

WHITEPAPER

DRIVING BUSINESS SUCCESS

ASTA DEVELOPMENT WHITE PAPER

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WHY ENTERPRISE PROJECT MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project management excellence is a fundamental strategic driver of business success and can be highly supportive of the kind of strong governance that we should expect of all businesses, regardless of industry sector. Boards can no longer make assumptions about projects; they are operational realities and the need for projects to come in on time and budget is ever more critical, especially during a critical recovery phase. It is vastly underestimated how much successful project management and planning for outcomes can mitigate against business risk. Yet still, many senior executives remain unclear about how strong project management capabilities can have a direct impact on the efficiency of all their business operations, beyond the traditional homes of project management (like IT or outsourcing) and into other strategic areas (like HR or Facilities Management).

Every discipline needs to be effective when it comes to time, resource and money; this paper aims to show how, regardless of company size or industry, it is business-critical that an integrated project management solution be considered part of the business infrastructure. Its primary aim is to help executive management teams understand the fundamental supportive role that project management excellence plays inside their business and offers valuable insight into the vital contribution that board level ownership will bring to this area.

This paper outlines the essential role that projects play within organisations, discusses the practical business benefits of implementing the right tools and strategies to make every part of the business effective and offers expert advice on what to consider when implementing an effective change of approach. Crucially, this paper offers practical guidance on how to choose the right strategic solution for your business, derived from real-world examples.

Project management has traditionally been perceived as a functional activity rather than a focus for the attention or investment of other strategic operations, and it has mistakenly been assumed that its strengths are relevant only to certain industries. It is time to dispell these myths and for companies to realise how, with board-level ownership and companywide participation, the critical activity of strategically driven project management can make a world of difference in engendering great success in business.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Business leaders are missing a vital opportunity to employ strategic project management tools which could directly underpin, assure and provide critical oversight of their efforts towards strong recovery and future business success. The aim of this paper is to help executive management teams understand the fundamental supportive role that project management excellence plays inside their business.

With a perspective that comes from more than 20 years' experience in the project management software market, we strongly believe that two factors are now combining to blinker senior teams from seeing the contribution and value that a higher-level approach to project management could deliver. This default positioning within companies needs to change if businesses are to pursue their plans for stability and growth within a continuing tough economic environment.

Firstly, project management has for too long been regarded as a functional activity. As a focus for investment or attention it has either been limited to application within specific areas such as IT management, production management or the execution of specific corporate programmes such as a major outsourcing activity. As a corollary, project management talent has perhaps not always been prioritised alongside other key talent disciplines – and it is time for that to change. At the same time project managers and planners share the responsibility to engage better on a business basis with senior executives.

Secondly, there is an assumption that project management applies only within certain industries, which limits the wider adoption of professional project management strategies. The assumption is that sectors like construction, engineering and manufacturing are the only ones that truly rest upon aspects such as resource, time and progress management. The reality is that these factors underpin all industries to some degree. The root of this problem perhaps rests in the original development path of project management and its supporting tools. They did indeed start by focusing in on many of the fundamental delivery challenges of such industries – but expanded long ago to encompass a vastly more powerful landscape of business challenges including management transparency, financial planning and compliance – core concerns of many boards.

Company leadership teams are missing a major

“We had a vision – not only did we intend to coordinate all the projects and plans in one place, we wanted a solution that, although would have its beginnings in the IT department, would grow to become an Authority-wide tool, one that could deal with corporate planning.”

**Tony Jones,
Business Solutions Manager,
ICT Department, Denbighshire
County Council**

opportunity to leverage a richly developed professional discipline which could have a wide impact across the enterprise, in any industry. Asta Development has helped companies to hone their project management approaches within a highly mature software sector that can unquestionably support enterprises at the strategic level. Decades of practical learning and development have created advanced enterprise project management platforms, including its own Asta Powerproject suite, which provide companies with tools that could be applied directly to many of the very mission-critical programmes and transformations upon which their future depends.

Projects are operational realities, and boards can no longer afford to make assumptions about them; they require a much better insight into operational strategy if they are to run businesses effectively.

This paper takes a fresh look at the topic of projects as a core enterprise success factor and explores how success is created through project management excellence. We will expand this comprehension to create a greater appreciation of the importance of enterprise project management platforms.

