ppo
project portfolio office

Taking on PPM Software Myths

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Introduction

There are a number of reasons behind an organisation's decision to implement Project Portfolio Management (PPM) software and it's no easy task for any organisation.

PPM software allows the project community, including the executives and management within an organisation, the ability to maintain a centralised view of the portfolio, which assists in making smarter financial and business decisions for the project portfolio. Most PPM software is designed to facilitate, support or enable existing project management processes and promote a culture of knowledge sharing.

How do you make sure your efforts pay off?

Given the statistics for the number of failed PPM software implementations, you'll want to combine the right ingredients to guarantee a recipe of success. In this e-book, we'll discuss everything you need to know about the common myths around the use of PPM software. We'll also provide you with some knowledge to assist you and your organisation in obtaining optimal value from your PPM solution.

Myth #1

Executives don't need to access the PPM software on a regular basis

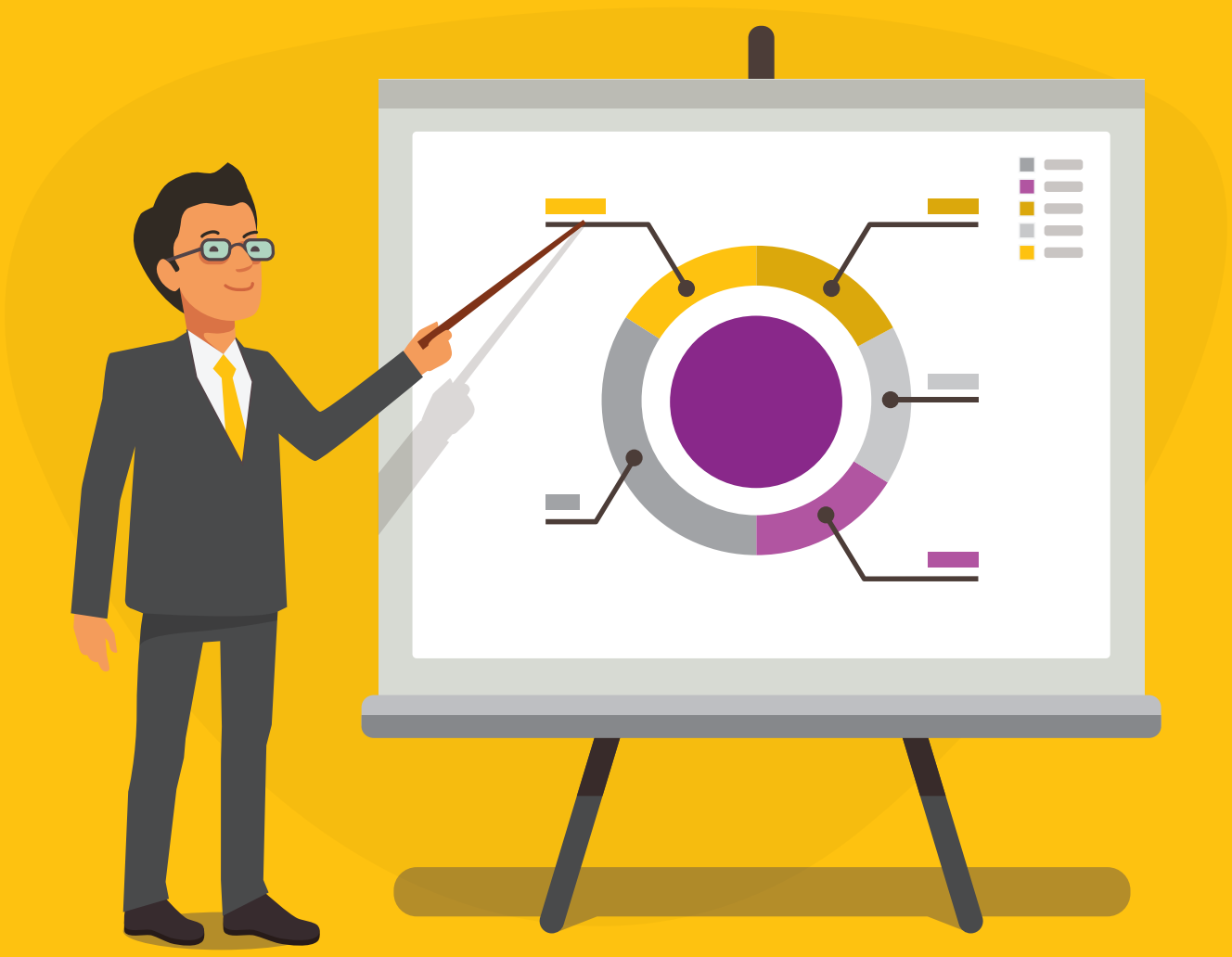
The key role of the executive is to balance and manage a portfolio by selecting the right projects, while continuously assessing resource availability and allocation for the achievement of business performance objectives.

