



Process Improvement: Using MS Project Will Not Get You There

Recently, the Process Improvement Lead at a major US Dept. of Defense Command with people all over the globe told me that ““process improvement” is not synonymous with “enterprise project management.”” If you assume “enterprise project management” means using applications like MS Project Server or Primavera, that makes sense. With those applications, you will never get there. But Project Remedies’ ActionProgram Manager Plus (APM Plus) is different than MS Project Server and Primavera in significant ways that make it the best enterprise project management solution available for process improvement.

Since nothing done in an IT organization is done uniquely, using tools that most people use to generate unique project plans does not make sense. Unique project plans and that attitude take you in the wrong direction. With APM Plus, process owners capture repeatable processes in the application.

In addition, everyone should be involved: process owners, project managers or team leaders, resource managers, approvers, and workers. And everyone should be looking at the same data. Rather than project managers updating their project plans based in feedback from the people who work the tasks, we think that the people who work the tasks should status the tasks and hopefully enter their time against the tasks, because duration (automatically captured when people say they are going to start working the task and then when they say they are finished working the task) and time spent are the two key performance metrics needed to improve performance.

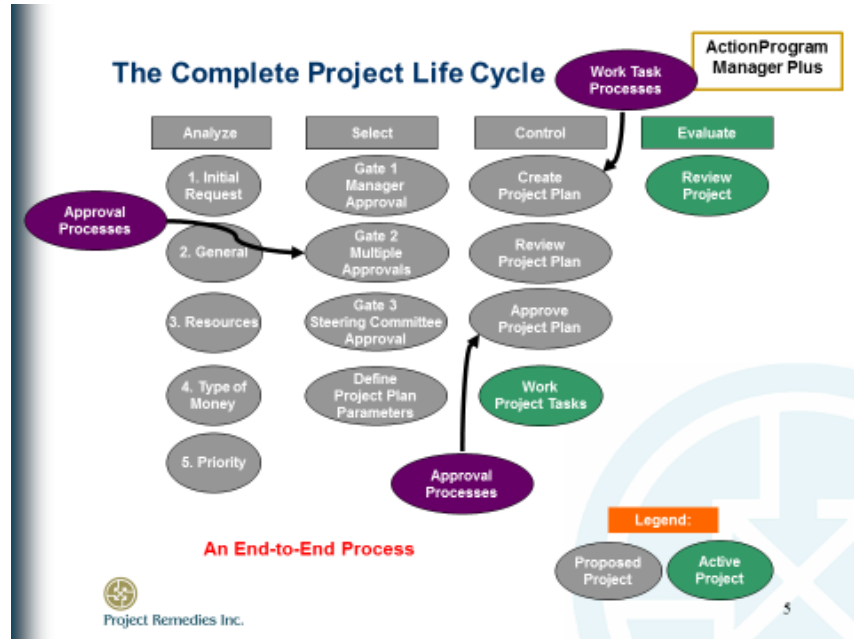
Because the work and approval processes are stored in the application and used to automatically generate project plans, training people on the process is no longer necessary. They need to be trained on statusing their tasks. If they want to see the process, clicking on the Gantt chart button will generate the Gantt chart for the project. The tasks are the tasks in the process and the task relationships are shown as well.

Another important difference is that APM Plus runs on an organization’s existing Remedy environment, whether on-premise or on the cloud environment. While APM Plus can run standalone, at least 20 use cases stem from being able to integrate with other Remedy-based applications like Helix Digital Workplace for automating service fulfillment, Change Management and Asset Management for data center consolidations and other applications. APM Plus uses Remedy’s workflow functionality in ways that are just unavailable to applications like MS Project, MS Project Server and Primavera.

APM Plus takes advantage of other Remedy functionality as well. For example, part of any implementation is working with our customer to set up a “hierarchy of notifications.” These notifications are launched automatically when a threshold is passed and logged in an audit field. For example, since the planned start date and planned finish date of each task are known, notifications can be automatically generated based on one of the dates. For example, the day before the planned start date, the person responsible for the task is notified that the task starts tomorrow. If he/she does not start the work, the day after the planned start date, the person assigned can be notified that the task was supposed to start yesterday. The day after that, the person and their manager are notified. The day after that, the person, their manager and the commander are notified. When the commander picks up the phone and asked why he/she is receiving these emails, the culture changes. The same types of notifications can be launched based on the planned finish date. That way, nothing falls through the cracks and is remembered months later. Notifications have been going off continuously until the work is completed.



