

Challenges for effective project management and delivery

FOR ORGANISATIONS..



An enigmatic efficiency conflict exists for all organisations involved in operations management or project delivery. Try combining the two together and you're managing a whole new landscape of tensions. Here we explore and isolate some of the challenges, identifying suitable remedies that will yield substantial benefits for any organisation which can range from simple hygiene fixes through to systematic reputation and conversion uplift.

Problem Statement

There are well documented challenges to effective project management and a perpetual absence of technical innovation to support the transition of fixed price or quoted project work as it translates to effective delivery. This is made enormously more complicated when those resource groups delivering a project have to contend with simultaneous deliverables, break-fix, cross platform dependencies, planned leave and other interferences which can be known to disrupt even the most comprehensive plans.



More recently, we've seen the rise and rise of agile methods for managing work packages, in place of traditional life cycle methodology in an attempt to shorten delivery cycles, improve speed to value and bring forward the realities of complex project management. As part of this, we've seen a plethora of tools and systems that aim to solve for, and bring visibility to dependency management and parallel design and development cycles. These methods have proven successful when delivered natively, within organisations and for technology oriented projects.

However, when taken outside the organisation and applied to a consulted third-party engagement, there isn't the luxury of iterative cycles and test and learn flexibility. Failing fast isn't an option and often there is only one chance to deliver. Additionally, the work mix is often complicated by support model stressors and intricate resource planning or forecasting. Compound this with the infinitely more dynamic contractual permutations that exist between firms, many of them non-technical in nature and suddenly, the emerging tools, methodologies and industry standards seem rigid and impractical. They can introduce layered complexity and administrative overhead when all that's needed is a bit of transparency and dare I say common sense. You know what they say. When the glove don't fit - Find a new glove or get your hand out of the cow.

To combat some of the limitations, we've listed our top 4 challenges and corresponding remedies. For relief, we've also deliberately built these remedies as core functionality into the Genico system.



1. HOW DO YOU ACCURATELY QUOTE A PROJECT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE VARIABLES?

Quoting projects for clients can be tough. Quote too high and you're out of the race, quote too low and you're out of pocket.

As a result, it's critical to break down a project into key features. These features should be work packages that are small enough to be estimated with confidence. Combinations of work packages might be estimated by different people, involving those best placed to understand and scope the work. This is also often the team members who will ultimately be responsible for delivering the work when the quote is accepted.

By quoting with team members, it brings expertise to the fore in a sales cycle. The inclusivity aids buy in from delivery teams, accountability of scope and creates alignment between value and capability, both which should be completely congruent with your organisations value proposition.



2. HOW DO YOU GAIN CONFIDENCE THAT THE DELIVERY TEAM CAN MEET A PROJECT ESTIMATE?

There are always risks, dependencies, surprises, change requests and challenging clients. The target is to anticipate, address and extinguish these as early and effectively as possible when they arise. In many cases, a lack of visibility in development cycles often leaves the delivery team solving for snowballing defects and issues when in reality, it may be due to any number of client shortcomings.

Some of these challenges, such as change in scope, access to stakeholders, unclear or unknown project risks can be softened by bringing the client into the development cycles with skin in the game to participate in delivery. Ensuring the requirement artefacts are made available to all, including the feature and task breakup allows the client to understand what's been shared, through the eyes of the project group and hone in on responsibilities in a well governed manner, without additional overhead of committee meetings or project reporting.



3. HOW CAN WE GIVE TRANSPARENCY TO OUR CLIENTS ON WHAT COMES NEXT AND WHERE WE NEED THEIR INPUT?

Fundamentally, any project will only be as good as the problem it's solving and mathematically the output is a function of the inputs. Bad requirements often lead to poor project outcomes, but the team responsible for quality is generally much further down the delivery value chain. Rarely is the commissioning party held responsible for a failed project result, despite regularly being the cause. To address this, project governance is key. At the core of governance is transparency, trust and competent management practices. These attributes can and should be systematised within all projects and are non-negotiable when you have separation between the client and delivery team members. Client facing roles need to embody translators that the rest of the team rely upon. In some cases a delivery team might also make their records available when quoting and keep a change audit record as the project is delivered.



4. HOW DO WE JUGGLE MULTIPLE PROJECTS?

For many growing businesses, achieving critical mass is not just a question of growth, it's a crossroads where the wrong choice can threaten existence. Growing pains are aptly named with good reason - they're not called growing pleasures, despite growth being positive. Preserving quality, maintaining margins, delivering efficiently, scaling proposition are all challenges for organisations dealing in business to business markets where intellect or capability are involved.

When intellect or capability denominated companies grow too quickly, they might be left with a dry pipeline and excessive overhead. Additionally, small companies trying to grow might also face a key man risk or design limitation whereby a leader role is both business development as well as delivery. Organisations like these often experience rapid variability and waves of demand. This can be due to changing focus of leaders - when the pipeline is drying, concerted effort allocated to growth and when that growth hits the queue, attention is refocused on quality delivery.

Effective systems need to moderate this effort to ensure these key staff can proportionately allocate their time to optimise the business system and create the frameworks for clear and accountable handoffs to support the scaling of delivery over time.

These are just some of the questions faced into by organisations on a daily basis. Some remedies for the above are quite clear

- Quote projects at the feature level to determine scope and size – Estimating a project in parcels helps clarify goals.
- Quote jobs as teams - Let those who do the work, quote the work to be done. Remove tensions in estimate and delivery.
- Allocate team members to participate - Trust team members to manage their backlog of work based on their expertise. Empower without forcing an impossible span of coverage. Give team members the freedom to quote and segment or prioritise their work, but also ensure the appropriate project disciplines are preserved.
- Manage pipeline – Remove cyclical frequencies by segmenting roles and priorities, ensuring that adequate time is spent on client management, sales, delivery. Delineate the efforts of working for, on or in the business by knowing exactly when you need to turn up or down activity to avoid growth pains.
- Forecast capacity – Managing teams that juggle multiple projects is tough. Couple this with operations management, leave and core business activities and forecasting proves difficult. By letting teams monitor and manage their own backlog, you can simplify the levers and simultaneously empower staff, firm up operations management and improve delivery efficiency.
- Delivery transparently – Bring clients on the journey with real time notifications and access to the project delivery as it happens. By being transparent it removes conflict and ambiguity. Both client and customer alike have configurable access to artefacts and milestones.
- Measurable benefits – Project or contract engagements can be notoriously poor at measuring efficiency. Understanding cost to serve, return and margin can be quite complex in a contracted environment yet are critically important to firm survival. By matching initial estimates and fixed quotes with actual cost of outcomes, firms can continue to train and adjust their modelling techniques to improve efficiency over time.

After years of frustration, iteration, methodology and market scanning, we haven't found a solution which adequately caters to our standards. As a result, we've made the choice to build the answer. An intuitive, fit for purpose solution. Solving the real challenges in an easy to use application once and for all. Notably, the solution offers more than comfort and delivery effectiveness. The benefits to getting this right magnify and ripple with each additional project.

So, what are you waiting for – give it a go.