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Lucid Thought

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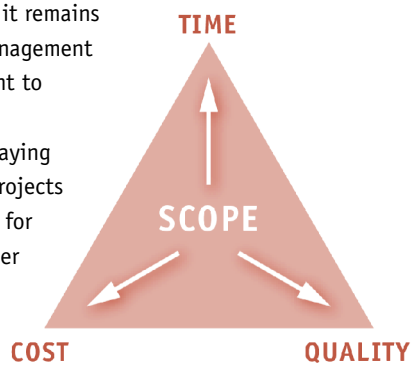
LUCID 11 THOUGHT

Put quality back in the iron triangle

It never ceases to amaze us the number of times that Project Managers act as if time/cost/quality - the three variables on the project management 'iron triangle' actually mean to schedule, to budget and 'to the procedures that the Quality Department say we've to follow' - and therefore fail to proactively manage quality for the project.

It never ceases to amaze us that project management knowledge areas such as risk management or value management are somehow seen as 'sexy' and 'must-haves' for projects when quality management is seen as 'frumpy' at best and optional at worst.

With a Quality Manager of many years on our team - Lucidus Consulting can't shirk the issue. Despite valiant attempts in the PMBoK® and in PRINCE2™ - it remains true that Project Quality Management is unfashionable and we want to understand why.



Some of you may be saying at this point - so what! If projects deliver products that are 'fit for purpose' and 'satisfy customer needs' then who cares whether the processes, methods, tools and techniques that got you there are fashionable or not. And you'd be right - but **sadly our experience is that projects all too often do not deliver products that are 'fit for purpose' - or only do so after taking more time and/or spending more money than was necessary to get there. Hitting specification late and over budget is neither good quality management, nor good project management.**

So bear with us for a while and go with the idea that project quality management is not done well at least in part because the subject is unfashionable and so doesn't get enough 'air-time' in professional circles. Why is this?

In mature project management sectors such as IT, Oil and Gas, Construction - quality management seems to 'just happen'. The Project Manager has people to 'do it to the project' so building capability to 'do it yourself' is never a priority. In less mature project management sectors, quality management 'just doesn't happen'. Perhaps because the quality management professionals within the organisation whilst, rightly, focussing on the things that need to happen to assure and control quality for 'business as usual' have not positioned themselves to be concerned about assuring and controlling quality for change initiatives. Or perhaps because the quality management discipline has allowed itself to be 'shot in the foot' by blind and unprofessional reliance on standards such as ISO9000 which has encouraged your average Project Manager to believe that project quality management is about complying with procedures. The tragedy is that often no-one argues.

So here's a simple test for Project Managers - for your current project can you (honestly):

- *Translate project success criteria and requirements into measurable performance indicators (quality/acceptance criteria)?*
- *Choose and apply relevant quality assurance and quality control techniques to ensure that acceptance criteria are achieved?*
- *Ensure your organisation continuously improves as a result of learning from your project?*

And here's a test for Training Providers and Consultants - do you (honestly):

- *Provide development in project quality management with the same confidence and energy that you put into (for example) project risk management?*

- *Go further in your 'standard PowerPoint™ slides' than saying that project quality is about ISO9000 compliance and perhaps something about the EFQM Excellence Model?*
- *Make YOUR quality management explicit rather than rely on a 'of course we're good quality' attitude that may not be true if the surface was scratched just a little?*

If providing products that are 'fit for purpose' and that 'satisfy stakeholders' needs' is important perhaps we need to get a little more excited about how we do that?

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