The complete project life-cycle: Analyze, Select, Control and Evaluate, is built into APM Plus. The 5 – 10% of the projects that go through the complete life-cycle can be managed and tracked, as well as the 90% of the projects that only go through the Control and Evaluate phases. Approval processes and work processes are used at key points during the complete life-cycle.



Leadership can see the status of any project at any time improving the Shared Understanding of the status of any project. The Project Inventory lists all active projects and all proposed projects (not In Process). Simply highlighting a task and then double clicking on the record opens the Project Record. Two more clicks and the task detail opens.

View Project Status at Any Time

ActionProgram Manager Plus

Project Inventory

Project Name	Risk	Status	Actual Cost	Plan Budget	Base Budget	Baseline Cost	Planned Cost	Actual Cost
NAC1	High	In Process	9/10/2018 9:11 340219 5:00:00 4/21/2018 5:00:00	15000	21000	21000	21000	21000
BOP-DR 1	Medium	In Process	12/15/2017 12:00:00 9/15/2018 5:00:00 1/22/2018 5:00:00	0	0	0	0	0
BOP-DR 2	None	In Process	3/26/2018 9:15:33 6/28/2018 5:00:00 1/4/2018 5:00:00	0	0	0	0	0
DCS Test 1	None	In Process	7/9/2018 12:35:45 9/7/2018 5:00:00 9/7/2018 5:00:00	21000	21000	21000	21000	21000
DCS 1	None	In Process	4/10/2018 13:18:18 10/30/2018 5:00:00 5/20/2018 5:00:00	15000	18750	18750	18750	18750
SPANAR 1	High	In Process	3/25/2018 9:11:53 5/25/2018 5:00:00 5/24/2018 5:00:00	15000	20400	18000	18000	18000
SPANAR 2	High	In Process	3/25/2018 9:13:22 5/26/2018 5:00:00 5/24/2018 5:00:00	15000	20600	18000	18000	18000
SPANAR 3	High	In Process	3/25/2018 9:15:22 5/26/2018 5:00:00 5/24/2018 5:00:00	15000	19400	18000	18000	18000

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The Project Inventory is often used by team leads during the weekly team status meetings because all of the data is current up to the last entry. And the people in the meeting are the people who status the tasks.

Improving communication and automating communication between the people working the tasks improves performance. Using APM Plus, when the person assigned to a task changes the status from In Progress to Complete, the person responsible for the successor task or tasks is automatically notified that the predecessor has finished and they can start working their task(s).

In order to improve processes, the performance metrics detailing how well resources perform against tasks in standard, repeatable processes need to be captured. APM Plus connects the 4 elements specified in that sentence: processes, schedules, resources and performance metrics.

It starts with creating a repository of standard repeatable processes. Both work processes and approval processes are entered and used in APM Plus during the complete project life-cycle, which is built into the application.

At the right time in the complete life-cycle, a work process along with a planned start date or planned finish date, is used to automatically generate project plans, i.e. task timelines.

Resources are assigned to work the tasks, and whether you are the project manager or resource manager, you can see how busy the person is when the task is supposed to be performed.

Once the person in the project manager role, often not a trained project manager, likes the plan, he / she sends it through a governance step, using one of the approval processes stored in the application.

When the project plan is approved, everyone is automatically notified that the plan has been approved. When the project manager initiates the project, the person responsible for the first task is automatically notified that he / she can start working on the task. , the plan has to be formally approved because you do not want a manager saying that he / she did not agree with the plan. And lastly, because it is their performance that is being measured, the people working the tasks need to status the tasks and enter their time spent on the task. The system automatically captures the other key performance metric: duration.

Summary. Measure what you manage. In order to improve processes, the performance metrics of the people working the tasks in the process need to be captured. That means all 4 elements: process, project schedules, i.e. a task schedule, resources assigned to work the tasks, and the performance metrics, duration and time spent all have to be connected. And that's what APM Plus does.