Most PPM solutions can provide executives with a range of standard portfolio reports and graphical dashboards to monitor and analyse portfolios based on priority and category. Insight gained on the status and health of the projects within the portfolio facilitates decisions around whether a portfolio has the correct mix of projects, if they need to be re-prioritised and to what extent business objectives are being achieved.

The reality is that only executives using a "top-down" approach can drive the behaviour of project teams to provide data at the required quality necessary for decision-making. Should the data within the PPM software be unreliable, executives will not see this as a trusted source of information and teams will quickly revert to the "old" way of reporting or duplicating administrative efforts. One way to counter this is for management to regularly access and review their portfolios, as well as asking the right questions of teams.

Myth #2

Implementing PPM software does not change the way an organisation manages projects



PPM software shakes most organisations to the core and its touch points spread throughout the enterprise, way beyond projects. You'll find that areas including finance, marketing, human resources, senior management, business operations and other systems are also all impacted. These areas often provide input to the project environment and will more than likely be affected by a project's outputs. The fact is, PPM software is best used across the entire organisation, so ample consideration must be given to the enterprise-wide impact of changes around management as a result of the newly implemented PPM software.

The way both businesses and projects are operated does change when the principle tool used to conduct project processes is replaced by a new solution. And so it should. PPM software enables organisations to generate significantly more value from projects, even while cutting costs.

Seems obvious, but surprisingly many organisations expect their current system to remain unaltered and the new software to simply fix broken pieces of the existing system.

Truthfully, PPM tools should not only add efficiency to the current system, but should also add value in weak areas while enhancing successful ones. If the system simply automates that which was already in place, the organisation will continue to experience the pains of the past with no added value (and a lot of time and money wasted).

How PPM software transforms an organisation

More efficient project management and collaboration

PPM software creates a platform for project information to be centrally created and stored. This ensures that teams are always on the same page by maintaining work items and documentation in a centralised place. A central repository in itself is a change, forcing teams to approach collaboration and communication on projects differently.

Getting more done

Most tools eliminate the necessity for maintaining documentation outside of the system with project logs and the reporting thereof generated from within the system. As a result of the increased visibility and real time reporting now available, the focus of progress / status meetings is now changed to more of an exception-based approach. Project managers can now adapt their style from "tell me what has happened in the last period" to "what support is needed to address what was not completed in the last period".

Myth #3

It's the job of the project manager to maintain the information in the PPM tool

The ever changing project environment pushes teams to become more agile and to respond faster to change, something that is impossible without efficient collaboration. But is this the responsibility of the project manager alone? No, it's not!