They can be fundamental driving forces for success and strong governance during a critical recovery phase and should be regarded in the same critical light as other strategic IT platform investments.

2. PROJECTS: THE ESSENCE OF GETTING ANYTHING DONE

The word 'project' is deceptively simple. If the importance of managing projects as a strategic operation within organisations is to be fully appreciated, that simplicity must be dispelled and the management of projects given a greater prominence and scrutiny.

- ▼ *Projects are essential in a true sense.* They are the essence of how all things get done by companies, governments, countries and people. The reality is that the process of setting an aim, establishing the resources, path and process of achieving that aim is how countries build their infrastructure, how scientists develop solutions to society's needs, how small companies become big companies - and how all organisations effect change. The Association of Project Management (APM) actually defines project management exactly this way: as **a way of managing change**. This is a familiar and enduring concept for leaders – which begs the question why it has languished unrecognised as a corporate strategic weapon. The importance of project management must endure from the initial inception of a change goal, through its planning and execution, right to the end outcomes and assessment of the impact on the business.
- ▼ *Projects are a business constant – at any one time many projects of different sizes may be under way within a company.* Projects are characterised differently from ongoing 'business as usual' operations, because of two factors. The APM explains this in the form of both **Uniqueness** – requiring people to come together to pursue specific objectives, and **Transience** – having a predetermined specific start and end point. We would perhaps qualify this, since the word 'transience' can suggest a short duration; projects can, of course, have any duration and some may be planned over the course of years to achieve a set of target outcomes.

“Asta Powerproject helps us to **organise people more effectively**. It captures what staff are doing and on which days ... it helps us channel the right work in the right direction. Our forward planning is outstanding compared with where at the beginning of the year...”

Tony Jones, Business Solutions Manager,
ICT Department, Denbighshire County Council

“We selected Asta Powerproject as it helps us to manage the many road projects required most effectively. The combination of it being an **easy-to-use tool**, together with the **high-quality reports it produces** makes it ideal to support our requirements. The multi-user application is **extremely useful as it allows different members of the project team to access the most up-to-date data at the same time.**”

Kevin Balaam, Area 6 Programme Manager,
Atkins Highways & Transportation

- ▼ *Project management is a driver of company-wide efficiency.* The importance of achieving the objectives and doing so in the most effective, efficient and optimal way is the overriding goal of all project management. This comes into stark focus when, as is always the case, multiple or inter-dependent projects are under way inside any organisation. Better insight and information can highlight duplication, overlap and conflict between activities, and offers methods of prioritisation and resolution to minimise costs, plan resources better, avoid unexpected delay, and capture learnings for future analysis.
- ▼ *No matter the scale or duration, projects require proactive management.* Project management is the higher-level operation which actually makes things happen. For today's business, that throws a light on things like managing collaboration, teamwork and cross-functional alignment, ensuring that all individuals have the information that they need to perform without causing interruption or delay in the overall progress. These are absolutely central to many other corporate and IT system transformations which are currently under way within business too – from enterprise content management initiatives to supply chain transformation and management, outsourcing and so on.

All of these demonstrate just how fundamentally integral projects are to any company – and will apply no matter the size or sector. Any executive team which does not have both broad oversight and the ability to query and drill into underlying factors to understand the dependencies they have on these will be at a potential disadvantage on its competitive and economic fronts alike.

3. PRACTICAL BUSINESS BENEFITS

- ▶ Win at tender stage – considerable investment of time and effort can be minimised, and a demonstrable, fully resourced plan can be crafted to demonstrate your ability to deliver on time
- ▶ Plan for outcomes – avoid unexpected delays and equip business with the means to adapt around potential problems
- ▶ Run for optimum efficiency – balance and maximise use of expensive and increasingly scarce resources
- ▶ Report with transparent communication – shared, easily navigable reporting on critical information enabling effective resolution and executive decision making
- ▶ Protect with a central repository – a comprehensive capture of every step of a project or a delivery process for accurate auditing and compliance

