12. What is a Project Management Culture and How do we Develop it and Keep it Alive

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Abstract

In developing the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework, the Project team relied heavily on the involvement and support of all Tasmanian Government Agency representatives. The stakeholders developed into a very cohesive group who believed in celebrating success! One result has been the development and adoption of a whole of government approach to Project Management methodology, as detailed in the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework (TGPMF), supported by the Project Services area in the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet. Another result has been less tangible but manifests itself in a sense of shared ownership across government, leading to wider adoption. This sense of shared ownership and wide adoption of the TGPMF could be said to be a good indicator of a healthy project management culture across the organisation, but is it really? And if it is, how do we continue to ‘grow’ the culture and also how do we link it to supporting organisational change?

Background

In 1999 the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet, (DPAC) initiated a Project with the rather long title of Project Management Information and Resources Project (PMIRP). The Objective for the PMIRP was to improve accessibility to, and improve the quality of, information on project management tools and techniques and on available training for Tasmanian Government project participants.

Longer-term benefits from the Project were identified as:

- improved standards for project management across the Tasmanian State Service; and
- increased knowledge and skills in project management methodology, through training and development covering all project participants.

Outputs included a new website featuring electronic copies of all resources, including:
• Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines;
• glossary;
• templates;
• knowledge base;
• fact sheets;
• resource kits;
• interactive tools, such as a Project Sizing Calculator and an ‘Ups and Downs’ game;
• an opt in mailing list; and
• help desk function.

Other outputs included:

• a Communication and Marketing Strategy Plan;
• Project Management Forums;
• newsletters;
• agency information sessions;
• facilitation of planning sessions for project teams in agencies; and
• individual advice and support.

The Project was termed a ‘Project about doing projects’ as it modelled, tested and reviewed the Tasmanian Government’s preferred project management methodology in its project management processes, as well as in the development of the outputs. It was to exemplify the application of better practice in the management of a project. This imposed extra constraints on the Project Manager and team as, not only did quality outputs have to be delivered, the Project itself, together with its outputs, had to stand alone as a model for projects within the Tasmanian State Government.

In developing the outputs, the Project relied heavily on the involvement and support of all Tasmanian Government Agency representatives. The project was typified throughout as people working collaboratively across Government to produce quality, useable and accessible resources. The goodwill and support experienced by the project team, in undertaking their project activities, was overwhelming. There was extensive whole-of-government consultation before the Project commenced and during its execution. The result has been the development and adoption of a whole-of-government approach to Project Management, as detailed in the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework supported, by the Project Services area within the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

An external consultant, John Smyrk of Sigma Management Science, conducted a post project review in 2001 and again in 2003. In compiling the report, the Inter Agency Steering Committee, joint Business Owners of the Project, were surveyed. The report concluded, ‘Information about project management is
much easier to obtain than it used to be. The practical value of the toolset is seen as good. The impact on projects using the toolset is seen as very good’ (July 2001).

Phase One of the PMIRP, which was the planning stage, involved the management of a large number of stakeholders in the form of project managers from all Tasmanian Government Agencies as members of the Output Working Groups. This exercise increased stakeholder expectations across Agencies and these expectations had to be managed during Phase Two of the Project, which was the production phase. This phase resulted in the early release of some outputs, such as project management forums and resources on the website. It also resulted in a growing sense of shared ownership of the resources as opposed to being seen as DPAC imposed.

In the redevelopment of the existing resources, and identification of new ones to be developed, considerable changes were identified from consultation activities conducted in Phase One. The existing Guidelines, although fit for the purpose for which they were intended, were incomplete and focused mainly on IT projects. They had also only been available to a limited audience, mainly those projects that contracted the formal Quality Advisory and Review Service. The PMIRP worked collaboratively with project managers from all agencies to redefine the Guidelines to become the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines, which were then made publicly accessible through the Project Management website (www.projectmanagement.tas.gov.au).

