
Softstar Research, Inc.

Project Management Artifacts

Revision History

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INTRODUCTION

Project management and its key responsibilities to plan, document, manage, and track projects are critical to the successful completion of all projects. The ability of the Project Manager to understand the balance within the project equilibrium of quality, schedule, and cost is crucial.

To assist in this effort, several documents and processes exist. Softstar Research utilizes the industry standards identified by PMI (Project Management Institute) in conjunction with other industry best practices from multiple methodologies such as RUP (Rational Unified process) and XP (extreme Programming), and information collected in Softstar's own project management experience as the base for capturing and providing information to clients.

Several project lifecycles exist in the Information Technology industry for planning, documenting, managing, and tracking projects. Softstar Research breaks down the project lifecycle to four durations or phases: Project Inception, Project Initiation, Project Execution, and Project Closure. The Project Manager is involved in each phase of the project to ensure consistency and flow to the overall project experience for Softstar's clients.

This document provides an overview of the project management artifacts that are essential for delivering projects successfully. Each Project Manager will leverage one or more of the documents described to provide a standard approach to tracking information and documentation for each project throughout the project lifecycle. Not all the project management artifacts described herein may be required for every project. A description of the primary project management artifacts for each phase in the project lifecycle is included.

Sample documents and templates are available in the Softstar Project Management documentation repository for each artifact listed in the project lifecycle.

Project Inception

Overview

The project inception phase consists of the pre-project artifacts required to solidify the Softstar and Client engagement. These documents include proposals, contracts, and SOWs (Statements of Work).

The process for this phase in the project lifecycle varies to meet the expectations of the particular client and to provide the flexibility required by Softstar's clients.

The Project Manager is involved in this phase to help provide the solution, approach, and estimates for the planned work. Involving and exposing the Project Manager to the project details and the client organization creates a smooth and consistent approach to the project engagement.

Project Initiation

Overview

The project initiation phase begins once Softstar Research and the Client sign the SOW (Statement of Work) or contract and the project engagement starts. The Project Manager immediately establishes various preparatory artifacts to provide a sound approach as the project accumulates momentum.

The documents listed below are key in setting expectations, as the project gets under way.

Project Charter

The project charter announces the initiation of a new project. The purpose of the project charter is to demonstrate executive level support for the project and project manager. The charter should clearly establish the project manager's authority to make decisions and lead the project.

The charter can be in the form of a business memo, email, or document. It should include the name and purpose of the project, the project manager's name, and a statement of support from an account executive.

The appropriate recipients of the project charter include any individuals associated with the project. The project sponsor provides this deliverable to all project stakeholders.

Project Stakeholders Document

Every project has stakeholders. Project stakeholders are individuals and organizations who are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be positively or negatively affected as a result of project execution or successful project completion. It is important to identify and understand who these stakeholders are prior to the instantiation of a project because these entities will help define, approve, and support the project throughout the duration of the project.

In its simplest form, a stakeholder's document contains the client's organization chart (with regard to the project), the project team's organization chart (or project team), and an open document of notes taken by the project manager and other project participants that document significant stakeholder information.

Communication Plan

Project communication is critical to the completion and satisfaction of the project stakeholders' expectations. Each project will require a variety of media to ensure that all project members and stakeholders receive accurate, timely, and successful communication about the project.

This document identifies all methods utilized to appropriately communicate. The Project Manager has ultimate responsibility for ensuring timely and accurate communications through the identified communications media.

Resource Requirements

Each project will require a variety of resources to ensure a successful completion that satisfies the expectations of each project stakeholder. The Project Manager must identify all the technical and human resources that are necessary to provide the solution on time, on budget, and within the defined scope.

This document identifies the hardware, software, tools, training, human, and other resources required to appropriately satisfy the project requirements. It doesn't include the allocation [tasking] of human resources, which is usually accomplished through the Project Plan.

Configuration Management Repository Setup

A standard directory structure to accumulate and store project information becomes critical as Project Managers take on more responsibilities and as project information accumulates. This allows Project Managers to locate and utilize historical project data to assist in their efforts to become more efficient and effective.

In addition, a standard directory structure provides a consistent approach to storing data for multiple projects. For any particular project, certain directories will be required while others are at the discretion of the individual Project Managers.

- **CMVC Directories**

The Project Manager must utilize a CMVC tool and the required directory structure to version control all project documents. The ability to access documentation that has changed over the course of a project is critical in capturing accurate and reproducible project information. The configuration management documentation identifies to the Project Managers the required and optional directories.

- **Project Plan Directory/Database (Project Central)**

Keeping a snapshot of the evolution of the project through a project plan is valuable and necessary. At the end of each week throughout the project, the Project Manager will save the project plan as a file and check the plan into CMVC repository.

Project Plan

Planning for projects is the key to fully grasping the effort required on any project. Softstar Research acknowledges the sayings “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail” and “plan your work, and work your plan”.

Thus, Project Managers often live and die by the information included in the project plan. Softstar begins the task level of the project plan very early in the project lifecycle. Once an opportunity for a project exists, the Project Manager, in conjunction with a Solutions Architect and other required resources create a high-level project plan including all known tasks. This initial high-level plan evolves into the final project plan as details become available.

Softstar utilizes Microsoft Project to create the project plans for all projects we engage in.

Like all the other artifacts, the project plan must be stored in a centralized and known location. This provides accessibility to current project plans to any Project Manager. In addition, the project location must meet the requirement for tracking hours against the project.

Risk Management

Risks exist in all projects. It is management’s responsibility to identify as many risks as possible and devise a mitigation plan appropriate to mitigate negative ramifications to projects. Critical data related to each risk is contained in this document to further aid management in its effort to identify and mitigate risk.

