FRITS J. BOS, PMP

1602 - 145 Hillcrest Ave., Mississauga, ON, L5B 3Z1 | C: (416) 524-7790 | frits@pm4hire.com

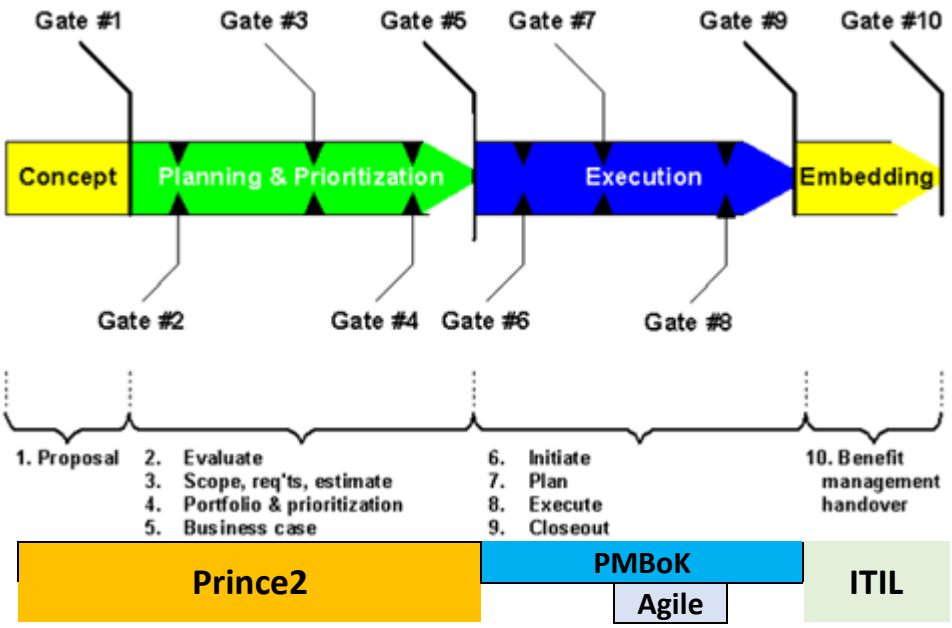
All organizations have experienced projects that went well, and projects that were disappointing, so perhaps it should not be a surprise that people look for a "magic bullet" to make their projects deliver on-time, within budget, and with all the functionality stakeholders could hope for. Each time you grab another "magic bullet" you put another project at risk: what makes a project more successful is to make sure the fundamentals are applied, and different constraints are balanced.

Project Management Contracts

I use a project management approach blending Prince2, PMBok, and Agile consistent with the PMBoK admonition to adapt project methodology to the needs of the project, rather than to force the project into a narrowly defined methodology.

I follow a project management process to practice that!

With over 30 years of project management experience in managing projects I can attest to what works and what will not work. I have run IT infrastructure projects, application development projects, business transformation projects, and construction projects, contrary to what may be promised there are no shortcuts when you want to deliver quality results. This illustrates the 10 Prince2™ life-cycle stages that a typical software development project requires to implement a concept until it is embedded in production. The strength of Prince2 is that it ensures there is sufficient detail to execute a project. As shown, execution is better managed using PMBoK™ as a guide. To optimize coding, Agile™ is more effective as the team management process. To securely deploy software, the ITIL™ standards are employed.



This diagram illustrates why a blend is better than one methodology. Many modern projects do not adequately establish up-front requirements, which increases the risk of initiating a project with incomplete understanding of what we are aiming at. For example, while Agile is a great way to streamline development execution, it is naïve to believe a requirements backlog will emerge from thin air. With respect to quickly developed solutions, most larger organizations require all new software to be vetted before being embedded into operations, according to the standard ITIL change management practices. The scope and complexity of the project will dictate a blend.

The overarching approach encompasses 10 process stages:

Stage 1 & 2: Concept or Proposal, and Evaluation

Most projects are initiated because a stakeholder (group) identifies a business need. Sometimes we need to refine that concept to make it clear why the project should be considered. The GDPR legislation is an example of a clear, imposed, requirement that does not require much debate, while for some "nice to have" functionality we need to carefully assess the merits. Before much (if anything) gets done the ROI potential for the project must be established, typically using highly preliminary estimates. The first stage of funding will involve the business requirements analysis.