The methodology as described in the Guidelines identifies 11 key elements, which must be considered in the management of projects no matter what the project size. The Guidelines are structured around these. The key elements include some relationship to PMBok, but also others identified by Tasmanian Government project participants. The core of the methodology focuses on the application of a scoping and planning model adopted from John Smyrk, Sigma Management Science. The model is termed the Input-Transform-Outcome model (ITO). It directs project planning processes that are focused on the outcomes/benefits, which the Project is aiming to achieve, and planning from this identification. The PMIRP modelled this approach. One of the results was the development of an Outcome/Benefits Realisation Plan, which was signed off by the Project Business Owners and committed, in principal, all Agencies to the utilisation of the outputs in order to achieve the stated outcomes/benefits. I will focus on this further in the chapter, as it is one way we link project management activities to organisational change management.

Existing templates were redeveloped mirroring the Guidelines redevelopment. New templates, identified from the consultation processes, were also developed. It was determined that if the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines were the ‘what’ of the methodology, then they needed to be supported
by products which detailed the ‘how’ of their application. This included templates that could be downloaded from the website and content added; Fact Sheets; Knowledge Base, including example documentation from Agencies; A Quick Guide to the methodology; interactive tools and games, help desk, and an opt in email list. A number of Forums were held where the draft resources were tested and project managers shared their learnings with practitioners from all agencies and also practitioners external to government.

It was deliberate policy to make all project management resources, tools and information available electronically, without restriction. It was recommended by the Project Manager, and agreed to by the Business Owners, that while the primary clients were Tasmanian Government Agencies, in the interests of fostering the Project Management Community of Practice, resources would be freely available on a public site.

A strong partnership was formed with the existing Quality Advisory and Review Service, later incorporated into the Project Services area, operating from the Unit and also the Training Consortium, which has responsibility for brokering training for Tasmanian Government Agencies.

Project Management Culture

The development of the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework and subsequent publishing of all resources on a publicly accessible website has led to a greater focus on the practice of project management techniques within the Tasmanian State Government. This is evidenced, not only from the final review of the Project, but also from continuing feedback from Agency personnel, information from website usage, attendance at forums and the number of requests for information, support and advice. A requirement for project management knowledge and skills, specifically knowledge of the TGPMF, has also been included on a much more regular basis for project positions advertised within Agencies.

Not only has the profile of the project management profession been raised within the Tasmanian Government, but also emails received from around the world indicate increased professional interest and the use of project management tools and techniques. This area has received formal requests from organisations wishing to adopt the methodology and tools available on our website. The free online registration system for the download of the Project Management Templates provides an ongoing record of where these templates are being used, and therefore where there is the application of project management techniques.

Another result of the development of the TGPMF has been less tangible, but manifests itself in a sense of shared ownership across government, leading to wider adoption. This sense of shared ownership and wide adoption of the TGPMF could be said to be a good indicator of a healthy project management culture.
across the organisation, but is it really? And if it is, how do we continue to ‘grow’ the culture and how do we link it to supporting organisational change?

We are quite happy to admit that Tasmania is a small State and we are either all related to each other or know each other, or know friends of friends. This can be a disadvantage, but throughout my rather long career in the Public Service whenever we are working on a major change initiative it has proved to be a huge advantage. Certainly in gaining commitment to developing the TGPMF, it was of great advantage in helping develop and use our networks.

Key messages identified as part of our communication planning included stressing that the sharing of understandings and experiences of project participants was a vital element of any project management support activities. Another key message was that the project outputs had been produced as a joint effort between all Government Agencies and were therefore relevant across government. Both of these key messages still form part of our communication and marketing initiatives. We continue to ‘sell’ the message that the Guidelines and materials are not DPAC’s, but belong to all agencies, as they were involved in the development of them. While most of the material is written within the Unit, the resources do capture the experiences of project participants together with research into better practice. Resource development involves a great deal of consultation with our practitioners and focuses very much on capturing their learnings.

While the PMIRP employed all of the formal project management approach including stakeholder management and communication strategies, a great deal of informal networking was also taking place. This has continued with team members currently spending many hours on the phone providing advice to project participants, meeting for informal chats over coffee and inviting agency project participants to drop in. We also put project managers in touch with other project managers. We organise formal forums and informal get togethers. No resources are published without going through our Project Management Advisory Committee (PMAC) who also circulates them to agency project participants for feedback. We are always conscious that Premier and Cabinet can be seen as an ivory tower and that we could lose touch with the realities of the everyday issues that project managers and teams face.

