

## ***Advances in Project Management Series<sup>1</sup>***

# **Moving beyond project delivery: Reflecting on the life cycle concept as way for organising project work<sup>2</sup>**

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Life cycles are fundamental to the management of project work. Indeed, Professor Peter Morris, reflecting on the prevailing state of the profession, affirms that '*the one thing that distinguishes projects from non-projects is their life cycle*' (Morris, 2013; p. 150).

The notion of the project life cycle has become a ubiquitous part of the theory and practice of project management to the extent that it often defines and delineates the process, flow, rhythm, dynamics and boundaries of projects. In doing so it also shapes the discipline and the way we think about projects, organising work and temporary structures.

### **Why life cycles?**

The life cycle concept, as we know it, serves many purposes. The life cycle represents a path from the origin to completion of a venture. Division into phases enables managers to control and direct the activities in a disciplined, orderly and methodical way that can be responsive to change. Phases group together directly related sequences and types of activities to facilitate visibility and control, thus enabling the successful completion of the venture.

The project life cycle acts as an important management tool focusing on the allocation of resources, the availability of key individuals, the integration of activities, the support of timely decision making, the reduction of risk and the provision of control and governance mechanisms.

The additional benefits associated with using a life cycle approach include (see, Dalcher, 2002):

- attaining visibility,

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<sup>1</sup>The PMWJ *Advances in Project Management* series includes articles by authors of project, program and general management books published by Routledge worldwide. Each month an introduction to the current article is provided by series editor **Prof Darren Dalcher**, who is also the editor of the *Routledge Advances in Project Management* series of books on new and emerging concepts in PM. To see [project management books published by Gower and other Routledge publishers, click here](#). Prof Dalcher's article is an introduction to the invited paper this month in the PMWJ.

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- breaking work into manageable chunks,
- identifying the tasks,
- providing a framework for co-ordinating and managing,
- controlling project finance,
- identifying and obtaining correct resource profiles,
- encouraging systematic evaluation of options and opportunities,
- addressing the need for stakeholder review,
- providing a problem-solving perspective,
- verifying ongoing viability on a progressive basis,
- encouraging continuous monitoring,
- managing uncertainty, and
- providing a common and shared vocabulary.

Control is attained through the division into phases and the breaking up of work into identifiable and significant milestones and meaningful deliverables (products delivered at certain times). Partitioning activities into phases gives the impression of natural order of thought and action. The spacing of activities along a time axis suggests the mutual exclusivity of stages and the primarily unidirectional flow of activities.

Each phase has specific content and management approaches with clearly identified decision points between them. Matching the content requires the application of an ever-changing mix of resources—skills, tools, expertise, money and time. Introducing phases with formal interface points encourages the opening of a communication path and the transfer of project information through formal hand-over or technology transfer between life cycle phases.

### **Rethinking project management**

As highlighted above, the project life cycle has dominated and shaped project management thinking. The resulting instrumental rationality is often interpreted as how projects ought to be performed in the real-life environment of project work (Dalcher, 2016). Some of the ideas implied through this type of thinking have been challenged by the UK Government funded Rethinking Project Management Network (Winter and Smith, 2006; Winter et al., 2006). Over the course of two years, the Network brought together senior practitioners and leading researchers ‘*to develop a research agenda aimed at extending and enriching project management ideas in relation to developing practice*’ (Winter and Smith, 2006). Overall, the network found a strong need for new thinking to inform and guide practitioners beyond the current conceptual base (Winter et al., 2006; 640).

The main outcome of the network was the development of a new agenda for research presented in the form of five directions identified by the participants as critical to the management of projects. Each direction is represented as a move from a current way of thinking, represented on the left, towards a more promising perspective – as described on the right (see, Table 1, (Winter et al, 2006, Dalcher, 2016)).

