

Project Management: On Going Challenges from Project Application to Successful Implementation

Aleš Trunk
International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia
ales.trunk@mfdps.si

Abstract:

Through the development of quality project implementation, the emphasis from controlling products moved in the interim to control the implementation of the activity, and later on the establishment of comprehensive quality assurance systems at all levels. Project management requires the use of appropriate project management methods. In practice, we find that the best effects are achieved using a combined approach that contains elements of process-oriented methods - rigid and ineffective (ensure control over project phases, easy planning, easier risk management and easy traceability) and an agile approach (increase the possibilities of success, especially when performing complex project tasks). For quality project implementation, an important role is also played by the project office, which, in addition to informing the management about the stage of projects, is responsible for the methodology of project work, the development of a project culture, learning on experience, organized and coordinated action of all teams.

Keywords: project management, project application, implementation, quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Experienced project managers are going to say (Kerzner & Kerzner, 2017): "good preparation is half the work done". Practice has shown that without a good project plan, the participants do not know when and what to do. Consequently, the implementation of the project is unorganized and the implementation control is impossible. Delegating tasks is much easier if employees plan their commitments on the basis of project plans, and decisions about possible changes are more reliable if we can help with different scenarios of the implementation plan.

You can read a lot of literature on project planning methods and techniques, but you will be able to master the skills of project planning best and fastest with practical work under the mentorship of an experienced project manager.

2. Approach to quality assurance (QA)

2.1 PDCA quality assurance approach

PDCA (plan–do–check–act or plan–do–check–adjust) is a four-step management method used in business for the control and continuous improvement of processes and products. It is also known as the Deming circle/cycle/wheel (Deming, 1986).

Plan

The planning phase involves assessing a current process, or a new process, and figuring out how it will be implemented. Knowing what types of outputs are desired helps to develop a plan to execute the process. It is often easier to plan smaller changes during this phase of the plan so that they can be easily monitored and the outputs are more predictable. Establish the objectives and necessary to deliver results in accordance with the expected output (the target or goals). In the planning phase the quality assurance helps to make sure that the quality indicators mentioned in Logical Framework matrix within the application are reflected in the analyses

Do

The do phase allows the plan from the previous step to be enacted. It will be monitored: are the activities implemented? How do partners perceive the Process Quality?

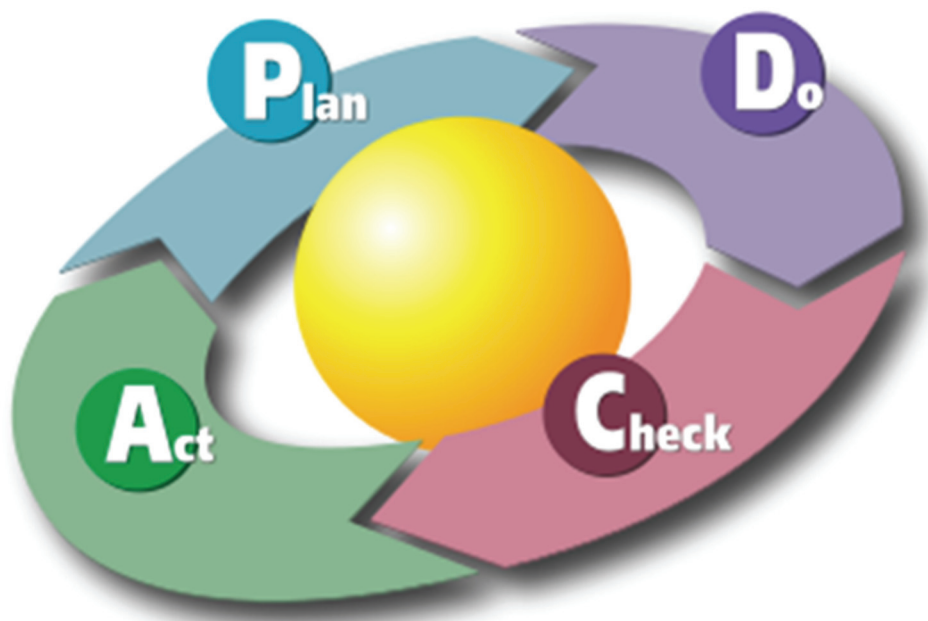
Check

During the check phase, the data and results gathered from the do phase are evaluated. Data is compared to the expected outcomes to see any similarities and differences. The internal evaluation will provide questionnaires which will allow for the collection of relevant feedback on the quality criteria mentioned in the application. It will also guide the analysis and reporting of this feedback and the elaboration of relevant conclusions from the feedback, mainly concrete suggestion for improvement of the activities.

Act (Adjust)

Also called "Adjust", this act phase is where a process is improved. Records from the "do" and "check" phases help identify issues with the process. These issues may include problems, non-conformities, and opportunities for improvement, inefficiencies and other issues that result in outcomes that are evidently less-than-optimal. Risk is re-evaluated. At the end of the actions in this phase, the process has better instructions, standards or goals. Work in the next do phase should not create recurrence of the identified issues.