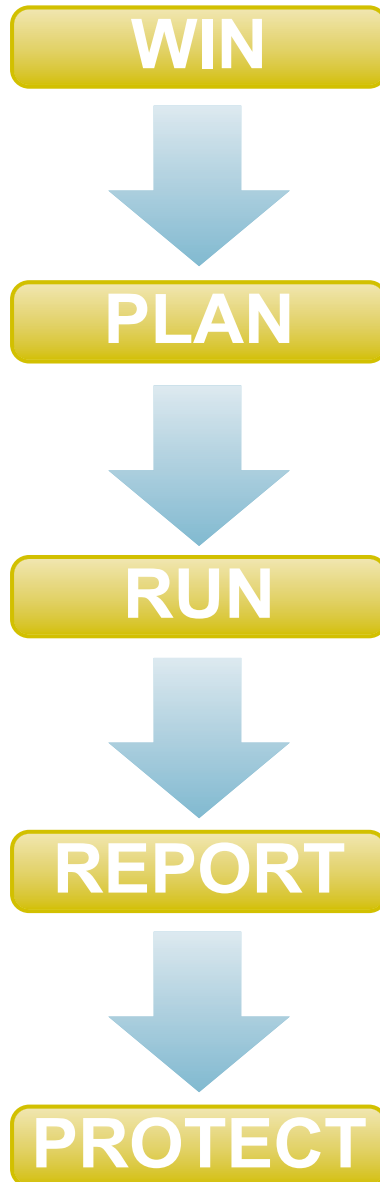
Effective project management unlocks a series of specific, necessary and important outcomes which are key to business survival and success. Business failure can sometimes be about project management failure and planning for outcomes mitigates against business risk. Good project management should be the driver that will allow you to Win, Plan, Run, Report and Protect your business.

WIN

a) **Win – planning and assuring yourself you have an economic and deliverable proposal that can be properly communicated to prospective businesses.** For many companies winning business has become a hugely complex and critical project in its own right, as many face up to new challenges and competitive landscapes. At the tender stage many customers now demand a demonstrable, fully resourced project plan with clear deadlines simply to be sure that completion on time and on budget is possible. This can take a considerable investment of time and effort, which

“Asta Powerproject is undoubtedly helpful to us in winning contracts, it means we can produce better quality information. We can enhance it by using histograms to give clients the cashflow forecasts that they want – it’s simple to do using the software and clients like it, it gives them more information and more confidence in us.”

Robin Percy, Planning Manager,
J Breheny Contractors



can be minimised with the right software solution that provides appropriate, concise yet clear schedules and programme reports. Providing this level of detail at such an early stage lends huge confidence that a company can deliver to potential customers – making it a powerful competitive weapon.

PLAN

b) Plan – plans that are deliverable and have been tested for robustness that are properly resourced and supported, giving an oversight of how multiple projects across the businesses are interdependent. Dealing with unexpected issues like delays and their associated implications can have serious impact on a business.

Unforeseen issues thanks to ineffective planning, scheduling or neglecting to test assumptions can damage customer relationships, create extra costs and interrupt key processes. Clear planning of the responsibilities of all aspects of a programme from the outset avoids unexpected delays and enables businesses to adapt around a potential problem occurring in the first place.

RUN

c) Run – running the business on a day-to-day basis; balancing and maximising use of expensive and increasingly scarce resources. Optimising staffing is essential for either regular staff on a project or when using expert engineers or specialists so they are all utilised to the maximum degree possible. Careful planning of all staff involvement on any activity or project means deployment changes can be made in real time and precisely when needed. The use of timesheets can be a great asset for gathering and understanding actual information about task progress and project updates, and can give valuable insight into how efficiently resource is being utilised. Similarly, monitoring and gaining intelligence about process efficiency enables continuous improvement, allowing for simpler real-time conflict resolution before an issue becomes a real problem.

“In a 4D model, you can see what is not going to work at the planning phase, and this can solve as much as 90% of the problems before you start construction. ... You can work with ‘what if?’ scenarios: if something is late, we can see what will happen further down the line. You can take into account the critical path and compare it with what is actually going on. The baseline actual versus the planned is well managed in Asta Powerproject, seeing what is going to happen means you can fix it in advance, saving costs and time and resource.”

Koenraad Nys, Managing Partner and main co-founder, D-Studio

“We use the system in two ways: in a business solutions role, which is customer-facing, and in a more strategic role on the support and services side, which is operations. Within these roles Asta Powerproject suite is used to get all the current, future and potential projects into one pipeline ... It also allows us to see what would happen if we put an urgent project in front of another. So we can future balance and plan for what we need to take on.”

