

Differentiating scope and quality

The whole point of considering the triple constraint is to have a clear understanding of the relative priorities of time, cost and quality (or schedule, budget, performance depending on the terms you use) for the particular project in question.

Despite valiant efforts in the PMI® PMBoK® and in PRINCE2™, it remains true that Project Quality Management is somehow not really understood and/or doesn't get on the 'radar' of the Project Manager. Somehow, it is always judged as being boring - almost unfashionable compared to other knowledge areas such as risk management or time management. We're not at all sure why this is the case.

So what are the root causes of this lack of attention to quality management for projects?

Hypothesis 1 - Quality management is seen as boring or someone else's job.

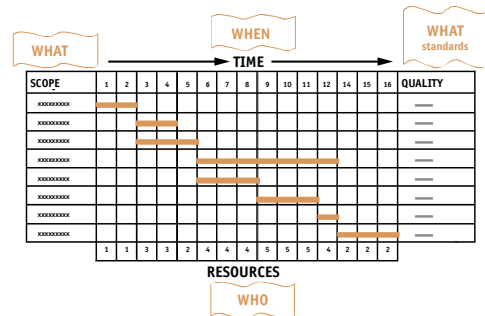
This was the main focus of Lucid Thought 12 and relates to the belief that in mature project management sectors the Project Manager has people to 'do it to the project' so building capability to 'do it yourself' is never a priority. While in less mature project management sectors, project quality management just doesn't happen; and for various reasons.

Hypothesis 2 - Planning techniques put quality planning in the 'optional' box

Although we all know that a self-respecting project plan should integrate scope, time, cost, quality, risk, procurement, human resources and communications planning, the reality is that the methods we use automatically focus us on scope, time and cost planning - so we can communicate a schedule and budget.

The methods that are used to define and optimise the

schedule and then establish the time-phased budget are aligned and flow naturally. The traditional methods do not connect in quality planning so it can be seen as optional and not done.



The Japanese originated 'Four Fields Mapping' approach to project planning integrates scope definition (what will be done) with resource planning (who will do the work) with quality planning (the standards by which activities will be evaluated at both entry and exit points). This approach does not supersede critical path, or critical chain approaches, but it does force the planner to think quality at the same time as thinking scope, time and cost. Another benefit of the Four Fields Mapping approach may be to address the confusion that exists in some circles between project scope and project quality which is the basis of our 3rd hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 - People think scope = quality

Many say it is the same thing and this is technically incorrect. They are closely linked, but not the same. The project scope defines what work will be done whereas project quality defines the grade or specification to which the work must comply. For example, in an office refurbishment project part of the original scope is to sound-proof the partition walls.

The specification to which the sound-proofing must conform will also have been defined - this is the quality requirement for this particular package of work. If time and/or cost constraints mean that the Project Manager needs to revisit the sound-proofing requirement there would be a number of options. One option would be to reduce the scope, to take out the sound-proofing work package. Another option would be to reduce the specification or grade to which the sound-proofing is to be done. Both options would need to be progressed through change control as both have the potential to make the new offices not 'fit for purpose', but the reduced specification option has a chance of being acceptable without a change to the overall deliverables whereas the reduction in scope will not. The diagram below illustrates the differences between scope and quality.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT		
SCOPE	QUALITY	
WHAT WILL BE DELIVERED	TO WHAT SPECIFICATION	
	Original Planned Spec.	Actually Delivered Spec.
SOFTWARE	1 error per 10000	5 errors per 10000
USER MANUAL	Trialled and accepted by 10 users	Approved by developer and internal QA
ON-LINE SUPPORT	99% availability	95% availability

It might be a fine point to some as scope and quality are clearly closely linked together, and with other knowledge areas - but treating them as one and the same is a mistake. It is essential that we demonstrate how quality management forms an integral part of our project plan and that our schedule and budget reflects both the desired quality of the outputs and the time and cost needed to achieve it.

And remember:

- *No one wants customers whose needs have not been satisfied.*
- *No one wants stakeholders who have no confidence in the project management process.*
- *No one wants processes that are out of control and that deliver unreliable outputs.*

- *No one wants to make the same mistake twice.*

All of these points are directly addressed by quality management and it is wholly and entirely complementary to project management. The specific tools and techniques of quality management when applied significantly enhance the chance that project deliverables will be accepted and delight the customer.

To quote a favoured PMI® theme - 'it is axiomatic of the quality management discipline that the benefits outweigh the costs'. If we believe that, and if providing products that are fit for purpose and that satisfy stakeholder needs is important, perhaps we need to get a bit more excited about how we do that? Just remember that there will not always be someone there do it for you. The only way to ensure that effective quality management takes place is for you to take control and make sure it happens.

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