



UNIT-2

Project Life Cycle

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the phases of a project's life cycle

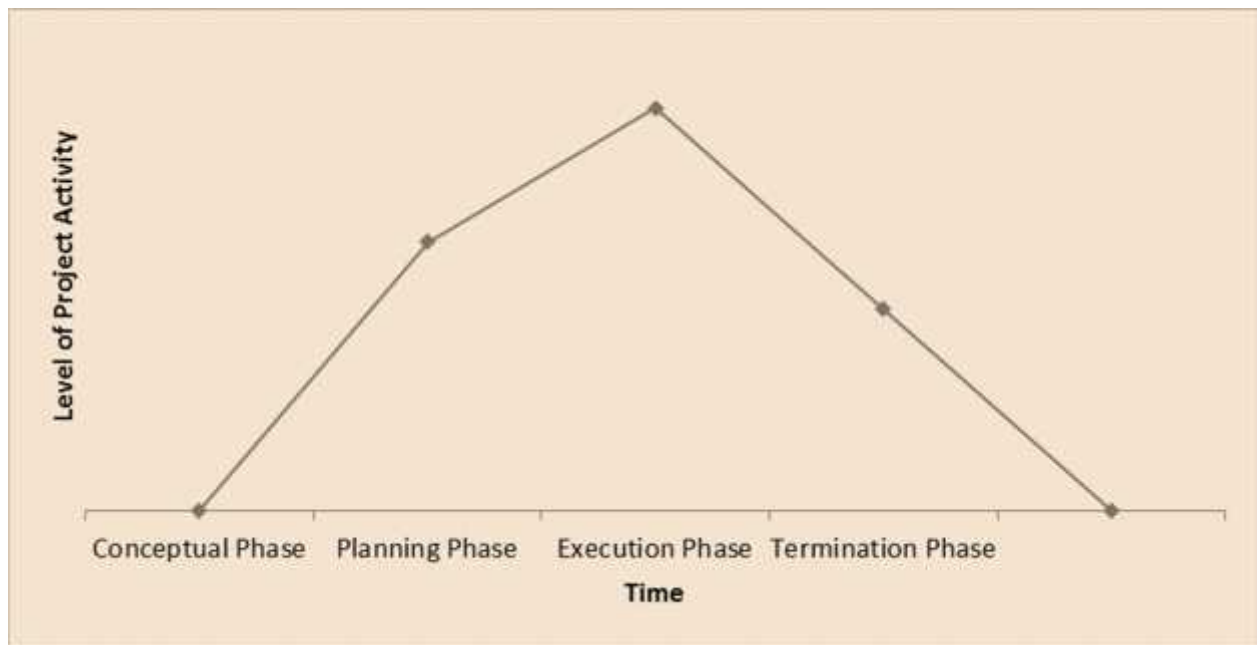
Unit 2

A Project's Life Cycle

The Life Cycle

Cycle Overview

The sequence of activities from the beginning of a project to its completion is essentially the same, whether we are talking about a small two- or three-day project or a large project that will span several months. These activities can be grouped into four different phases. (A phase of a project is a major set of activities that must be performed within the project management process.)



Conceptual

The first phase is the Conceptual phase, sometimes called Initiation, or the Create phase. This phase shapes the project. It often begins after the project has been selected. The purpose of this phase is to provide direction to the team, to decide what is to be accomplished, and to identify constraints and risks.

Basic elements of this phase include determining feasibility; identifying and researching alternatives; naming prospective team members; and creating proposals, budgets, and schedules.

Once the team has been established, members will study some of the initial research before moving onto a Project Charter or Statement of Work (SOW). The team will also set a clearly defined conclusion, establish benchmarks and deliverables, and choose a course of action.

The output for this stage is the Project Charter or Statement of Work (SOW).

