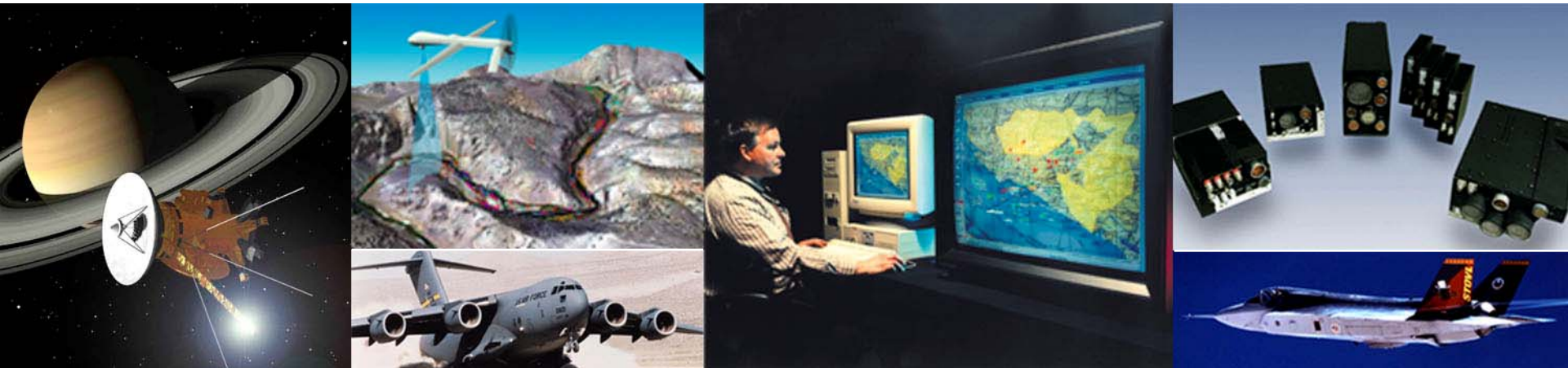# Project Planning Support Produces Consistently High-Quality Project Plans

Electronics, Intelligence and Support Operating Group

John M. Johnston

Agenda

- Why Have Project Planning Support?

- Objectives of Project Planning

- Enablers for the Achievement of the Objectives

- Project Planning Support Features

- Feedback Used for Process Improvement

- Other Project Planning Support Benefits

- Questions

Project Planning Support

- Discovered that many Project Execution issues / problems stemmed from incomplete Project Planning
  - Focused on Project Planning activities for corrective actions

- Project Planning Support (Launch Support) was introduced to improve the quality of Project Planning
  - Similar to what some organizations have as a dedicated or "floating" proposal team that facilitates and guides the proposal development and submittal

- This project launch support concept was identified as a "Strength" (best practice) during a recent SCAMPI^{SM} A Appraisal

SCAMPI^{SM} (Standard CMMI® Appraisal Method for Process Improvement) is a service mark of Carnegie Mellon University
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Importance of Project Planning

- Project Planning provides the foundation for proper project execution
  - It is the fist step in most project or management models (e.g. The Shewhart / Deming Model of Plan, Do, Check (Study), Act)
- Thorough planning will reduce the number and severity of false pathways encountered during project execution
  - "Errors" are more costly and more difficult to correct as the project progresses
    - Therefore, it is more cost effective to spend resources on proper planning, than having to rework tasks at a later date in the project
  - This is where Project Planning Support is conducted, and why it is beneficial to the project
    - "Quality is planned in…"

| Project Planning | Project Execution |

Project Planning Objectives

High-quality Project Management Plan

- Complete and thorough
  - Integrated planning activities

- Executable
  - Realistic technical, cost, and schedule approach / baselines

- Completed in a timely manner
  - Allows project to move from Planning Phase to Execution Phase earlier

- Consistent from project to project
  - Easier to review and execute

Project Planning Support Enablers

Project Planning Support Features

- Dedicated Project Planning Support

- Standard modules

- Tailored to project needs and integrated with their planning activities

Dedicated Project Planning Support

- The Process Group offers a "Project Launch" service that supports the project team in their development of the project plan, applying the standard process

Project Planning Support Concept

- A series of workshops designed to focus on
  - Teaming concepts and integrated product concepts
  - Decision making, communication, problem solving

- Structured around
  - Team needs, skills, and experience
  - Planning work products to be created by project (e.g. Project Scope)

- Lecture is minimal – the work is done by project teams
  - Short lessons followed by planning work product workshops
  - Draft planning work products produced by project team

- Facilitators assist project teams in using process
  - Subject Matter Experts (SME) are used, if required

Project Launch Goal: Produce the Project Plan

Project Planning Support Team

- Planning support team (facilitators) provide planning expertise

    - Previous project experience from their own project assignments
        - (e.g. Project Manager; Systems Engineering Manager)