Tony Jones, Business Solutions Manager, ICT Department, Denbighshire County Council

“All resources, schedules, planned projects and financial information can be pulled off the system. We can see at a glance what we planned against actual figures, what projects are coming up and which resource to allocate. We can run a planned and pro-active process of management and have the time to deal with anything that goes wrong ...”

Rebecca Mitton, Project Manager, Canon Europe Ltd

REPORT

d) **Report** – reporting functionality is a critical feature of any good enterprise project management system. This enables high-level transparency and reporting at board level, essential for gaining high-level management buy-in and to support effective decision making. The information that is used comes from the same central source as that used by all levels of management. That means managers at all levels can see and drill down into the granular detail and enable effective resolution when and if problems crop up during a project. Internal and external reporting factors also include customer communications and stakeholder/supply chain collaboration. Companies today all recognise the vital importance of information and business intelligence; project management systems should be a part of this thinking.

PROTECT

e) **Protect** – powerful capture and analysis tools enabling auditing and regulatory compliance, for managing SLA disputes, protecting against delay and disruption claims and learning from mistakes to avoid repeat. Managing operations via a full, complete and comprehensive capture of each step of a project or a delivery process is extremely powerful when it comes to later investigation and discovery, including exactly what happened when, by whom and how it varied from the baseline plans. The power of a central repository comes from providing a single version of the truth and an undisputable resource and audit trail.

Well managed projects sit at the heart of business. Along with other key strategic factors they enable good management decision making, enhanced visibility, processes that work, resource efficiency, and increased communication with corporate stakeholders. The larger your business, the more vital it is to manage multiple simultaneous projects and operational activities across it, handling interdependencies and issues ahead – especially in uncertain times.

“Asta Powerproject is more beneficial when it comes to senior management reports ... they have a dashboard that gives them not only the high level view of everything that they need to know, but the option to drill down and see the information at a more granular level ... we can use it to show senior management that we need extra resource to complete on time ... and the knock-on effect that this will have on other projects if we don't. Most importantly the dashboard tool helps senior management understand what we are up against; therefore, they are more engaged with what we are doing and our requirements.”

Robert Douglass, Systems Project Manager,
Denbighshire County Council

“Having visibility of all projects and resources and making sure we are on budget against what we estimated is, of course, of paramount importance to us. But when it comes to having to explain why something took longer or cost more, we know that the software contains the answer. We consult it to find out where something slipped or overran. We can pinpoint the certain areas where the problem occurred, for example, we might find out that someone new who was not up to speed was working on the project – so it helps us keep track and provides an audit trail.”

Ali McGuckin, Client Services Director,
Stalis Ltd

“For any risk, I need to be able to demonstrate any claim. Using Asta Powerproject I can show evidence for any part of the programme, because everything that is logged in it is an indisputable true record of events ... It would be very hard for anyone to disprove anything we say... Right from the start Asta Powerproject has been a true asset to our business.”

Neil Turner, Managing Director,
Bovey Construction

4. OPERATIONAL REALITIES RULE

In some ways the 'traditional' concerns of boards and executive leaders have changed. While profitability and growth remain central to the purpose of a company, the turmoil of the years since the 2008 economic nosedive have created a range of new realities which boards can no longer afford to ignore. Consulting firm Deloitte looked at

the issues of boards in 2012 and beyond¹ and outlined the worries of adapting to the 'new normal' of increased uncertainty. Of particular interest, they highlighted a key change: the increasing need for boards of directors to take a much more strategic role in operational management.

A STRATEGIC ROLE IN OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

"This is a broad scope for a board because operational management encompasses activities included in the delivery of products or services that ranges through process design, cost management, employee remuneration, succession planning, innovation, compliance, and more. It is through the combination of these processes – resources, people, knowledge, technology, and facilities – that the organization delivers on its commitments, which will often cover a range of policy and strategy considerations."