**Table 1: Rethinking Project Management proposed directions for future research**

<b>The lifecycle model of Projects and PM</b>	<b>Theories of the complexity of projects and PM</b>
<p><b>From:</b> the simple lifecycle-based models of projects, as the dominant model of projects and project management.</p> <p><b>From:</b> the (often unexamined) assumption that the life cycle model is the actual terrain.</p>	<p><b>Towards:</b> the development of new models and theories which recognise and illuminate the complexity of projects and project management.</p> <p><b>Towards:</b> new models and theories which are explicitly presented as only partial theories of the complex terrain.</p>
<b>Projects as instrumental processes</b>	<b>Projects as social processes</b>
<p><b>From:</b> the instrumental lifecycle image of projects as linear sequence of tasks to be performed on an objective entity ‘out there’, using codified knowledge, procedures and techniques, and based on an image of projects as temporary apolitical production processes.</p>	<p><b>Towards:</b> Concepts and images which focus on social interaction among people, illuminating the flux of events and human action, and the framing of projects (and the profession) within an array of social agenda, practices, stakeholder relations, politics and power.</p>
<b>Product creation as the prime focus</b>	<b>Value creation as the prime focus</b>
<p><b>From:</b> concepts and methodologies which focus on: product creation – the temporary production, development or improvement of a physical product, system, facility etc. – and monitored and controlled against specification (quality), cost and time.</p>	<p><b>Towards:</b> concepts and frameworks which focus on: <i>value creation</i> as the prime focus of projects, programmes and portfolios.</p>
<b>Narrow conceptualisation of projects</b>	<b>Broader conceptualisation of projects</b>
<p><b>From:</b> concepts and methodologies which are based on: the narrow conceptualisation that projects start from a well-defined objective ‘given’ at the start, and are named and framed</p>	<p><b>Towards:</b> concepts and approaches which facilitate: broader and on-going conceptualisation of projects as being multidisciplinary, having multiple purposes, not always predefined, but permeable,</p>

around single disciplines, e.g. IT projects, construction projects, HR projects etc.	contestable and open to renegotiation throughout.
<b>Practitioners as trained technicians</b>	<b>Practitioners as reflective practitioners</b>
<b>From:</b> training and development which produces: practitioners who can follow detailed procedures and techniques, prescribed by project management methods and tools, which embody some or all of the ideas and assumptions of the 'from' parts above.	<b>Towards:</b> learning and development which facilitates: the development of reflective practitioners who can learn, operate and adapt effectively in complex project environments, through experience, intuition and the pragmatic application of theory in practice.

The propositions related to the current position put forward (and re-stated on the left-hand side of Table 1) reflect a growing dissatisfaction with the life cycle dominated position recognising multiple shortfalls. The first direction acknowledges the limitation of a simplistic lifecycle as a dominant influence within the discipline, further recognising the unchallenged assumptions it harbours. The second challenges the instrumentality of the life cycle image implying a temporary apolitical production process replete with codified and understood knowledge. The third direction addresses the fixation with delivering a product or artefact, while the fourth bemoans the narrow conceptualisation and the assumption of a clearly identified single objective that is fully known at the start. The last direction tackles procedural adherence and unchallenging approach and perspectives with which the principles and approaches are applied, so we shall return to this point towards the end of the article.

The Rethinking Project Management Network published its findings in 2006. Reflecting on the progress made a decade later, Dalcher comments that *'At first glance, it would not appear that the practice of project management has been transformed in the way the original researchers and Network participants were advocating. Research still plays a very limited part in refreshing, informing or supporting the content of the bodies of knowledge.'* (Dalcher, 2016; 813).

*'Evidence regarding the theoretical basis of project management remains elusive. However, to an extent, the argument about the theoretical basis of project management misses the point. Project management is a portmanteau activity that brings together a whole range of established business, organisational and social scientific theories about working collaboratively, communicating, making decisions, managing resources and so on, that are already documented in other contexts. Given the tendency to import what works from other areas, does project management need an exclusively theoretical basis of its own or rather just a link to each of the established forms of activity associated with managing projects involving people in social and societal contexts?' (ibid.; 815).*

## **Reflecting on the shape, efficacy, and purpose of life cycles**

The fifth direction proposed by the Rethinking Project Management Network encourages reflection and questioning in and of practice. Dalcher (2016) observes a greater need to develop deliberative and reflective professionals capable of dealing with permeable boundaries and unstructured situations characterised by increasing levels of volatility, complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity. This implies the development of new skills, capabilities and habits.

*'Ultimately, the shift in practitioner development seems to be from relying on fixed expectations, standards and models in pre-understood and pre-defined contexts towards a more dynamic and reflective approach informed by the relevant context and situational needs and therefore capable of coping with the inherent complexity and uncertainty.'* (Dalcher, 2016; 802-3)

The network has questioned the dominance of life cycle thinking within existing practice. The departure point for the remainder of this article is to take a further step back and to question the efficacy and rationale of the life cycle concept itself. Indeed, if the life cycle concept was adopted from other disciplines, does it even work there as purported when it was borrowed, appropriated and imported into project management thinking, lore and habits?