Stage 3: Prince2™ Scope, Requirements, Estimates

The effort involved in establishing project scope, and eliciting detailed requirements, may be underestimated. We may need to consider a "Product" plan to reflect successive "Project Scope" definitions so the final product can be delivered in releases. Delivery projects can overlap: a scope breakdown just makes each project more manageable, to manage budget constraints for what deliverables should be prioritized. Requirements elicitation provides details by project, and initial estimates to ensure that scope does not exceed budget constraints. Contributing projects can then be chartered at the appropriate time.

Stage 4 & 5: Prince2™ Portfolio & Prioritization

Many projects may compete for funding, so the portfolio manages what the next project to be initiated will be based on resource requirements and funding constraints. To obtain funding for a project we create a business case (from the validated estimates) for due diligence. Depending on the scope of the project we can propose a full PMBoK™ process or only the Agile execution stage (assuming the preparatory requirements are fully developed). Note that a transition from stage 4 to stage 5 can take days, weeks, months, or even years, depending on what other priority projects compete for funding and resources with specific skills required to do the work.

- Prince2 is less effective in detailing work effort within a project that is eventually launched, so based on the likely delay for work authorization I usually switch focus to the PMBoK methodology that is generally accepted for project execution.

Stage 6 & 7: PMBoK™ Initiate – Charter, Plan, Requirements, Resources

A project charter initiates the PMBoK™ project defining project purpose, scope, and objectives, the management structure, and reporting standards (usually based on templates) that will apply to the project). The project sponsor(s) must formally approve the charter for the project to be initiated and the resources to be allocated and approved. Next, we revisit the requirements for the project and create a detailed project plan that identifies the resources required to implement the project. This includes creating a RACI chart to define who does what, and a CAIRO table to track change, assumptions, issues, risks, and other items. I generally employ an integrated Excel workbook with VBA macros so that I have all the reporting and tracking in one single repository. For most active projects that means weekly status reporting with minimal effort on my part, as opposed to transcribing information from a project management tool into Word, for example.

Stage 8: PMBoK™ Execution → Waterfall & Agile/Scrum

By all accounts the execution stage is where most of the costs are incurred. When possible, this stage can benefit from Agile/Scrum team management, based on "Total Quality Management" principles. Each project is unique – therefore, there is not one right way that governs all possible projects, but instead you must adapt the project management process to the needs of a project. The exact methods used depend on the nature of the project, the technology, and the tools.

We note the inane debate about waterfall vs. Agile vs. iterative development, as if any approach can cut corners: the real difference is a gated approach vs. an iterative approach. Also noted, the gates act as authorization to proceed, whereas the Agile manifesto gives license to the team to make selections on project scope. Interestingly, Agile only lives within one gate: it is used to streamline the execution stage by engaging/enabling the technical resources to achieve greater independence with reduced red-tape. It is not that any less effort is expended: the advantage is that the time-lines can be shortened by facilitating multiple and parallel initiatives that each have a predefined scope set in a more conventional methodology. Hence, Agile/Scrum is focused on team management and optimizing the use of resources within that predefined execution scope, and sometimes that allows us to do advance work on high-risk components, which then leaves us more time to resolve complex issues while more routine work can progress in other streams.

Stage 9: PMBoK™ Closeout

The "administrative closeout" of a project reflects the accounting for accrued expenses and any vendor invoices pending, as well as hold-backs, all of which are typically completed and handed over to the financial- and/or procurement administrators as the project winds down and most human resources are returned to home-base while contractors are released. Aspects of continuous improvement require that lessons learned from each project are acknowledged and, where appropriate, incorporated in the project management guide for the organization. All project-related contracts must be closed-out, and (as required) handed to the procurement organization for final payments according to the established terms.

Stage 10: ITIL™ Embedding

Delivering software into a production environment requires a controlled deployment that usually involves the operations team to make sure there is no adverse impact on existing production. In a controlled environment the results are handed over to a PAT (product acceptance testing) team associated with operations that determines when the product can eventually be deployed.

Low cost introductory offer

For this ***introductory offer*** we charge $850.00 per day (for out-of-town venues add $400.00 for travel time, plus reimbursement of transportation and lodging expenses at cost) for consulting, or $650 per working day for active project management engagements.

Respectfully,

Frits J. Bos, PMP