Picture 1: PDCA cycle



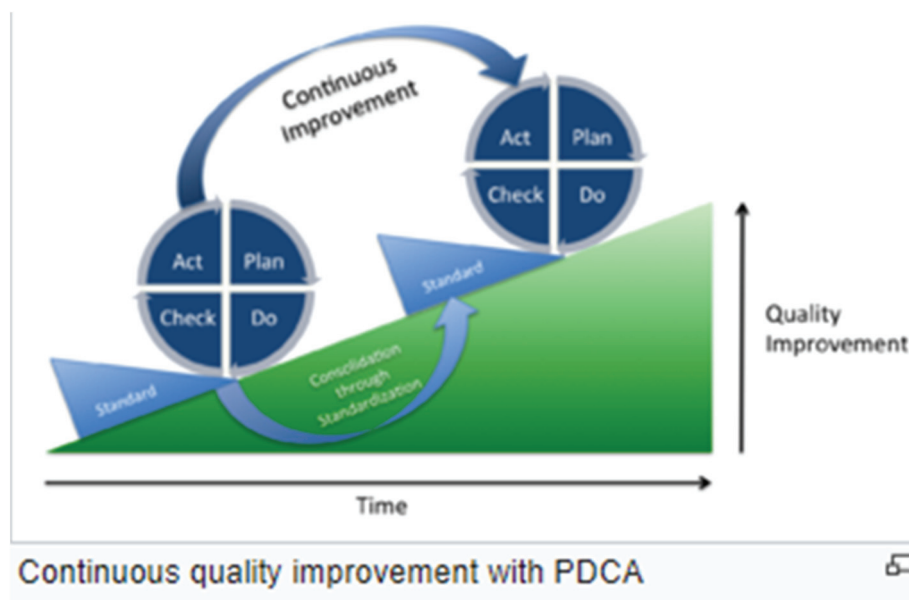
Source: Wiki, 2018a.

2.2 Continues improvement and reflectivity

The PDCA quality assurance approach includes micro-cycles of reflection aimed to enhance the reflectivity and quality of the work in every phase and to make sure that potential improvements are identified at any time and useful corrections are made on a continuing basis rather than only at the end of the implementation. Means to implement this reflection include:

- Real-time collection and systematisation of relevant data and information in Virtual Project Office (VPO)
- Feedback by all partners to all relevant project developments (activities, events, documents,...).
- Survey of Process Quality for project partners – suggestions for improvements and assessment of risks, implemented 3 – 4 times in the life-time of the project, usually after partner meeting or other important activity.
- Quality of communication among partners
- Explicit and transparent decision making by all partners
- Inclusion of key stakeholders on the main stages of the project, mainly inviting them to the activities and through Advisory Boards

Picture 2: Continues improvement (elements of reflection and action research)



Source: Wiki, 2018b.

3. Quality Assurance (QA) – internal evaluation

3.1 About assurance strategy (tasks and procedures)

Quality assurance comprises administrative and procedural activities, it is about systematic measurement, comparison with a project documentation and indicators, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop that lead to improvements. The quality procedures will focus on particular aspects of the project – particular internal processes and deliverables – to guarantee efficiency and a higher potential impact. For the actual quality assessment, particular tools and mechanisms will be implemented.

Quality assurance strategy:

- to measure and evaluate the project process (activities, deliverables) and products (outcomes)
- to ensure timely delivery of activities, deliverables and outcomes

- to involve all partners to participate in quality assurance activities to directly provide feedback on particular internal processes of the project, or to get inputs from representatives of the target groups in their countries

Quality procedures will focus on particular aspects of the project – particular internal processes and results – to guarantee efficiency and a higher potential impact from the whole process.

3.2 Coordination and responsibilities for QA

Coordination procedures. QA activities will fall into two categories in terms of their coordination level, namely:

- Centrally managed activities (planning, reporting) are in the majority: questionnaires and/or focus groups of key events and products will be managed directly by the QA coordinator. Where partners will have specific roles in organizing the activities, the WP coordinator will task them with implementing the QA tool and prepare the evaluation report.
- QA activities at partners level. Each partner will from time to time, organize some activities that are adapted to local needs. They can use one of centrally developed tools or prepare its own. They have to report on the activity and its evaluation. Data on such activities will be collected by the WP coordinator in real-time, who will use them to match each partner's contribution against the overall targets, and take action to support individual partners or to encourage further work.

3.3 Process and product evaluation

Quality is about

- processes (reflection/satisfaction, activities/deliverables, and output indicators) and
- products (results/outcomes).

It makes sense to choose carefully what evaluation to do when.

Process evaluation and the key activities

Provides guidance on what to include in, and how to gather data for, a process evaluation, which tells you how well you delivered the project. Process evaluation captures the HOW of a project. Process evaluation has been defined as the evaluation that assesses the delivery of the project. Process evaluation identifies what the project is and if it is delivered as intended both to the “right audience” and in the “right amount”. The following questions (according to Scheirer, 1994) can guide a process evaluation:

- Why is the project expected to produce its results?
- For what types of people may it be effective?
- In what circumstances may it be effective?
- What are the day-to-day aspects of project delivery?

Key project activities deliverables and activities will be identified/selected for systematic evaluation - based on the project proposal and agreed changes (if needed). This does not mean that the others will not be covered but will be subject to more informal procedures within the partnership. In order to monitor the activities and evaluate the implementation of events, it is crucial to understand the purpose of different type of activities. As a result, QA tools and measures will differ based on the purpose of the events/deliverable.

Product evaluation

An outcome/product evaluation reveals how well you met the goals and desired outcomes you set for the project. Product evaluation captures a measure of the project's products or OUTCOMES. Sometimes outputs are also captured and this is fine. Just keep in mind that outputs may be (and often are) necessary; they are not sufficient for demonstrating the impact of the project. A product evaluation is often summative – to determine the ultimate effectiveness of the project.

The quality of products/results/outputs will be subject to self-evaluation (peer evaluation) and evaluation by beneficiaries, external experts and Advisory board. The main results will be subject to peer review by members of the partnership to guarantee quality standards before being presented to beneficiaries

and external experts for testing and evaluation. For this purpose the specific evaluation tools will be develop – satisfaction questionnaires, review templates, etc.

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