

CPAs, PDCA, and Financial Project Management¹

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Total Quality Management is defined by ISO as a management approach centered on quality and based on the participation of an organizations people and aiming at long term success (ISO 8402:1994). In thinking of all of the quality processes or actions which have been developed in the last few years, there is one which I have found the most interesting. It is interesting because it is a series of simple tasks which lead to big results if followed closely. The process is the known as the PDCA cycle. PDCA stands for Plan, Do, Check and Act. Plan means to design the business process components in order to improve the results of the task (Averson, 1998). Do implements the plan and measures the performance (Averson, 1998). Check assesses the measurements and reports the results to upper management or any project decision makers (Averson, 1998). The final component is act which is the process of deciding on all changes which are needed to improve the project processes (Averson, 1998).

When it comes to quality management, it is important to realize one of the main focus is to “improve the processes” of the projects. It is meant to drive success and deliver a high quality product or service (the deliverable). The PDCA process takes the fundamental requirements and places them in a logical sequence. These are everyday tasks which must be completed in order to accomplish quality regardless of the old or new process. For instance, Six Sigma is a process which incorporates the concept of everyone working together at all levels. PDCA entails the same thing. Six Sigma is a process of “combine the process with the people” and then to foster results. The same holds true for PDCA. Obtaining quality is a process of taking simple steps and performing those steps in an organized manner at the best of the employee’s or organization’s ability with one goal: deliver a quality product or service. There are issues in financial project management with can hinder the success of PDCA.

There is the argument which states more financial-based projects would be successful if a CPA was used as the project manager as opposed to an IT professional (Johnson, 2016). The reason for this theory is simple. CPAs know the nuances of finance and can determine what is business intelligence faster and more accurately then someone who does not have the training in finance or accounting. There is also the factor of finance regulatory needs which must be present in all financial projects. Financial reconciliation, financial and managerial reporting, and implementation of robotic process automation are factors which can and should be determined by a CPA or a seasoned financial database analyst on projects involving financial data. When financial professionals are not included in the project management process where manipulation of financial data is the scope of the project, this does not fit into the PDCA frame. Planning is often times not done in an effective manner resulting in scope creep, split projects, delays, or cancellations.

The first step of planning is crucial to the success of the project. A CPA can work with and for stakeholders better where financial data is the basis. The knowledge and experience the CPA

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uses during the planning phases is immeasurable. Stronger project goals can be defined; requirements will be more detailed for financial considerations such as regulatory restrictions; the infrastructure and scheduling will be better planned; analysis of risk which includes audits will be more detailed; and the CPA will be better versed in determining the cost management for the project. From planning the project, the next phase of Do is not as stressful when properly planned.

Can “Do” be derailed. Yes. Any project has a level of risk involved which can derail it. But with a CPA, the chances of that occurring are not as prevalent when dealing with financial data (Johnson, 2016). The CPA will guide the technical team member through the execution phases of the project while provide a more comprehensive monitoring and control aspect. The monitoring and control aspect is also the “Check” phase.

The CPA provides change management services as needed. Ensuring the team is aware of and performs maintaining the scope and deadlines of the project. Meeting milestones and reporting financials to the PMO is crucial to the overall success. There is a need to have accurate reporting of all aspects of the project. A CPA can provide that level of detail based on the financial and accounting training needed to obtain the credentials of a CPA. With the additional training to become a project manager, this make the CPA of a financial project a stronger candidate for managing those projects which build financial data bases for management and financial reporting.

The final phase is the Act. The act is simple; the CPA closes out the project and reports the final transition. The process improvements, financials, and warranty periods are closed bringing the project to an official end. The CPA must close the project in detail adhering to all requirements of the PMO for project closure. When working with financial data, the warranty period is critical to ensure the reconciliation process is functioning correctly and producing the necessary data for reporting. When the reporting is not correct, this effects many stakeholders and could destroy a company.

PDCA – Plan correctly; Do your due diligence; Check monitoring and control aspects; and Act by closing the project correctly and completely. This is a very important acronym for a financial project manager to know, a simple acronym which can save a project when used by the right person and implemented correctly.

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About the Author



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Regina D. Parks (Exec. MBA, Doctoral Student, Mom) has a varied work background. She has worked as a Mental Health Case Worker, Teacher, Retail Manager, and Financial Analyst. Currently, she is working as a Data Governess for financial databases and metadata catalogs. Her undergraduate degree is in Psychology. She also holds an Executive Master's Degree in Business Administration, and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Management with a concentration in Project Management. She lives in Texas and has a 14 year old son who is in his sophomore year in a dual credit program earning his High School diploma and Associate Degree. Regina can be contacted at regina.d.parks@att.com.