Planning

The next phase is the Planning phase, sometimes called the Sell stage. The project team identifies the steps and develops the plan for how and when the project will be accomplished. This is the most critical and most often neglected phase of the project. Poor planning or lack of planning here can have consequences all down the line. If everybody knows what is to be done, the project will go much more smoothly.

Tasks to be completed during Phase Two include setting clear goals, defining who is responsible for which tasks, refining budgets, obtaining necessary approvals, securing or designing systems needed, building and testing, analyzing results, and commencing production.

The output for the planning phase is a project plan document, a complete plan for how the project will be executed. The sponsor and other key shareholders should all approve this document.

Execution

After the project plan is approved the Execution phase starts, where the plan is put into action. Here is where you get down to working on the project and delivering the deliverables that were outlined in phase one. To make sure the work is on track, the team (or the project manager) must monitor progress, and, if required, recommend changes. Progress reports go to the stakeholders.

Tasks include making the time necessary to get the work done, obtaining and using resources (such as money, people, and equipment), meeting regularly with the team, and updating stakeholders.

Ensuring that the project is completed on time and within budget requires the project manager to direct and control the work underway. Tasks include establishing specific standards, monitoring performance, inspecting results and conducting interim progress reviews, auditing, and making adjustments.

Test Your Knowledge

What will “making adjustments” require? How can adjustments be made to work for the project?

At the end of the execution phase, the final deliverable is delivered to the project customer or sponsor.

Termination

Closeout or Termination is the final phase in a project. This is when your customer will decide whether they are satisfied with the project. The sponsor assesses the project in terms of goals met and costs incurred, while the team discusses lessons learned and ways the next project can be improved. A final status report is issued and sent to all key stakeholders. This is also the time to celebrate success and thank everyone involved with the project.

Tasks often include a meeting to produce a report or checklist upon completion, and the final production of manuals, drawings, and procedures for the client. The project team may train the client's staff, and the lessons learned through the life of the project are documented and shared for future project work. Finally, project team members are reassigned to pre-project work or perhaps new projects. Any equipment, space, or resources used during the project are repurposed or released.

Milestones

Milestones are the major elements or steps of a project. The first three milestones in every project are the "go or no go" phase gates. For example, after all the preliminary work has been done to shape what the project will look like, a critical decision has to be made. Is this project worth doing? Shall we move forward with it?

If the answer is yes, you move into the planning phase. When all the plans have been made, you once again stand at the edge of the cliff and decide, "Go or no go?" Has all the planning been done? No? Go back and finish it. Is this project still something we want to do? In that case, let's move forward.

The third phase gate is at the end of execution. Have all the deliverables been given to the customer? If no, then back you go to finish the job. If the final deliverable has been completed, then you can move to the final phase.

Why Do Projects Fail?

A project's failure is usually due to several key factors, one of which is the manager or team's lack of involvement in the conceptualization stage. The further down the organizational hierarchy the manager is, and the less information they are privy to, the more likely they are to fail or be less successful in their projects, and the more stressed they will be as a result. A coping technique should include asking for more information, or, after being briefed, summarizing their understanding of what took place. This can be followed by a statement such as, "This is my understanding of the project; if I do not hear differently, I will assume this is as it should be."

How Can My Project Succeed?

Here is a brief list comparing the reasons why projects succeed and why they fail.

Failure Factors	Reasons for Success
Poor planning	Good planning
No communication	Pre-defined communication plan
Lack of resources/money	Enough time and money
Lack of commitment/team problems	Team commitment
- Poor choice of leader - Setting unrealistic goals - Lack of experience	- A good team leader - Realistic goals and time frame - Experience with project planning and experienced team members
Unclear objectives	Clear goals

Three Ways to End a Project

Before you start the project, you need to have a very good idea of what the end will look like. We'll start with the best case scenario.

Fulfillment

This is the best case scenario, where the results, changes, or new products that were the goal of the project are included in the ongoing operations of the company. Project team members return to their pre-project work if appropriate, or move on to new roles. The project as a distinct entity is wrapped up.