In recent times we have focussed on more organised ‘community of practice’ activities and on supporting other areas of government business to take a ‘community of practice’ approach under the Better Practice program. We now have other frameworks developed, such as Web Publishing and Information Security, which are supported by active communities of practice.

It is said that culture manifests itself in both formal ways, such as through the use of symbols, and informal ways. The TGPMF and related activities can be said to be the more formal manifestations of our Project Management Culture.
and are to a certain extent measurable. The community of practice and associated network activities are the less formalised manifestations of a healthy culture, but vital to its development and sustainability.

**So, what is a PM culture?**

*Answers.Com, Wikipedia* defines organisational culture as ‘comprising the attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and customs of an organisation. Whereas organisational structure is relatively easy to draw and describe, organisational culture is considered to be less tangible and more difficult to measure’. The same applies to defining what makes a project management culture. *Answers.Com* describes a strong culture as one where staff respond to stimulus because of their alignment with organisational (substitute project management) values. Where culture is strong people do things because they believe it is the right thing to do. If we were to take this as an indicator of a strong project management culture, within the Tasmanian Government, the TGPMF has not been mandated in any policy documents but accepted as the Tasmanian Government methodology through its application in practice.

If we were to try listing the criteria for defining a project management culture I would suggest that it would vary from organisation to organisation. The ‘evidence’ I use to make me believe we are a long way there in the Tasmanian Government is the following.

- the TGPMF is not mandated but accepted across agencies;
- we have high level sponsors including the Inter Agency Steering Committee (IASC), which has membership of Deputy Secretaries from all agencies;
- we have an active Community of Practice that extends outside government;
- senior executive within agencies expect to see projects planned and documented using the Framework;
- we have a whole-of-government training pathway for project managers;
- our workshops and forums are well attended (usually over 100);
- agency personnel know whom to contact if they have a project management issue, not just us but project managers in other agencies, networks are alive and well;
- we have two representatives from each agency on our Project Management Advisory Committee, (PMAC) and the majority consistently turn up for meetings, circulate information within their agencies and regularly provide timely feedback to us on resource development and service delivery issues;
- we continue to monitor and report activities and current issues, and there is still interest in us doing so;
- 90 percent of large Tasmanian Government projects use our fee-for-service QA;
• 100 percent of large Tasmanian Government projects use our guidelines and templates;
• several agencies have recently begun to look at the establishment of various forms of Project Support Office (PSO) using the TGPMF resources as the tools;
• several agency Corporate Plans specifically mention having applied the TGPMF;
• our team is well known across agencies and we are told we have a good reputation as being accessible and responsive;
• we currently have 650 subscribers to our email list (self-subscription process);
• we receive many requests to present at agency information sessions;
• agency personnel return from conferences and contact us to proudly mention that ‘our’ TGPMF has been referred to;
• current major projects across government – all of which include significant organisational change management challenges (OCM) – have elected to take a project approach, either by individual sets of projects or programs of projects; and most importantly
• there is a sense of shared ownership of the methodology on the part of practising project managers, who feel comfortable to comment and provide feedback on what works and what does not.

With regard to helping ascertain how healthy your Project Management Culture is, Project Management Maturity models exist, and organisations can be contracted to assist in assessing the maturity level of your organisation. The Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) proposes one such model. It proves a little more difficult to gauge whole-of-government maturity as opposed to individual agencies. While I have focussed on whole-of-government activity in this chapter, individual Tasmanian Government agencies are obviously at differing stages with their own application of a project management discipline.