The report also poses three key questions that boards should ask:

- ▼ "Does our board play an appropriate role in the oversight of operational management and the execution of strategy?"
- ▼ Do we receive reports on key performance indicators needed for us to understand the operational issues facing the organization and to guide the board's input into the development of short-, medium-, and long-term goals and objectives?"
- ▼ Does our board receive regular reports on strategic and tactical operational matters, including those related to efficiency, effectiveness, performance benchmarks for competitors and other industries, customer satisfaction indices, and other reports on the execution of strategy?"

Extract from *Deloitte - Directors' Alert: 12 issues for 2012 – When Uncertainty Reigns*

Such studies strongly support our view that boards can no longer divorce themselves from the operational practicalities of their businesses, and must work much more closely with their management teams to get the insight they need.

From the perspective of those driving a company in this day-to-day reality, things like corporate agility are also brought much further up the agenda, along with needing to see a much wider set of

'what if' scenarios in order to head off any destabilising risks. Creating predictability and the ability to plan in operations is more important than ever. Gaining a dependable view of key metrics is essential.

Managing resources up, down and across the organisation is central to financial stability and, for many companies, resource costs are hugely dominated by expensive people. Ensuring these are effectively planned and deployed is a key facet of

“We can see where contingency is being eaten away and the effects on on-time delivery ... Conflicts are highlighted and because we are aware of what's coming up, we can give a realistic picture to the customer ... Asta Powerproject suite gives us that knowledge, allowing us to forward plan and pass that information on to our customers weeks or even months in advance instead of days, this makes them far more accepting of a possible delay and so Asta Powerproject suite helps us improve customer relations.”

Robert Douglass, Systems Project Manager,
Denbighshire County Council

¹ http://www.corpgov.deloitte.com/binary/com.epicentric.contentmanagement.servlet.ContentDeliveryServlet/USEng/Documents/Board%20Governance/Directors%20Alert%202012_Deloitte_010412.pdf

business efficiency. It includes retaining top talent, especially those who keep core operations running, as well as securing and working more collaboratively with the supply chain in order to assure every aspect of production or distribution. Delivering on every project, every commitment and to every customer is essential. Above all, for senior management, maintaining a clear and complete view across the organisation is critical.

Fulfilling on these needs, getting the dependable information and oversight that leadership in this environment requires, demands the very systematic underpinnings that enterprise project management solutions play a key role in delivering. They sit firmly alongside other key systems that drive and deliver the business intelligence that senior leaders require to run businesses.

“ Every business today has to keep costs under control, and everyone is under pressure to get their product to market more quickly and within budget. So careful resource management is critical to ensure there is no wastage of time or money. One of our department’s success metrics is meeting deadlines; Asta Powerproject suite assists us to achieve this by helping us to set realistic end dates, to monitor the schedule and manage deadlines. ”

Peter Jones, Programme Manager,
Canon Europe Ltd

5. A STRATEGIC SOLUTION CHOICE

Core capabilities that are required when choosing Project and Portfolio software:

- ▼ Core capabilities that are required when choosing Project and Portfolio software:
- ▼ Right-sized solution for the company’s needs
- ▼ Supports multiple teams and locations
- ▼ Superior presentation capabilities
- ▼ Business intelligence features
- ▼ Rapid time to implementation
- ▼ Ability to visualise projects
- ▼ Scenario testing that feeds into planning and forecasting

Making the appropriate choice of a Project & Portfolio Management solution should be a strategic decision, much as choosing the right corporate financial management platform or other key system. Choices need to be assessed in the light of helping you to maximise business opportunities and minimising your risks, as well as ensuring it has the specific features and capabilities you need.

The ability to manage project management basics such as tasks, resources, time-lines and so on are core capabilities that should be expected in professional project management tools.

The suitability of a solution as a strategic tool for business success is not only driven by

these factors, but also by other points to consider such as:

- ▼ *Select a right-sized solution* for the company’s needs. All projects, regardless of size or complexity, need to be well managed. Smaller projects are as susceptible to change or delay just as much as larger ones. Good project, portfolio and resource management software that can meet the requirements of both ends of the spectrum is what companies need in order to manage the success of all of their projects. Software packages, such as Asta Powerproject, are capable of running small and large projects, eliminating the need for companies to implement

multiple instances of desktop project management tools which are simply not designed for anything other than individual projects. Although these tools are sometimes good at connecting with other office software, they usually only support the most basic of project management tasks. They also are not designed to share or aggregate information across multiple projects or leverage a central project information database. This means that, unlike Asta Powerproject, they can never scale up: inherent limitations effectively bar them from effectively supporting a multi- project enterprise environment or portfolio of projects.

- ▼ *Supporting multiple teams and locations.* The reality of most companies is that information updates will flow from different places and individuals, such as engineers based on different sites. Information held locally rather than centrally will rarely be robust and consistent (at least, not without a lot of extra work to check and correct it). It is also rarely able to generate an up- to-date view thanks to the time-lag between updates from different people. Other factors will include multi-project visibility, and the ability to import blocks of data from different sources into a Master programme to support very large projects. It is crucial to have easy access to all progress information to see clearly what is actually happening and increasingly to be able to do this via the web with mobile access.
- ▼ *Look for superior presentation capabilities* that can support both internal management reporting and external presentation needs. Presentation capabilities will vary widely, but for the most effective implementation the ease of use should be a priority; effortless presentation export and output which has flexibility to present a variety of histograms and charts will enable the maximum value to be gained. Pay attention to practical printing matters too – many project management solutions are not designed for easy output and printouts can run over many pages; Asta Powerproject also allows a simple click and print of summaries designed for a single page and the rapid perusal by busy stakeholder audiences.
- ▼ *Business intelligence features* that enable easy stakeholder engagement sit alongside the need for good presentation but are distinctly different. The higher-level management audience is rarely interested in the minutiae but benefits from an aggregated dashboard view of the kind that Asta Powerproject delivers – although they also need the option to drill into detail to see what is

“ We wanted to manage resources centrally, have a global view of all projects and linked planning on multiple projects ...

We chose Asta Powerproject mostly because it is so much more user-friendly and cost-efficient; it offers us the amount of functionality we need, without paying for additional capabilities not required for the framework, in essence right-sizing the product for customer usage. ”

Gavin Clegg, Framework Programme Manager, NMCNomenca

“ Interrelations and time sheet functionality are of the utmost importance to us; the projects are multi-purpose, inter-related and need to be accessible to all staff and customers. We need to know that the best resource is allocated to the right project at the right time to ensure we all work together most efficiently. This is why Asta Powerproject suite was the perfect fit. ”

Peter Aspinall, IT Service Development Manager, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals Trust

“ There were clear interfacing risks between trades, because the earthworks and structural engineers were using different programmes that never met in the middle. We were always having clashes between activities simply because they weren't visible in the same programme. Having Asta Powerproject eliminated the risk of conflicting and mutually exclusive activities being planned in for the same timeframe. ”

Steve Allen, Project Manager for Earthworks, Banora Point Upgrade Alliance

“ We have created a programme template ... It looks good and is easy to use. Each time we get a new project we don't have to reinvent the programme schedule – we can adapt the template to meet the needs of each programme. It's a very powerful feature that can easily be carried out in just a click – saving large amounts of time. ”

Ian Birch, Project Planner, H&J Martin

actually happening if they wish, which is also supported. Manually composing fiddly reports is a huge waste of project manager time compared with an interactive dashboard.

- ▼ *Rapid time to implementation should be a key factor* in selecting the right solution and drives assurance of a business return on investment. Some higher-end project management solutions can require a fairly significant preparation period including careful coding before planning can commence, as well as interfaces that take time for users to learn to navigate. All solutions will claim they are easy to learn (and, of course, many are -- but this is often balanced by limited capabilities to scale up). Asta Powerproject is truly unusual: it has been designed to allow commencement in around an hour, with a highly intuitive interface that makes it easy to use while having a feature-rich capability for managing complex activity which you can draw on as your experience grows.
- ▼ *The power to visualise projects* and project factors directly affects the user's job effectiveness. Moving around rapidly, the provision of features that cut out the need to scroll through multiple screens and smart visual representation of project information can directly drive job performance in addition to project efficiency. Asta Powerproject's aggregation of activities into a single window and the ability to place project areas on screen side by side are good examples that are not present in some mainstream competitor solutions.
- ▼ *Scenario testing feeds into more effective planning and forecasting*, and the ability to create 'what if' scenarios is hugely powerful for testing out assumptions. Creating multiple plans has often been the route, but is impractical in the real-world business environment where duplication of effort is wasteful. Asta Powerproject allows for this with its multiple-undo capability: it allows you to test out numerous scenarios and always return easily to the original, even after a save, unlike some other systems which can cause accidental overwrites if you have auto-save enabled.