Partial Fulfillment

Project team participants return to their pre-project roles if appropriate, and the project continues but as part of overall operations, rather than separately. This can happen when a project takes much longer than originally anticipated, or funding runs out and must be found from other places within the company, but it is advantageous to take what is already completed and integrate as much as possible.

Premature Termination

The project is stopped mid-stream, and people may or may not return to their original work; sometimes they are laid off. This happens when the project fails for any number of reasons, or the business changes focus. The project is closed down, and the team involved may experience a wide array of emotions depending on their reaction to the time and energy they dedicated to the project prior to its termination.

Test Your Knowledge

Stages of a Project

Place each activity under its proper heading (Conceptual, Planning, Execution, and Termination).

Conceptual

Planning

Execution

Termination

Selling a Project

Tom Peters

Tom Peters, one of the highest paid consultants of the business world, has written a lot about projects. He says that if you are assigned a project, get excited about it, not defeated. In fact, he suggests we take any project that is given to us and figure out a way to make it even better; not necessarily bigger, but better.

tom Peters once said, “Never, ever, accept a project or assignment as it is given. Resist the status quo.” Peters also says that if you haven’t been assigned a project but you can see the possibilities, go out and find a project to tackle. Perhaps you had an idea as to how you could redesign your boss’s office for increased efficiency, or you were walking through the mall and saw a wellness program advertised that you thought would work in your office. Maybe you heard of something another organization or department is doing that you think would work well in your own.

Project ideas are all around us and if you feel ready to tackle them don’t wait for someone to notice you. Bring your idea forward.

The question you have to ask yourself is, “How will I sell it to my manager, or to the powers that be?”

It’s pretty clear that you must have the ongoing support of management and key stakeholders before you initiate any project. This will involve both communication and negotiation skills.

Start by determining why the project is worth doing. How do you believe it will benefit the organization? Can you explain how the cost of the project (in time, money, or other resources) will be justified by the outcomes?

Ask yourself:

- Is there a need or an opportunity for this project?
- What is the relative cost in time and money for this project?
- Is there any risk of failure? What would this mean to me?
- Can I get support for my project?
- Will this project affect the bottom line profitability of my organization?

Remember, pet projects that are personally interesting but which will not benefit the company or have a low priority for other people can negatively affect business.

Identify the stakeholders (all of the people you have to get on board if this project is going to be successful). What role will each stakeholder take in the project?

Can you find a project sponsor (someone willing to give you the resources you need to move the project forward) for your idea?

The Priority Matrix

How do you get your own ideas accepted? How can you be sure these ideas are good enough to push for? There are a number of ways you might do this, but one of the most useful is to create a visual reference to demonstrate our priorities.

The Priority Matrix

For example, we might create a matrix to identify priority criteria for projects. Below are three criteria to consider but there are other things you might want to consider as well, such as “Will my manager support this project?” If your manager does not support your project it is usually dead in the water.

Project	Benefit	Easy to do	Contribution to priority area	Total
A				
B				
C				
D				

You can make this work by assigning points to each criterion, say on a scale of 1-10, or you may assign points depending on their overall value. For example, contribution to priority area may rate 15 points, while benefit rates 10 points, and easy to do rates 5 points.