The reflection will take the form of six largely open questions related to the nature and purpose of life cycles, before returning to address its appropriation from other disciplines, and the unquestioning mode of its application within the project management community.

### **1. Where is the cycle in the (project management) life cycle?**

While, there are multiple variations on the theme of the life cycles of projects in terms of the number of steps and their names, most follow a similar essential flow of activities beginning with a relatively well-defined concept and ending with the delivery of a result, deliverable, artefact or product. Indeed, the typical manifestation is of a short and typically limited sequence of activities, which is not repeated and contains no iterative elements. There is no cycle in the prevailing models as applied within project management – so why don't we rename it as the project life sequence?

### **2. Life means alive?**

Life cycles often represent the different stages of the idealised life that a live subject may go through. Does something need to be alive to have a life cycle? for that matter, is the project management life cycle really concerned with the 'life' of project management?

### **3. Life surely implies start to finish?**

If life implies full life, the traditional project life cycle is a misnomer, as it does not encompass the full life of a project.

Life cycles are typically applied in biology, for example to capture the stages of life of a frog through a number of distinct phases:

Egg mass → tadpole → froglet → adult frog (who is now able to initiate the next cycle...).

This allows life cycles to reflect change over time. Yet, project management life cycles often seem to assume a fully defined concept, which is transitioned into a working product, result or artefact, where we seem to lose interest. That is a rather restricted focus of interest and could be viewed as the equivalent of zooming in to a limited segment concerned with the development of a tadpole into a formed froglet (with no consideration of the purpose of the froglet, or the ultimate shape of the chain of development).

#### **4. Life cycle as transforming?**

For a life cycle to be meaningful it must represent a set of transformations that occur over the life of the subject or the lifespan of an object.

Given the limited gaze encompassed by project management thinking, it is perhaps better to acknowledge that the simplistic life cycle utilised in project management thinking encompasses more of a simplistic system transformation model where we are concerned with the input, and output of a single transformation activity.

The minimal concern shown in the future beyond the transformation, does imply an interest in a single transformation with the following format: input → process → output

Subsidiary interests may encompass the knowledge, constraints and guidance that direct the transformation (in addition to the available resources, which may be counted as the input), but ultimately, this is both a limited and limiting view of process.

#### **5. Is the life cycle encompassing birth to death span?**

Span is absolutely crucial to adopting a life cycle perspective. If life cycles capture the full life span, shouldn't project management life cycles reflect the same desire?

Other life cycles encompass the birth and death of the subject. The narrow conceptualisation captured within the project management life cycles ignores most aspects of life (and says nothing about death).

In product development there is an increasing emphasis on 'cradle to grave' coverage, encompassing the full life cycle of a product. While we may not need to reflect on the potential for resurrection or redeployment of a product in a new guise, some projects do exactly that. The London 2012 Summer Olympic games allowed part of the stadium to be dismantled and delivered to a new location to start life as an enhancement to a different stadium expansion project. Innovation and new product development often extend the scope of 'cradle to grave' thinking to encourage re-purposing and reuse of

materials, thus engendering a 'cradle to cradle' type thinking. This would imply a significant extension to the scope of interest in the life of a product or project, rather than the traditionally limited zooming in.

At the other end, the early stages play a key part in defining, constraining and shaping the project, and yet our life cycles pay little attention to early decisions and their impacts. In life cycle equivalents, if we could gain a better understanding of the influences on egg mass (and tadpole) creation, we would have a far richer insight into the ecology of frogs and their environmental relationships with their habitat, than if we limited our gaze to fully formed frogs and wondered why they are afflicted with certain symptoms, conditions or manifestations.

## **6. Whose life cycle is it anyway?**

In project management we often refer to project life cycles (Dalcher, 2015), but within the great scheme of things, are we talking about **project** life cycles, **project management** life cycles, **product** life cycles, **product management** life cycles, or **project spans**?

Do we always talk relate to the same thing? Do we all consider life cycles in the same way?

Should we instead, formulate clearer definitions of what we mean – and develop a better understanding of which aspects need to be described, detailed and depicted in our conversations.

Ultimately, are we correct to talk about, focus on and structure our project work around the idea of a life cycle?