One can also join Project Management Benchmarking Networks that provide valuable insights when you are benchmarked with like organisations. Many of these opportunities we are unable to take advantage of due to budgetary constraints. We therefore try to use our networks, both interstate and overseas, to as much advantage as possible. We continually seek to share our learnings with others and to learn from them. Our standard response to a copyright request is:

Yes, with due acknowledgement, but it is ‘warts and all stuff’ and we would love to hear back from you about what you are learning about the usefulness of the resources and how they might be improved. More importantly lessons learnt from the projects you are undertaking and how these lessons might be captured and shared.
In summary, I believe we do have a healthy project management culture in the Tasmanian Government but the form it takes is probably different to how it would be seen in other State or Federal Government jurisdictions. For example, in some Commonwealth Departments it is a mammoth job to get agreement to common project management processes across individual units let alone across the whole of department or indeed government. In many cases Project Management frameworks or methodologies have to be mandated with other support activities aimed at creating the collaborative culture that will enable more than lip service to be applied. Gateway processes are gradually being implemented where projects have received large amounts of funding. I would contend that gateway processes need to be founded on particular project management methodologies. The UK uses PRINCE2 for example. It is much easier, and possibly more efficient and effective, to introduce a Gateways approach if the project management practices are sound and in place. In fact, why would we fund major change initiatives where there is no evidence of a quality project management framework within which the projects will be undertaken?

**How do we continue to grow the PM Culture?**

Our biggest challenge now within the Tasmanian Government is to fight the perception that (okay) we have done the project management ‘stuff’ we can go into maintenance mode with the Project Services’ activities and focus on other things. I have responded by using a very female type metaphor of, ‘if you give birth to a baby and nurture it to early adolescence, you do not suddenly leave the child to fend for itself, as it probably will not survive!’ In our case the Community of Practice would certainly keep things going, but without strong support and continual revision and improvement of the TGPMF, the rot would soon start to set in.

Referring to Wikipedia once again, there is a stated risk that where a strong culture exists another phenomenon can emerge, *Groupthink*. This is a state where people think so alike that they do not challenge organisational thinking and there is reduced capacity for innovative thought. Having an established Project Management methodology could lead to missed opportunities for innovation through reliance on established procedures. We are very conscious of this and constantly seek feedback from our practitioners, based upon their knowledge and experience. We also do our very best to keep up to date with the latest research and to keep our own professional development current. We have tried to create a ‘living’ framework where we are constantly reviewing and endeavouring to make sure that our resources, advice and support meet the needs of our practitioners. We have been told that our resources are very practical and useful, and this is what we strive to achieve. We also strive to keep a high profile amongst the practitioners, keep them in touch with each other, and continue to generate the sense of shared ownership of the resources.
Our standard response whenever someone mentions the DPAC Project Management Guidelines is to say, (nicely) 'No, they are the Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines and were put together by practitioners from all agencies, not just DPAC'. This continues to be one of our key marketing messages. We now have an extensive network of practitioners across all agencies and we use constant communication, formal and informal to keep this network alive. We work in partnership with our Government Training Consortium to ensure Project Management training pathways are provided and information sessions are held for new recruits. Agencies can also request in-house training tailored specifically to their needs, and we assist with organising this, sometimes delivering it ourselves, depending upon the need.

Our local TAFE has introduced Project Management training as part of the Business Services and Public Sector Training Packages. We are collaborating with them and they are using some of our resources so that government employees receive similar messages. One of our team is delivering part of the course.

We have begun to work with our Department of Treasury and Finance to incorporate the requirements of the budget submission process into the Project Business Case templates. This includes assisting with designing of training modules for budget submissions and aligning that with project management processes.

A number of Inter-Departmental Steering Committees have been formed to oversight major Tasmanian Government projects, and these committees apply the governance structures and methodology as outlined in the TGPMF. This includes

- the Tasmania \textit{Together} Program which is a long-term social, environmental and economic plan for the State’s development for a period of 20 years; and an overarching framework for planning, budgeting and policy priorities for the government and non government sectors;
- eGovernment projects, including major changes to the Monetary Penalties and Motor Registry systems; and
- Social Policy Projects.

Our area has contact with each of these Inter-Departmental committees including the Inter Agency Steering Committee that also acts as the governing body for our Unit is activities.