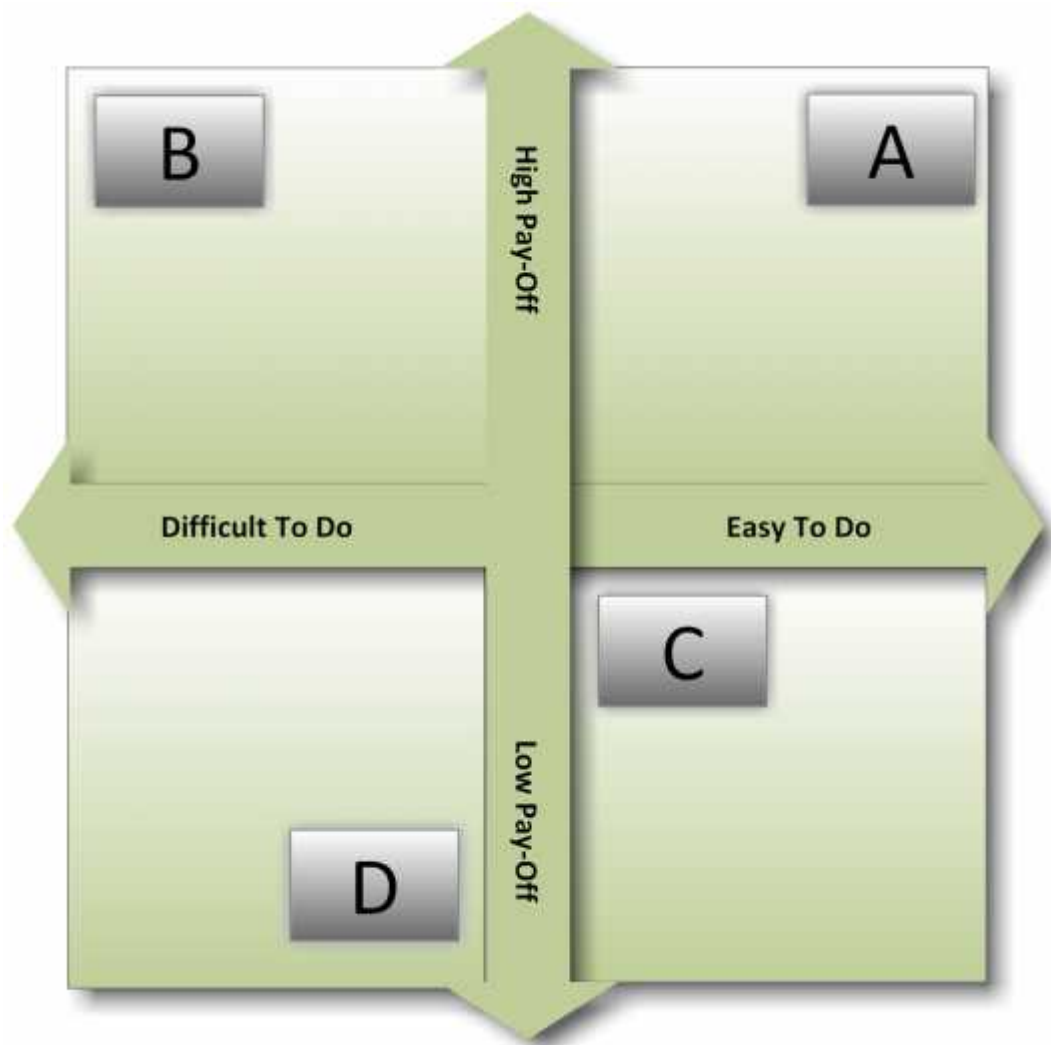
For project A, for example, you may feel the benefit rates 7/10 points, and it is very easy to do so you give it 5/5, but the contribution it would make is not really a priority in your department so it gets no points there. It would only get 15 out of 30 points.

On the other hand, Project B would be quite beneficial, so you will give it another 7/10, but it isn't so easy to do, so it gets 3/10. Nevertheless, it is in a priority area so it earns a 10/15. Thus its total score is 20 out of 30.

Now deciding between the two projects is easy; the one that scored 20 should be the project to do.

Priority Quadrants

There is another matrix we can use. Draw two bisecting lines. One is for a high payoff vs. a low payoff. The second bisecting line is for difficulty vs. ease of doing a project. Mark each project in the appropriate quadrant.



Which would you consider a priority?

1. A
2. C
3. B
4. D

These are simple matrices, but they are graphic and they can sometimes help you make a decision you have been wrestling with.

Further Reading: