

Goal Directed Project Management – An Overview

What is GDPM?

Goal Directed Project Management (GDPM) was introduced in the 1980s by a group of project management consultants - *Kristoffer V. Grude, Erling Andersen and Tor Haug*. They are the authors of the third edition, 256 page paperback book published in 2004 of the same name. ISBN: **0-7-494-4186-0**

GDPM has gone through many developments since its inception and *Fast Forward Project Management LLP* recognise the power and value of a straight-forward and pragmatic project management approach which not only improves effectiveness, but also increases the chance of project success through the use of a few simple paper-based techniques and templates.

Goal Directed Project Management as its name implies focuses on the project end goal and **what** outcomes need to be achieved as a project moves forward through a number of achievement based milestones rather than focus on the detailed activities of **how** they will be achieved. The resulting milestone plans are normally simpler – often a plan on a page – making it an ideal communications and control tool and because the focus is on **what** is needed, the milestones are more robust to changes.

It is a light-touch and non-bureaucratic approach which breaks down the complexities of project management using simple, practical techniques which are easily understood by people regardless of whether they are experienced in project management or not. GDPM can be used, either as a stand-alone approach or in conjunction, with other methodologies such as PRINCE2, APM, and PMI etc.

GDPM uses active sponsorship and stakeholder management to clarify the project scope, boundaries, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timed) objectives and success criteria. It separates planning the **what** from the **how** and emphasises collaborative participation, rather than imposition, in the development of the project milestone plan. The roles & responsibilities of the team are clearly defined using a responsibility matrix and resource contracts to engage people in the project. The small and simple documentation set conveys all of the relevant information and makes it easier to maintain project control. Finally a multi-dimensional project health-check tool is used as the teams ‘conscience’ to ensure the project is set up and controlled effectively.

GDPM is a particularly good approach when used to deliver business change, breaking down functional boundaries and engaging people from all areas of the organisation – many who may have little or no project management expertise.

GDPM- Some Key Principles

Clear Scope and Objectives

No matter which project management approach or methodology you adopt they will all stress the importance of having a clear understanding of the project scope and objectives. The first principle of GDPM is to put appropriate effort in at the start – to develop and form a collaborative understanding of the project purpose, its boundaries, scope and end goal with the project sponsor, project manager and the project team.

Milestone Planning

The Milestone Plan, expressed in achievement based outcomes, is the prime planning tool detailing **what** is required which makes it more robust to change. The plan should be on a single page – also known as a ‘Plan on a Page’, making it easy to understand and an effective control and communications tool as well.

In GDPM the plan is always developed collaboratively by the people who will deliver it. This ensures that they not only understand fully what has to be done, but are committed to the chosen solution. This process is best done with the aid of facilitators conversant in GDPM leaving the project team to concentrate on the project.

As the milestones are defined in terms of outcomes the milestone description should start with ‘When ...’ e.g. “When the new billing system is ready for trial.”

The Milestone Plan is the high level plan for the project – individual milestones will have supporting plans which define the detailed activities. These may be in various formats such as MS Project, Excel or a simple list.

Roles & Responsibilities

A simple Responsibility Matrix is used to allocate key responsibilities with a series of code letters. Initially this may be expressed as groups such as Procurement, Architects etc then changed to specific named individuals. This matrix forms an extension to the Milestone Plan.

The Project Team

The project manager and project team are collectively responsible for the delivery of the project; they are not just functional representatives. Together they work to develop and clarify the scope, objectives and end goal. They are also responsible for planning the project, assigning roles & responsibilities, and the management and control of project delivery. The size of GDPM Project Teams normally ranges between 3 and 7 people.

Project Control

Project delivery is managed by the project manager and their team using regular exception based progress reviews - typically weekly. For each milestone the team assess whether it is still on track for delivery, or if not what action must be taken to bring it back on track and minimise the impact on subsequent milestones.

In parallel to the delivery of the project milestones the project manager and team use the project health-check tool to assess the effectiveness of their project management across multiple dimensions which include the objective and purpose, effective team performance, planning, resourcing and control of benefits, costs, risks, stakeholder engagement and progress.

Why would I want to use GDPM?

GDPM is light-touch, non-bureaucratic and is expressed in simple terms using a language that can be understood and adopted by people who are not professional project managers as well as add value to those that do have a project management background.

Your existing project management approach or methodology does not appear to be successfully delivering projects. You may not have an approach or methodology or only have an ad-hoc one which your company has outgrown. Research says that 80 - 90% of projects fail so why keep doing what you're not doing very well?

You want to improve the skills and capability of your people as part of their career development plans.

You want to be in a position to improve your overall business performance using the GDPM approach coupled with the development of your people's project management capability.

You may have a volume, business as usual organisation suddenly required to implement a major change programme or series of changes. You may be uncertain of your ability to manage these changes successfully.

What if I already have a methodology?

You may already use a recognised external methodology such as PRINCE2, APM or PMI. Alternatively you may have developed your own derivative. These may be supplemented by software planning packages such as Microsoft Project. GDPM is completely complementary and can be used to increase the project management effectiveness of other models or methodologies.

While these other methodologies have a sound basis many organisations still fail to deliver their projects using them. Why? Well this may be caused by the level of competence of their people, using a methodology for the sake of it or a combination of both. Smaller projects often suffer from a bureaucratic overload when trying to adopt the same methodology for all types and sizes of projects. This mechanistic approach can often be an end in itself where people spend more time delivering the process rather than delivering their projects.

As frustration grows management request more and more levels of planning detail which, rather than helping gain tight control, does the opposite as the volume of information makes it difficult to see the overall picture and also detracts from the activities which are needed to deliver.

Collaboration and team working is the key ingredient for successful project delivery not a complicated and bureaucratic set of plans. The GDPM approach ensures those that deliver, plan the project and a good test of understanding is that anyone from the team can articulate what the project is about. This increases the level of engagement, understanding and buy-in from the team as well as allowing them ample opportunities to raise their issues or concerns.

How do I get GDPM embedded in my organisation?

To achieve sustained results in project delivery an organisation needs to have not only the skills of those people responsible for delivery but also the organisational support, structure and governance around the application of those skills whether it be through individual projects or larger programmes.

We have a licensing framework which can develop your people's skills and competences from a basic understanding of GDPM through to a GDPM Practitioner, Coach or ultimately a licensed GDPM Tutor. This can be achieved via a number of steps:

- GDPM Overview presentation – Normally used for senior management to better understand the key principles of GDPM.
- 2-day Project Management Workshop – A highly interactive and practical workshop using the GDPM tools, techniques and templates in a safe, simulated project environment.
- Coaching, mentoring and project specific support to help teams and individuals apply the learning in their own workplace.
- Facilitation of project teams through the key GDPM stages – initiation, planning, organising, implementation, controlling and closure.
- Coaching, development and assessment of individuals that wish to achieve GDPM Practitioner, Coach or Licensed Tutor status.

In terms of existing projects and programmes we can:

- Use the project health-check model to assess the effectiveness of existing projects and make recommendations on areas for improvement.
- Help you establish project and programme structure and governance – linking delivery to the overall business strategy; establish a portfolio of projects and management of progress and control.

In terms of the overall organisational support and environment we can:

- Help ensure that senior managers and sponsors gain an understanding of GDPM and what is expected of them in terms of their commitment, engagement, active sponsorship and setting priorities.
- Identify the processes, practices or systems that dilute the effectiveness of project delivery.
- Help you develop a project management framework of key tools & techniques, skills & development paths and professional project management communities for your organisation.
- Use the GDPM approach to plan, communicate and deliver the new organisational structure to support the project management community.

In Conclusion

During its 20 year development the GDPM approach has been adopted as a standard approach by organizations all over the world, improving their project management capability, delivery and focus.

Our training is highly interactive, based on practical use of the techniques and templates using simulated projects in a safe environment. We do not use extensive classroom based lecturing or examinations. This means that your people can be effective immediately they return to their normal business environment.

If you think your organisation and people can benefit from the introduction of GDPM then please contact

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