We are beginning to explore, as a Government, the relationship between policy development and project management. As previously mentioned we already have good examples in government of major policy initiatives, which have taken a structured, project management approach in development and implementation. Tasmania \textit{Together} has been mentioned as one such example. Our Social Policy...
Projects Unit, within DPAC, takes a project management approach to implementation of social policy. It is arguable that good policy development and implementation is achievable by taking a structured project management approach within the context of the strategic direction of the organisation. If project management is all about the management of change, so is policy development.

Team members continue to make themselves personally accessible and practitioners come to us for support and advice. We can also assist by putting project participants in touch with each other across government. As I mentioned previously, being small has its advantages. We often refer to silos within government but I argue that through our project management community of practice (CoP) and other CoP activities we are drilling so many holes in the silos that they should eventually crumble.

The Project Services team has also gained credibility with Senior Executives and through the provision of the Project Management Quality Advisory and Review Services, Steering Committees take quality recommendations very seriously and in at least two recent cases recommendations to halt and review large projects have been accepted.

There is no easy answer to keeping the culture alive. I think it boils down to sheer perseverance and the need for a central group to continually support the practitioners out there in whatever ways they deem useful. Passionate commitment to ‘the cause’ is a must as is a belief in celebrating every whiff of success. A sense of fun is also important and that is why we include a ‘fun’ bit on our web site.

Project managers need champions as they ply their craft, often in the face of middle managers who put the pressure on to ‘just get on with doing the project’, none of this rubbish about taking time to plan and document before commencing the work. The Tasmanian Government Project Management Guidelines Version 6.0 (March 2005) state specifically that ‘considerable time should be allowed in the initiation phase of the project life for initial planning and scoping activities, as this is often the most neglected key element, due to pressure just to get on with doing the project. This pressure should be vigorously resisted’.

We still have a big job to do in winning over that group labelled ‘middle managers’. We do have strong commitment from the practitioners, and strong support from the senior executive. But it is at the business unit level and with the business unit managers that we still have a challenge to convince of the usefulness of taking a structured approach to managing projects. There is still the perception that project management is all about documenting and far too much of it. We have to constantly fight that perception and stress that the purpose of the documentation is all about recording the decisions made for future reference.
How do we link Project Management to Organisational Change Management?

Having determined that we believe we have a reasonably healthy project management culture within the Tasmanian Government, how can we use this to support organisational change? We do this by building it into our project management methodology and supporting project managers and steering committees to clearly define the nature and extent of the changes the projects are aiming to bring about. We try to give them the tools and networks to support their efforts to do so.

We define project management in the Guidelines as ‘a formalised and structured method of managing changes in a rigorous manner. The application of any project management methodology requires an appropriate consideration of the corporate and business culture that forms a particular project’s environment’.  

One of the key fundamentals of our approach is that all projects bring about change. Our approach in planning and scoping projects is to begin with the fundamental question of ‘why is the initiative being undertaken?’ and ‘what are the planned outcomes/benefits the project aims to achieve?’ Some of these are then defined as ‘measurable’ and we term these ‘Target Outcomes’. We argue that every project, no matter what the size, should be able to prove at the end that they have achieved the planned business benefits/outcomes.

Our response to a recent Cross Jurisdictional CIO committee survey requesting information in relation to current/best practice associated with ICT project management and benefits realisation, stated that:

It should be noted that the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework stipulates that Departments frame Business Case funding requests and Project Business Plans in terms of the business drivers rather than solely technology or infrastructure requirements. In this sense, there are no ‘ICT’ projects as such, but rather projects with business drivers that may include an ICT component as part of the solution.

In recent times, the Tasmanian Government has chosen to manage change increasingly through the use of project management principles and practices. There are currently no cross-agency projects being undertaken in Government that do not employ the TGPMF to some degree.

Organisational Change Management (OCM) can be defined as the management of realigning an Agency/organisation to meet the changing demands of its business environment, including improving service delivery and capitalising on business opportunities, underpinned by business process improvement and technologies. It includes the management of changes to the organisational culture, business processes, physical environment, job design/responsibilities, staff skills/knowledge and policies/procedures. Projects are used as the vehicle for
implementing changes to an Agency/organisation. Projects are all about transformation and are intended to create change of one kind or another, no matter how small or large.  

