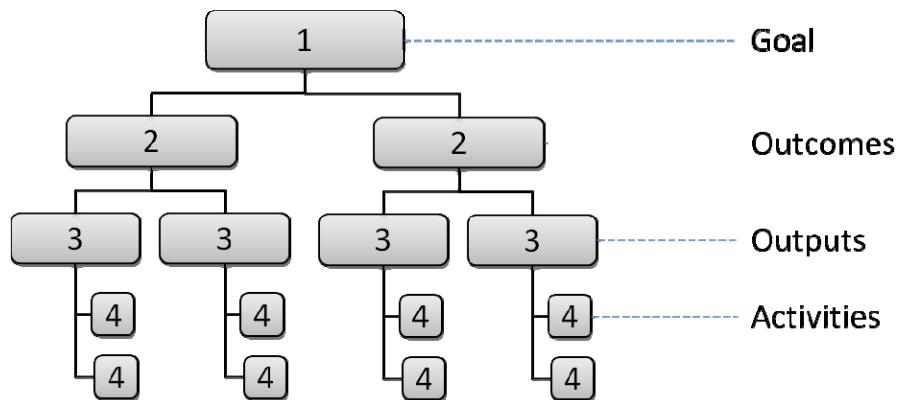
Brainstorming sessions bring people together into a creative process and increases the social nature of the project. As 8-10 people get in a room, if the meeting was conducted properly, they will walk out with a feeling that they are contributing to what they will be working on in the future. It can be a bonding experience; and more importantly, it will get people thinking and communicating with each other about topics relevant to the next few weeks or months ahead.

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The best way to adhere to the 100% Rule is to define WBS elements in terms of outcomes or results. This also ensures that the WBS is not necessarily to be followed strictly; but , that it allows for greater creative thinking from all project participants. The best approach to develop a WBS is to get together the people that have a good understanding of the work. Here are some tips to help develop a WBS:

1. **Start at the top level** - the project's ultimate goal extracted from the project log frame is the impact level.
2. **Identify all the outcomes** - or purpose that will support the achievement of the project goals.
3. **List the outputs or results** - that will support the different outcomes of the project
4. **List the project activities** - usually defined in terms of deliverables



Things to remember:

- The first two levels of the WBS define a set of planned outcomes that collectively and exclusively represent 100% of the project scope.
- The WBS elements are defined in terms of outcomes or results (Outcomes are the desired ends of the project that can be predicted accurately).
- Each WBS element has an identification number assigned which identifies its relative position within the structure.
- The WBS encompasses everything that will ultimately comprise the project deliverables.
- The WBS is not a project plan or a project schedule, and it is not a chronological listing.
- The WBS is not an exhaustive list of work. It is instead, a comprehensive classification of project scope.
- The WBS is decomposed down to the work package level. A work package is the lowest level in the WBS, and it is the point at which the cost and schedule for the work can be reliably estimated.
- All major tasks should be decomposed in work packages of a minimum of 8 hours and a maximum of 80 hours; which is the 8/80 rule.

PM Connect is the Journal of Development Project Management that offers wide ranging and comprehensive coverage of all facets of project management. Published quarterly, it provides a focus for worldwide expertise in the use of new frameworks, principles, technologies, methods, and techniques .

The points of view presented in this publication provide the PM community with topic summaries, that in PM4DEV's experience, have proved critical in the successful implementation of project management methodologies. For more information about PM4DEV , please contact us via email to info@pm4dev.com

Helen Stewart
Publications Manager

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