

The Bleeding Edge of IT Project Methodology

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Abstract

There is abundant theory concerning the tailoring of project management methodologies, specifically as it pertains to ‘what’ tailoring is and ‘what’ the outcomes of tailoring ought to be. There are works that describe the process at a high level and there are also a sizable amount of papers reporting on the successful fusion of disparate project management methodologies. Whereas the ‘what’ of selection, tailoring and fusion is well described, it is argued that tools, methods and theory supporting, guiding and describing ‘how’ to conduct tailoring presents an opportunity for the delivery of unique and valuable contributions to the profession. In the proposed presentation, a holistic approach to addressing these concerns are introduced, from which unique and valuable theories, methods and tools stem.

A multi-level model of project management for large, complex projects is proposed following an investigation into 29 main project management methodologies. Agile methodologies, in particular, describe the project as a defined initiative that can be viewed and interpreted from one level – the project’s level. Some traditional methodologies allow for sub-projects and master projects, but it is argued that these approaches still fall short of providing the possibility of optimal customization. As an example in summary: A large, complex project may deliver defined functions at various levels within the organization – infrastructure and software development by the IT team; marketing and training by the project sponsor’s business unit; and compliance by the company’s legal arm. Furthermore, ‘above’ the organization, certain functions may be required to adhere to processes defined by the regulator. Third party suppliers, ‘below’ the organization, may benefit from clear guidance as to how their unique process will be required to adhere to the methodology of the organization’s IT team. The multi-level model allows for freedom of process at each level, while specifying the project governance needs between the levels. This produces seamless integration and reduced risk, while providing more freedom to the delivery of each function.

In aid of the selection, tailoring and fusion of customized project management methodologies, a methodology comparison tool, or framework, and a hands-on guide to tailoring is proposed. The tool contains the defining characteristics of each of the 29 main project management methodologies. A methodology can be selected for analysis, at the requested level of detail. Multiple methodologies can be compared for mutually inclusive and exclusive characteristics. Furthermore, through a process of compression, methodologies can be compared by viewing only their differentiating characteristics. This advises the selection of a base, or master, methodology. The selected methodology can then be reinforced with the mutually inclusive characteristics of other methodologies. The guide to tailoring describes these steps and the requisite knowledge that stakeholders are expected to provide to the process in order to produce a methodology that caters for the perceived complexity and risk of projects, while being as lean as possible. Using this tool and guide, a customized methodology can be created for the organization, for a business unit, for a portfolio, for a program’s projects, for each individual project or even for each function delivered at a specific level, as per the multi-level model.

Finally. In response to the need to progress beyond the design and development of solutions and to also provide for the implementation and take-up of solutions, the development of a guide to the implementation of enhancements into the IT project management landscape, specifically, is proposed. This is done by building on the methods and lessons learned from ITIL implementations. This proposition and its benefits promises improved implementation success and take up, and reduced change fatigue endured in an

environment where high-risk and high-value projects need to continue without hindrance. These propositions aim to provide a holistic guide to the selection, tailoring and fusion of customized project management methodologies; and enhanced implementation success and take-up.