While organisational changes are often monitored during project implementation, in the past not enough attention was paid to defining the organisational changes required to ensure project outputs are effectively managed after project closure and defining who is responsible for making this happen. For the changes to be effective and the full benefits achieved on an ongoing basis, planning for business/organisational change, at the beginning, during and after the project, is essential.

Very few projects are carried out in isolation in an agency, organisation or business unit. Overall strategic direction for the management of change within the agency/organisation may have been established already, and articulated in relevant corporate/strategic plans or similar documents. This should be considered in the light of the overall organisational approach and the extent to which the project is involved in bringing about change. We contend that project outcomes/benefits cannot be fully realised without the necessary organisational changes being made.

Owens and Owens state that organisational change management should focus on both tangible and intangible changes. The tangible being the physical organisational changes required and the intangible being the people risks to the project, i.e. cultural changes, buy-in and acceptance from stakeholders etc. While Owens and Owens suggest that it is the Project Manager who takes responsibility for this, we argue that it is the collective responsibility of the Project Manager, Project Sponsor, Steering Committee and Project Business Owners.

James Carlopio (2003) states that, for a project to be successful, organisational change management needs to be integrated into project management, not just a bolt on. In the TGPMF we have named Organisational Change Management/Outcome Realisation as one of the eleven Key Elements of project management.

There is a growing focus on being able to measure and secure benefits. We support the Outcome/Benefits Realisation planning approach where we argue that no project should be closed until it is very clearly documented as to whom the project outputs will be delivered, what business process changes will be needed to manage the outputs and who will be held accountable for Outcome/Benefits Realisation on an ongoing basis. We suggest that this planning commence with project initiation so that before the project commences there is at least an understanding of who the Business Owners for the project outputs will be on project closure.
The purpose of Outcome/Benefits Realisation planning, and its documentation, is to ensure that:

- the final stages of the project are managed in a satisfactory manner;
- the utilisation of the projects outputs are linked to the planned project Target Outcomes;
- the success of the project’s outputs are assessed and corrective action performed if required; and
- the planned project outcomes/benefits are realised to a significant extent, prior to formal project closure.

Outcome/Benefits Realisation planning, we suggest, is all about gaining commitment from the Business Owner(s) to manage and maintain the outputs in a quality manner, and to ensure that reporting of progress against the realisation of the Target Outcomes occurs at agreed intervals after the project closes. In order to manage the project outputs in a quality manner, Business Owners must take responsibility for implementing the necessary organisational changes.

We advise that as part of the initiation phase of a project, the Business Owner(s) for each of the high-level outputs from the project should be identified and included within the governance structures. It is the Business Owner(s) who will accept responsibility for the ongoing management of the project outputs once delivered, the realisation of the Target Outcomes from the use of those outputs and subsequent flow of benefits to the agency/organisation and its customers.

Organisational change management programs are increasingly delivered by using a project management methodology with the aim of fully achieving the benefits of the project. Benefits cannot be fully achieved if the required organisational changes have not taken place. These include process change, technology change and most importantly, people change.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the development of a project management culture within the Tasmanian Government has meant a long-term commitment, mainly on the part of the project management practitioners, but also for senior executives and the Project Services team based in DPAC. One cannot really pinpoint in time when it began, but like most other organisations, the Tasmanian Government has progressed along a path of project management maturity. As a result of a major project failure in the early 1990’s, there was recognition of the need for a structured approach to managing projects to increase their likelihood of success. The Tasmanian Government’s project management methodology was developed and has evolved over the past ten years. It has been an iterative process with input from external consultants, international research including an analysis of the nine knowledge areas within the PMBOK® and pragmatic input from practising project managers within the Tasmanian State Service.
The Project Management Resources and Information Project (PMIRP) was an exercise in organisational change management. It resulted in the establishment of the Tasmanian Government Project Management Framework and a small Project Services team. This team continues to work collaboratively with our practitioners to keep our project management culture alive and healthy. This work does require passion, commitment and continual championship for ‘the cause’.

ENDNOTES