### **The problem with shared practice**

We will return to explore the implications of the above questions later in the article. However, for now it is useful to question the persistence of performance shortfall. Given that projects are essential to enabling, embedding and driving improved performance, one would expect blind spots to be addressed and obstacles to be removed in the perennial search for improved efficiency. In an age of austerity, one might also expect deeper assumptions to be questioned and challenged as organisations continue to seek to achieve more with less. And yet, organisational errors, failed projects and poor performance persist in many settings.

The Rethinking Project Management Network identified a major problem with the life cycle as the way of thinking about projects and project management. They identified multiple concerns around the perspective and context, however, ten years later, many of the concerns were still receiving little attention.

*'While project management is often introduced as a practice, the majority of the literature still conveys an instrumental rationality associated with a prescriptive model that assumes universal applicability in all contexts.'* (Dalcher, 2016; 817)

Organisations, training courses and the professional bodies in general seem reluctant to address some of the major concerns and resist the temptation to rethink the fundamental tenets of the profession.

*'In summary, it might prove simpler to refer to the instrumental rationalistic nature of classical project management knowledge observed by the Network and remark that it retains its hold on certain parts of the profession. Challenging the hegemony of professional body infused knowledge may require a considerable investment in time and momentum to engender the more significant and far reaching rethink advocated by the Network.'* (Dalcher, 2016; 815).

### **The death of common sense?**

Gary Klein, a leading organisational psychologist has investigated organisational inability to improve through the lens of insight. He notes that organisations inadvertently suppress the insights of their workers in ways that are ingrained and invisible, resulting in stifled innovation and sub-optimal performance.

*'Organizations stifle insights because of forces locked deep inside their DNA: they value predictability, they recoil from surprises, they crave perfection, the absence of errors. Surprises and errors can play havoc with plans and with smooth operations. In their zeal to reduce uncertainty and minimise errors, organizations fall into the predictability trap and the perfection trap.'* (Klein, 2014; 151)

**The predictability trap** asserts that managers prioritise predictability, in order to minimise ambiguity and uncertainty for their executives, who abhor surprises. Such abhorrence results in the development of meticulously developed, yet unrealistically precise plans that do not allow for surprises. They further eschew uncertainty by applying stricter controls and creating new forms and further levels of governance mechanisms to reinforce the pursuit of certainty.

**The perfection trap** refers to the organisational pursuit of devising perfect processes, procedures and systems through a concern with eliminating waste, reducing errors, and becoming lean. Errors and imperfections are easy to define, measure, manage and eliminate. Becoming preoccupied with their elimination, assumes that the best processes are already installed.

*'The quest for perfection, for mistake-free performance, can be thought of as a war on Error. It is right up there with the quest for predictability. These are both inherent in running an organization that depends on managing people and projects. In well-ordered situations, with clear goals and standards and stable conditions, the pursuit of perfection makes sense. But not when we face complex and chaotic conditions, with standards that keep evolving.'* (Klein, 2014; 155)

When the two traps combine, it is all too simple, and much safer, to eliminate shortfalls rather than begin a search for improvement, creativity and development. It also makes it easy to follow a recipe for success or a prescribed life cycle...

*'Cutting down on errors seems pretty straightforward. You list the steps needed to perform a task, or define the standards for each step, and then check if the workers are following the steps and adhering to the standards. You are on the lookout for deviations so that you can bring workers back into compliance.'* (Klein, 2014; 155-6)

## **Turning knowledge into action**

While individuals may have privately identified and lodged their frustrations with the status-quo in terms of existing methods and aspects that do not work, organisations as collectives can often remain resistant to new knowledge and insights, and avoid the necessity to make use of new knowledge. Indeed, US Professors Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton (2000) observe that many organisations fail to take the vital step of transforming knowledge into action which they refer to as the knowing-doing gap. Pfeffer and Sutton conclude that an organisation's culture plays an important part in sustaining or exacerbating the gap. Their message is that executives must use plans, analysis, meetings and presentations to inspire deeds rather than allowing them to act as substitutes for action.

A key reason for the continuing gap revolves around the lack of accessible, reliable content that can be considered. Even when there is access to such new content, for example, through academic journals, practitioners may feel unable or unwilling to implement it because they may consider the contribution to be too theoretical or devoid of any practical potential impact.