This is such an important artifact that a separate document, “Risk Management Overview” has been created as a supplement to the Project management artifacts document and templates.

The Project Manager utilizes this template document to identify, track, and manage risks associated with the project. At a minimum, the Project Manager identifies risks; their probability, and a contingency plan for each risk should the risk become a reality.

Project Reporting Templates

- **Status Reports**

This is a template document that identifies the format of status reports. If the client has a 'status report format' preference then Softstar will accommodate that preference. If not, Softstar will identify the format internally.

The status report tracks the utilization of hours and costs on a weekly basis by developer as well as by project. In addition, the report states the work accomplished, issues, and comments.

It is critical that the Project Manager identify the procedures surrounding the status report and the dissemination of its information. These procedures may refer to the project communication plan (to whom the status reports get delivered), as well as the frequency of status reports and any delivery instructions.

- **Issue Log**

The Project Manager establishes the template document for issues for the project. The Project Manager will continually update the Issue Log throughout a project. At a minimum the log should identify the issue, who generated or identified the issue, when it was identified, to whom the issue is assigned, the resolution of the issue (if any), and the date of resolution.

- **Change Management Log**

At the initiation of a project, it is essential that the Project Manager establish the change management procedures. To support the change management procedures, the Project Manager must create the Change Management Log for any changes. This log file will identify any change documents that exist and the impact for each change. The change management details are kept within the detailed change request document.

Supplementary Project Artifacts

As Softstar successfully establishes additional mutually beneficial partnerships with clients, additional project management artifacts may become necessary. Each client relationship potentially requires a new and unique set of requirements to manage expectations and information within a project and engagement. Softstar is flexible in providing its clients the documentation necessary to satisfy the project informational needs of the project stakeholders.

Project Execution

Overview

The execution phase begins on the start date stipulated in the Statement of Work or contract. The Project Manager's responsibility is to track the project deliverables and to keep all project stakeholders informed of the project's progress. Any issues, concerns, or questions are the primary responsibility of the Project Manager.

Although the Project Manager is the primary decision-maker, he or she has the ability and discretion to escalate any issue, concern, or question to the appropriate project management support individuals. The Project Manager is the primary contact for all project stakeholders. With the proper planning in the Initiation Phase, the Project Manager will be more able to focus on managing the deliverables and expectations of the project stakeholders.

The artifacts listed below as part of the project execution phase generally build on and use the templates created during the initiation phase.

Maintain the Configuration Management Repository

All versions of documentation related to the project must be stored in the configuration management repository. It is the Project Manager's responsibility to keep the repository up to date and accurate. Softstar currently utilizes a variety of tools in managing the project repository. The specific tool will generally be project specific.

Maintain the Project Plan

The Project Manager will keep the project plan up to date through utilizing various tools available such as Microsoft project. This accurate reflection of work performed will be available to the clients and the management support team.

Update the Issue Log

The issue log will keep a day-to-day log of all issues within the project. It is critical that the Project Manager keep this log up to date and accurate for all project stakeholders' information. The issue log should also track all decisions made on issues by the Project Manager and the Client's Project Champion.

Manage and Track Change Management Documentation

As the project progresses, changes are likely to occur. The change management documentation provides a documented path for change requests. It is critical that the Project Manager document all changes to the original project scope. The client's Project Champion must approve all changes before Softstar will expend effort in providing the specified change.

Provide Status Reports

Accurate status reports delivered in a timely manner are critical in every project. Good status reports help to identify issues and inform project stakeholders of the progress for the project. The Project Manager is required to send the status report to the client on a weekly basis unless other arrangements are necessary.

Employee Reviews

Feedback is very important to the development of all Softstar resources. At the completion of each project or every six months, Project Managers will review the resources on their projects. The management support team will review the Project Manager with input from Softstar's clients.

Project Closure

Overview

As projects end, it is important to realize the efforts involved in the project as well as finalize the project deliverables. Softstar values its relationships and works to build ongoing, mutually beneficial partnerships with its clients. Just as projects begin with an approval and sign-off process, Softstar provides a project closure document as well as project evaluations to formalize the project closure process.

The project closure process provides a mechanism for our clients and our project team members to voice concerns to project and corporate management based on “lessons learned.” The project closure phase is used to guide management and team members to avoid replicating mistakes discovered during the project lifecycle on future projects and to encourage repeating the things that were done right. Above all, the project closure phase is a learning tool.

The artifacts listed below as part of the project closure phase are generally done at the conclusion of a project. Depending on the duration of a project, some of these artifacts may be required throughout the project (resource evaluations, for example).

Project Acceptance Certificate

The project acceptance certificate indicates the project deliverables are complete and provided to the client. If any supporting documentation is required, the acceptance certificate will contain a note to the appropriate appendices. This is the formal conclusion of a project, when the client signs off that the project is complete. Let the party begin.

Project Evaluation

The project evaluation reiterates the requirements provided, work accomplished, rework required, deliverables completed, and documentation utilized throughout the project to reach the project closure phase. This evaluation also includes a “lessons learned” overview by the Project Manager.

Resource Evaluations

Each member of the project team will receive an evaluation of performance by the Project Manager. This review allows team members the opportunity to continually improve their abilities. The evaluation also enables the Project Manager to provide positive feedback to those team members that took the extra step in perfecting their performance on a project.

Project Manager Evaluation

Just as each team member receives an evaluation of performance, the development team and management support team provide an evaluation of the performance of the Project Manager (a.k.a. Upward Review). The management support team will solicit feedback from the client to ensure all feedback for the Project Manager is available.

Client Questionnaire

In order to accumulate all available feedback on the engagement process, Softstar’s the client an opportunity to complete a questionnaire. The information gathered will be utilized on future projects to improve our capabilities and provide the necessary efficiencies in Softstar’s project management approach.