“Asta Powerproject is especially useful to us for Risk Analysis. It has a “What If” manager. Using that we can run various scenarios of what would happen if...? For example, if it snowed for a month and we couldn't carry on with certain arts of the build, Asta Powerproject will tell you all the implications of that event, allowing all rescheduling along the way and automatically fixing end dates. We can manage the baseline using that function.”

Ray Ferguson, Planning Manager,
Graham Construction

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

Having found the right solution, there are a few other important considerations in implementing an effective change of approach:

- ▼ Effective management of the transition
- ▼ Clear ROI and rapid payback
- ▼ Communicating the change well
- ▼ Professional services team to help integrate with other enterprise systems
- ▼ Flexible licensing
- ▼ Joined-up IT

Having found the right solution there are a few other important considerations in implementing an effective change of approach. These include:

- ▼ **Managing the transition** project well – and engaging the right people in the decision process is key. The only people who will truly understand the best tool for project success in your organisation are the senior planners and project managers who already understand the dynamics of project management within your environment. As with implementing any IT solution change, establishing a project team which includes a management sponsor to champion the needs of the business, plus planners or project management experts to represent the functional priorities will help to assure an effective changeover.

“It’s a big investment to implement new planning software and to use it throughout an organisation. We talked to Asta and found the most beneficial option for us. We chose to have network licences or multiple-user licensing ... Asta makes the options flexible for you depending on your requirement.”

Robin Percy, Planning Manager,
J Breheny Contractors

- As with any other IT investment, returning clear ROI and achieving rapid payback is important. It must be well supported in terms of installation and **customer support**, to ensure users become immediately productive. Not all solutions are supported in-country or by a team that can prioritise individual customers of any size and deliver both a knowledgeable and personalised support service.
- Communicating** change is vital, especially if implementing a solution across the business which may displace personal favourite tools or ‘DIY’ spreadsheet-based project solutions. Enabling easy transition for users who will have used a variety of desktop, office and other project management tools needs an engagement plan and a system that is easy to install and learn, because you will need to overcome inertia and ‘not invented here’ issues.
- It is very important to have a well established solution backed up by a strong **professional services** team to work with you to integrate with other enterprise systems such as SAP and other business tools at the commissioning stage. Ongoing, locally available support under agreed SLAs is increasingly important for larger organisations that support large communities of staff accessing project management tools.
- Flexible **licensing** is an advantage when it comes to ensuring the right financial as well as functional fit for the solution, and can help to evaluate the investment on a per user basis, rather than selecting from a limited range of standard licenses.

- Joined up IT** strategic thinking is smart, so deciding on the right solution for project management should not be done in isolation. There are other IT drivers pressing on organisations. For example, enabling collaboration and joint working across an organisation is a focus for many at present, and central to driving efficiency initiatives in the public sector. Mobility and supporting ‘any-time’ access is a consideration everywhere. There are many initiatives under way focusing on unlocking and utilising business intelligence and business analytics. Making data more available and easier to share internally and externally is core to current IT strategies of many businesses, as is how to manage increasing volumes and varieties of enterprise content – of which project information in all its varieties is a part. Choosing the right project management platform should form part of your data management decision making, relating directly to how data is managed and centrally distributed, ensuring one version of truth upon which the company can depend.

“Asta’s support service is excellent, they get back to you very quickly. We have seen the software be developed over the years from version to version, and with each new version previous glitches have disappeared and new functionality comes in. So it is obvious that Asta Development is listening to its customers and taking on board their requests.”

Ray Ferguson, Planning Manager,
Graham Construction

6. A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Moving project management into a more strategic position in the organisation will not be achieved solely through recognition at board level. It must be driven and supported by all those involved in project management activities, especially those in key roles such as planners and project managers. If they do not communicate the value of the rigour in their project management activities at every stage, and how these benefit the business as a whole as opposed to a single project, efforts to gain engagement and buy-in further up the organisation may be fruitless. Each has their own responsibility to communicate and engage within their project teams in relevant ways, and similarly to communicate with management level and upwards in a way that can be related to.