It appears that the reluctance to adopt new practices comes down to the accessibility of the content and the perceived reliability as well as the practicality and value associated with its potential implementation in a practical setting. This month's column offers the potential to bridge that gap and encourage a new level of thinking around project life cycles and frameworks. The guest article written by Robert Buttrick is derived from the new edition of: *The project workout: The ultimate guide to directing and managing business-led projects* published by Routledge. Robert's work makes a valiant effort to address the knowing-doing gap by offering an accessible framework that has been tried and tested in practice, and can offer a new perspective on the successful deployment of projects. Indeed, Robert's work begins with a deep analysis of lessons from the best and most successful organisations which attempts to distil key lessons that have worked well and utilise them as a basis for developing an informed framework.

The framework expands thinking around projects, to incorporate the needs and concerns of the project sponsor and make sure that projects are driven by benefits which support the organisational strategy. The shift in perspective beyond the project manager's gaze, enables projects to be considered as vehicles for change. The dual focus on directing and managing projects is an important development in life cycle thinking and is able to address some of the concerns related to the complex domains of projects, involving multiple stakeholders, benefits, priorities and concerns.

As project management becomes a profession in its own right, it is important to update our thinking on projects and endeavour to make sense of increasingly complex contexts for project work. Rising to the challenge, Robert offers a practical and pragmatic perspective for regaining control of life cycles. His framework enables practitioners and organisations to rise beyond the predictability and perfection traps to consider new and applicable improvements that have been shown to work and contribute to project success. His framework also offers a way of making sense of the confusing claims and counter claims by various communities related to projects and the best methods for delivering value.

## **Reflection reprised: Looking at impacts**

It is particularly encouraging to see an extended version of the life cycle that considers the wider implications and ramifications of project work. This section concludes the article by expanding the earlier reflections to consider the practical implications of life cycles through the articulation of a set of principles, before trying to predict what they might mean for the life cycles of the future:

### **1. Beyond linearity**

Project sequences offer a way of organising and structuring work; however, many projects entail some iterative elements that require making sense of the context, discovering new knowledge, sharing insights with stakeholders, prototyping, and exploring new opportunities and proposals for addressing them.

### **2. A hybrid world**

Project work need not exist within a particular camp or adhere to a particular approach or methodology simply due to the predictability trap or the perfection trap. Given that every project is different, it is important that the context is acknowledged and the specific needs and requirements are addressed. In practice, most project managers are pragmatic and many projects display hybrid characteristics as we fuse, mix, adapt and match ideas that can support project work. A philosophy- or method-agnostic perspective is able to benefit from devising and tailoring life cycle approaches that match the specific context of the project or programme.

### **3. Spectrum of positions: Between and around opposites**

While we live in a society that increasingly demonises a particular position or approach and preaches and advocates for an opposite, it is useful not to fall into the trap of identifying a binary contradiction and committing ourselves to a particular camp. Habit is a dangerous surrogate for predictability and perfection... Given our acceptance that most projects pragmatically mix elements from different perspectives, we can afford greater freedom of positioning. In a hybrid world, there is no need to anchor ourselves to a particular position or stance.

#### **4. Learning enables**

If projects deliver change, and we are allowed to respond to opportunities, rather than pursue pre-approved plans, we would be able to adapt, embrace innovation, and be in a better position to respond to the increasing turbulence, uncertainty, ambiguity and novelty of life. Continuous learning may require multiple iterations, but it also harbours the potential for greater innovation and an improved fit with an ever-changing context, emerging new technologies and shifting priorities.

#### **5. Design overlaps with realisation**

Any attempt to solve a problem and impose a solution leads to new insights. Imposing a strict management structure in the form of a life cycle may stifle innovation, but more crucially, it may not allow us to respond to learning, discovery, prototyping and opportunities that emerge. Utilising hybrid models may enable managers to explore different options and possibilities, before proceeding down a particular path. (A similar case could be made for the intertwining of requirements, or problem definition, with design, as a form of engaging with proposed solutions. Indeed, a problem-solution separation can be overly simplistic, compartmentalised and counter-productive).

#### **6. Social element**

Projects involve people, so that perfect plans can never hold: Iteration and prototyping allow greater exploration of needs, expectations, requirements, design options, and their cumulative impacts. It also enables buy-in, validation and facilitates improvement possibilities.

#### **7. Focus on value**

If projects are designed to deliver beneficial change, which will be measured by the organisation, the realisation of benefits is a crucial part and major emphasis of project-work. The direct implication is that projects must consider the expected value so what is deployed, can be utilised to deliver the benefits. Managers must (at least) be aware of the implications of the required benefit and deploy the project in ways that will not exclude such realisation.