    - Planning experience from planning multiple projects

    - Process knowledge from current Process Group membership

    - Planning-phase lessons learned / best practices awareness from involvement with on-going process improvements

Initiation of Project Planning Support

- Project support team coordinates all potential and actual planning support activities

  - Potential contracts (projects) are tracked from proposal phase through contract award

  - As the potential contract award is imminent, the project support team will work with the assigned project manager to plan for the project start-up by the development of a "launch plan"

  - When a contract is awarded, the launch plan is used to provide a quick-start capability to the project's planning activities

Preparations Underway Before Project is Awarded

Standard Modules

- Standard modules (Launch Modules) have been developed to expedite the tailoring of the process and the planning of the project

Launch Modules

- Modules have been previously prepared and vetted for:
  - Process accuracy, best practice use, and quality

- Each module covers a planning activity or work product development (project plan component)

- Modules reinforce the process and application of best practices
  - Describe process activities
  - Describe importance and benefit of performing the activities
  - Describe how the activities fit into the larger project plan or project execution
  - Identify who is involved in the activities, and who are the stakeholders for that particular portion of the planning phase

Standard Set of Approved Modules Available to the Project

Launch Module Topics (Sample)

Project Scope & Shared Vision

Technical Planning

Project Organizational Structure

Stakeholder Involvement

WBS & Activity Scheduling

Monitor & Controlling

Measurement & Analysis

Risk Management

Configuration Management

Allocating Budgets

Modules Cover all Project Planning Topics

Typical Project Planning Session

- Assign scribe for this meeting
- Review any outstanding issues from previous session
- Status planning schedule

- Discuss the purpose and content of the module
- Discuss relevant lessons learned for this module
- Discuss the benefit of this portion of the planning phase
- Discuss the interconnection to other planning activities or modules

- Develop session work products
  - i.e. Risk and Opportunity Management Plan or Risk Register

- Discuss preparation for the next module
- Fill out session evaluation forms

Tailored to project needs and integrated with their planning activities

- The available modules are reviewed with the project team to determine

  - Which modules are needed
  - Depth of the module material needed

Launch Plan Development

- The module selection and depth of support are tailored to the experience level of the project members

- A project planning support plan is developed from that meeting

- Details of the Project Planning Support Plan include
  - Overall planning phase timing
  - The list of desired modules
  - The tailoring of the modules
  - Expected duration of each session
  - The initial sequencing of the modules
  - Expected attendees and facilitators
  - Any pre-session work requirements

Launch Plan Developed with Project Team

Sequencing of the Project Planning Support

BAE SYSTEMS

Module Name	Topic Duration	Start Time	Date	Location	Attendees	Facilitator /SME	Pre-Session Planning Work Products and Assignee
Shared Vision							
Work Breakdown Structure							
Responsibility Assignment Matrix							
Risk Management Plan							
Measurement Plan							

- Planned for just-in-time guidance during the project's planning activities
- Project Launch Modules are incorporated in the Planning Schedule Template
- Follow-up tasks allow for the completion of the work product

ID	TASK DESCRIPTION	Nov 16, '08	Nov 23, '08
55	Risk Launch Module	17 — 11/17	
56	Develop Risk Management Plan	11/18 — 11/20	
57	Develop Risk Register	11/21 — 11/21	
58	Launch WBS Module		11/24 — 11/24
59	Complete WBS		11/25 — 11/26

Feedback on Project Planning Support is Evaluated

- Launch module sessions are formally evaluated
  - Session-specific questions are asked to evaluate session content
  - Facilitator-specific questions are asked to evaluate the facilitator
  - Scores are analyzed for improvement opportunities

- A planning-phase lessons learned is submitted by the project team
  - Provides a broader view of planning phase than the module / session evaluations
  - Provides mechanism to improve the overall projects-planning support concept

- Process Group gains timely feedback on process and planning through Project Planning Support Team's participation
  - Support Team witnesses planning activities firsthand and provides improvement suggestion to the Process Group

Project Planning Support is Kept Relevant and Effective for the Project Team

Project Planning Support Benefits

- Achievement of a high-quality project plan
  - Provides expertise in project planning activities
  - Provides uniformity from project to project
  - Provides focused lessons learned reviews
  - Provides process knowledge

- Framework for post-planning support established
  - Project team and support team have rapport that lasts for the duration of the project
  - Support team has in-depth knowledge and understanding of the project
  - Provides continuity of support to the project

- Provides information to other aspects of the process
  - Appraisal preparation
  - Continuous validation of process capability

Final Thought

- The resultant high-quality project plans provide the sturdy foundation from which the projects are better prepared to execute the project
  - The better the preparation, the smother the execution

Questions

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