Enterprise project management software can be a powerful communications tool in its own right. It

plays a real role in making strong business cases for investment, especially when used to generate higher-level reports which link KPIs to business benefits, or to provision senior-level traffic light summary reports that show a broader view of multiple projects across the business. Perhaps of

even more impact on a day-to-day basis, senior management need to see what challenges the project management teams are facing if they are to make appropriate funding and resourcing decisions.

A more business-like approach to communicating inside the business can raise the profile of the function and expertise of individuals – this in turn can reinforce the case for professional project management recruitment and ongoing continuing professional development.

7. CONCLUSION

Project management is not just about avoiding failure in projects but ensuring success in business – creating the parameters within which success is guaranteed, defining the route and managing it every step of the way. For companies, achieving success is about putting all the tools and strategies in place to make every part of their business effective, and good project management lies at the very heart of that. Missing out on a key opportunity is not smart, and for companies that plan on succeeding in this tough environment, is not an option. Regardless of company size or industry, it is business-critical that your integrated project management solution is considered part of your company infrastructure.

Investing in project management skills and professional development for your project management professionals is certainly one step towards an increasing understanding of the key role project management can play in an organisation. However, to make a real difference it is even more important to assign board-level ownership. Just as other key corporate functions such as financial management must have clear owners, so should this vital activity. Project management is inextricably linked with other aspects of management, and so demands collaboration with areas such as HR, finance, production and supply chain management,

which must be driven from the top down to be effective. In many companies it may have a natural home with the Chief Operating Officer, but may equally depend on sector and focus of business. Regardless, whoever leads the thinking in this respect should not only be driving collaboration across the business, but be challenging the company's operational managers and project management professionals to raise their game too, demanding the information that is needed to run the company for the future.

This critical activity simply cannot be supported by a disparate range of isolated tools and DIY approaches – and that is a current reality in many organisations at present. The final pillar of ensuring that project management excellence plays a real role in business success is to invest properly in enterprise-wide project management and ensure it is fit for purpose. Making the right selection of a project management solution to support business success needs to look beyond project management functionality and seek wider business benefits which align behind business goals and success factors. It should be right up there with your other key IT system decisions. It is not only something for the CIO to consider, but the CEO and COO too. It has to support the business from top to bottom and from edge to edge.

ABOUT ASTA POWERPROJECT SUITE

Asta Powerproject suite is a class-leading project, portfolio and resource management solution used successfully throughout the world on projects of all sizes and by all industry sectors. The software is suitable for use by anyone involved in the delivery of a project.

Asta Powerproject suite has been developed with input from our users' industry over more than 20 years and is the preferred software of thousands of project professionals throughout the world who like its combination of ease of use with feature-rich functionality.

It is employed by many sectors including: Construction, IT Services, Civil Engineering , Software Developers , Public Sector, Engineering, Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Financial Services, Consultancy Firms.

Read more about Asta Powerproject suite here <http://www.astadev.com/products/asta-powerproject/>

ABOUT ASTA DEVELOPMENT

Asta Development is a leading international developer of project, portfolio and resource management software which provides solutions for managing any size and any type of project.

Since its launch in 1988, the company's core product, **Asta Powerproject**, has evolved and improved driven by regular feedback from users and using the latest technologies available.

Having proved its capabilities over the years on high profile projects throughout the world such as Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam; Jumeirah Park, Dubai; The London Eye and The Shard in London, The Space Shuttle, New Orleans; Ipswich Motorway, Brisbane and The Reichstag, Berlin, **Asta Powerproject** is now used by thousands of planners in a wide variety of industry sectors in the UK, Europe, Asia Pacific and the USA. Companies large and small are using Asta Powerproject, as well as a growing range of new software products from Asta, to successfully plan and manage projects of all sizes.

In the UK, Asta Development supports customers directly from its offices in Oxfordshire and Shropshire with a comprehensive range of services including consultancy, training and technical support. Outside the UK, it has a network of partners and distributors who supply, train and support customers in 20 countries and in seven different languages.

Asta Development is a part of Eleco plc, a holding company focusing on software and advanced off-site building systems for the construction industry. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

More information about Asta Development and its products can be found at www.astadev.com and information about Eleco plc can be found at www.eleco.com.

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