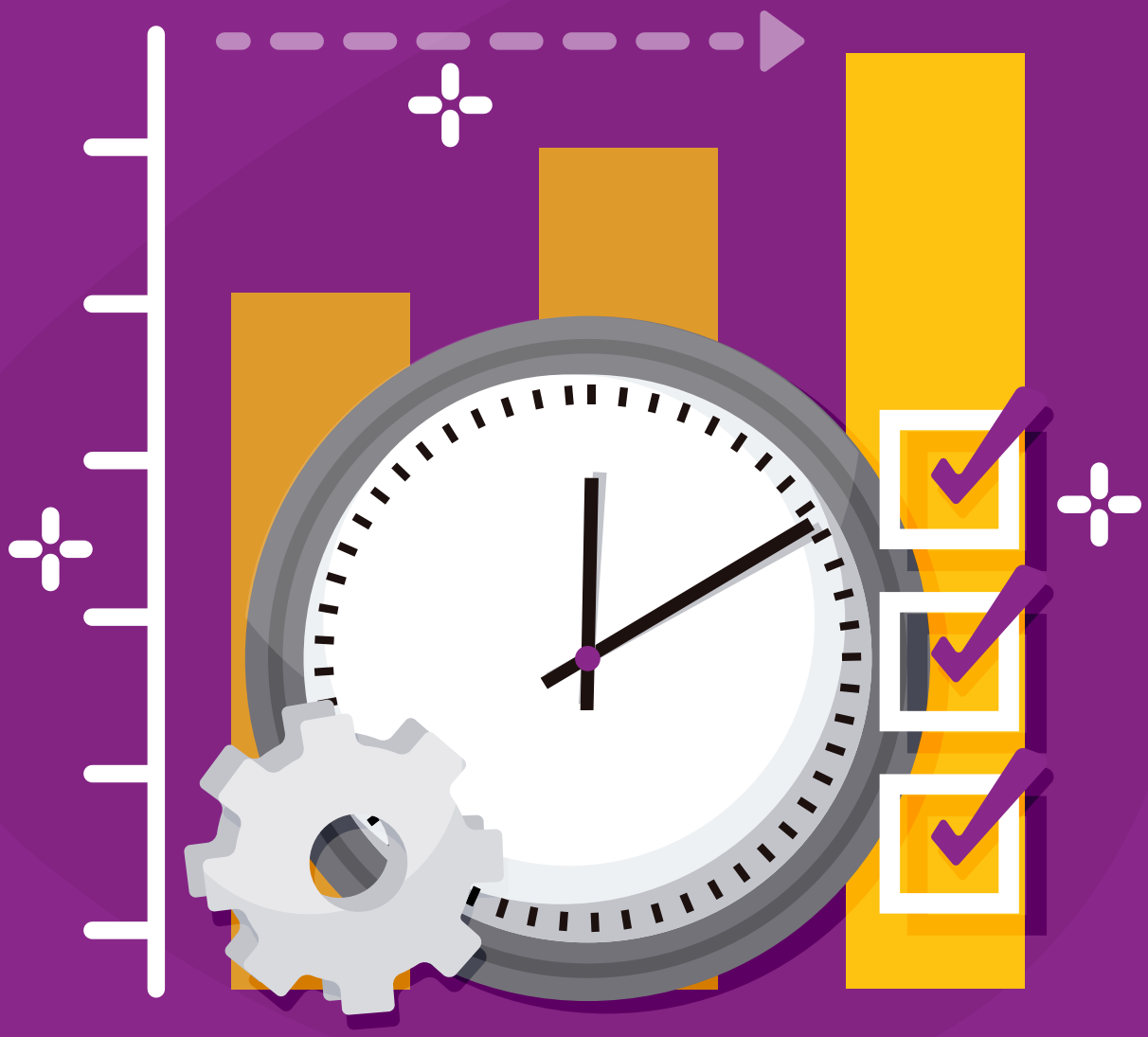
More distributed teams and the growing need for information sharing and visibility of projects for improved decision-making have meant that all team members play a role in contributing to project communications, which could include progress feedback, issue escalation and knowledge sharing. Most PPM software applications are designed to keep individual team members informed of their work in terms of the tasks, issues and risks allocated to them, and to keep project managers informed of the progress made against these work items.

Improving collaboration

Once a PPM tool is implemented, teams are no longer reliant on e-mail – with the related limitations of a lack of storage and the inability to involve the whole team for reporting project progress. To improve a team's effectiveness, project managers can no longer be the source of all information. If used properly, a PPM tool can in fact minimise the administrative burden of the project manager, while at the same time improve collaboration within a team.