#### **8. Adoption precedes use, which precedes benefit realisation**

In order for a project to deliver the benefits identified in the business case, it is important to ensure that users will be able to utilise the results in order to enable and facilitate the benefits. In this way, the actual value can begin to accrue following deployment.

#### **9. Think benefits**

Extending the tail end of the life cycle to include the realisation of benefits is insufficient. It must be matched by suitable upfront planning. If we expect to harvest benefits, we need to plan for their capture and ensure that they progress from the

business case, to inform the project design. Increasingly, more projects include some element of benefits capture and this needs to be reflected in the planning.

### **10. Cradle to grave**

Decommissioning and disposal need to encompass upfront preparation during the definition phase. This is likely to include the development of a set of disposal requirements and to ensure that subsequent decisions do not impact, curtail or block future disposal options.

### **11. Our actions matter**

Consideration of future decommissioning and disposal, are part of a product life cycle that considers the full economic costs of developing and utilising a product over time. Once again, this requires upfront planning. Adopting a whole life cycle or a full product life cycle perspective enables executives and managers to responsibly engage with the long-term future implications of their project-related actions and guarantees that project managers are informed of such future options to ensure that current actions do not jeopardise future intentions.

### **12. Responsible project stewardship**

Responsible project management increasingly looks at the social and environmental impacts of projects alongside the economic and administrative concerns. Meanwhile, society is increasingly concerned with extended producer responsibility involving everyone benefitting financially from a product or system. Executives within organisations have an increasingly emerging responsibility for proper end-of-life disposal of systems and assets in a responsible, affordable and effective manner. Such issues of stewardships are likely to require additional planning and consideration throughout the fully extended life cycle required to justify, support and enable project work.

### **The demise of project delivery**

However, the most significant and profound implication of reflecting on project life cycles relates back to our inability to look beyond our very own predictability trap and perfection trap and to conceive the life cycle in its proper context.

National governments and other organisations have been emphasising the importance of the project delivery profession. An alternative label is as solution professionals. The problem with such a definition is that it zooms in on the predictable and definable aspects of projects, typified through the limited life cycles that launched this discussion.

The final reflection is therefore concerned with developing an informed attitude that recognises the limitation of focusing on the notion of delivery as a pre-occupation. The management of projects is much bigger and more expansive than project delivery and should not be brought down to its lowest common denominator.

The five directions identified by the Rethinking Project Management Network in 2006 point to the fundamental problems in pursuing such a position. The six reflections detailed and explored above indicate why such a position is not sustainable, while the 12 considerations enumerated directly above pinpoint the need to move forward and the type of concerns that need to be addressed.

To become influential, project management needs to consider the ability to integrate, extend and develop strategically in order to address wider organisational and societal concerns (Dalcher, 2017). To shrink the focus of interest would be an unforgivable error.

The fifth direction identified by the Rethinking Project Management Network encourages reflective practice and the questioning of assumptions, underpinning knowledge, and the expectations and practices that become embedded due to the limited ability to challenge the status quo and question the underpinning logic of prevailing practice.

Now is the time to progress our understanding of what it takes to be successful in project-work and to define the basis for responsible project management and informed project stewardship. Any other position would simply continue to underpin the enduring dissatisfaction with the ability to deliver beneficial change through effective projects.

In order to continue to improve and reposition the discipline, we need to deliver the final proposition that builds on the earlier principles:

### **13. Progress from a culture of delivery to an ethos of value**

Projects enable significant beneficial change, however, they should be considered, developed, deployed and utilised for the right purpose.

The profession is ready for a step change in how projects are described and positioned. In order to bridge the knowing-doing gap, we now need to remove relics of old thinking patterns and abolish redundant or lazy terminology. The notion of project delivery must go!

To accept a trivialised role as project delivery professionals is to eschew professionalism, reflection and responsibility and ignore the potential impacts and responsibilities of the profession.

Projects are part of a bigger landscape of enabling change, strategy and value. It is only when the capability, output, or outcome of project-work is used as a result of a comprehensive change programme that benefits can be realised, resulting in meaningful value. Benefits-driven projects and programmes support the investment cycle, with portfolios and governance structures utilised to monitor the results and question the continuing alignment with strategy and the realisation of expected and emerging benefits.

In this way, the management of projects can demand a seat at the top table, rather than relinquish its position to become a subservient and trivialised service discipline.

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