Myth #4

PPM software provides no benefit to the operational level of the organisation



Matrix structure is consistent of most organisations. Functional leaders are typically responsible for more than one area, with their resources having a dotted line reporting to one or more project managers. The problem is, these environments often result in confusion for the team and frustration for the functional manager, with questions like "What are my priorities?" and "Where are my resources spending their time?" arising.

Project managers and their operational counterparts need to work together to gain agreement on the most effective use of the finite resources (most importantly people) available and operate with transparency. For many organisations, implementing a PPM solution has contributed to improving the working relations for these conflicting areas of the organisation. In addition to the expected benefits afforded to the project manager, PPM tools provide the functional manager with current and accurate information about what their teams are doing — even when they are involved in everyday work, strategic or ad hoc projects. This allows the functional manager to report on their team's activities and better manage their people and what they are working on by planning their capacity more effectively.

What's in it for the functional manager?

Most tools – as a minimum – provide some basic form of capacity planning, resource management and time reporting. While capacity planning will enable the manager to set resource utilisation targets and determine the capacity for work, time reporting allows for the evaluation of resource performance for the time spent on projects and ad hoc work assignments, which provides visibility into the actual work progress, current work status and remaining work. Resource management will help the manager understand the assignment of resources to current and future projects and non-project related work.

Myth #5

Integrating PPM software is the only way to get the best value from the tool

A stand-alone PPM tool may not be enough to address the diverse needs of most businesses, and it never will be. The reality is that an organisation's applications frequently need to talk to one another and must be interconnected in various ways. The question to ask though, is whether this means that application integration is a requirement for the successful adoption of your organisation's PPM software?

Integrating applications and automating end-to-end business processes require planning and maintenance. Planning needs to identify exactly which data points will travel between the systems to meet requirements, and then decide how often the passing of data takes place and what to do when there is a discrepancy – so which source is authoritative or source of the truth?

Best practice has shown that any integration of your PPM software should be a subsequent phase and not a part of initial rollout – biting off more than you can chew will confuse adoption and draw out the implementation. After using the PPM software for a period of time, the organisation will have learnt a lot and be better prepared for future requirements.

When a requirement is identified, the following two questions should be put forward: Does the requirement to bring data in from another system, impact the ability to manage or report on the progress of the project? And, is the benefit of integration going to be increased productivity with less time being spent on manually entering data in multiple systems? If the answer to both of these questions is no, then careful consideration must be given to the reasons for undertaking the integration path. It is a good idea to integrate only when the end-to-end business process is well understood and entrenched.

Conclusion

Through years of experience & hundreds of PPM software implementations, the team at Project Portfolio Office has found that keeping the initial implementation simple is best for greater adoption, which, in turn, allows more time to properly plan and validate any future requirements. Start getting the most value from the PPM software by ensuring that no other mechanisms exist for managing projects and reporting on their progress. Agreeing reporting cycles and using the PPM software as the single source of information for reporting purposes is another way for the organisation to gain quick adoption and in turn greater value.

Myths Debunked

Myth #1 Executives accessing the PPM tool on a regular basis gain insights that facilitates improved decision making

Myth #2 PPM software creates a platform for project information to be centrally created, stored and accessed across the organisation promoting more efficient project management delivery and collaboration.

Myth #3 All team members play a crucial role in contributing to project status reporting, which includes progress feedback, issue escalation and knowledge sharing.

Myth #4 Functional managers' benefit from transparent and accurate information on how their teams are spending their time — even when they are involved in everyday work, strategic or ad hoc projects.

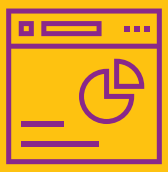
Myth #5 Business value is derived much quicker when the initial implementation is kept simple and integration happens as a subsequent phase when the end-to-end business process is well understood and entrenched.

ppo
project portfolio office

Manage your projects, programmes and portfolios

anywhere, anytime

Project Portfolio Office (PPO) helps organisations achieve **greater project success** by implementing and adopting a simple to use, cost-effective, configurable yet enterprise scalable project portfolio management application to **plan, manage, collaborate, execute and report** on their projects, programmes and portfolios.



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