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BY: STEVEN GOEMAN

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POWERFUL PROJECT DELIVERY LIFECYCLES

START WORKING WITH PROJECT DELIVERY LIFECYCLES AND STRUCTURE YOUR TIMELINE EVEN MORE

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WHAT IS A PROJECT DELIVERY LIFECYCLE ?

Here we should start with the definition provided to us by the **Project Management Institute (PMI)**. In the **Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) guide**, in **chapter 1, on page 19** in their sixth edition, the institute defines the **project lifecycle** as:

"A project lifecycle is the series of phases that a project passes through from its start to its completion."

On **page 20** of the same edition of the PMBOK-guide, one can find the definition of a project phase, being:

"A collection of logically related project activities that culminates in the completion of one or more deliverables."

If one of our other project management articles; "Project Lifecycles Demystified" we explained that a project lifecycle consists of two components, being the project **management** lifecycle and a project **delivery** lifecycle.

You don't have to make a choice between one of the two, they are both required on the project.

The **project management lifecycle** is being used to structure, outline and organize the project management activities, whilst the **project delivery lifecycle** does exactly the same, but for the tasks and activities that are necessary to create the project product or result.

The **main difference** between the two is that the project management lifecycle is quite generic and can be used for almost any kind of project. Once you have created a project management lifecycle where you find yourself comfortable with, you can reuse it all over again and again.

The project delivery lifecycle is more specifically related to the project at hand. It needs to be created every single time because of the unique characteristic of a project and the uniqueness of the project product. You can start from a template or a certain methodology, but it will often need some tuning or additions to fit for your project.

WHAT IS MEANT WITH TWO LEVELS IN A PROJECT LIFECYCLE ?

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As already explained in the other project management article, a standard project management lifecycle will consider the following five phases:


This project management lifecycle will not tell a lot about the delivery approach taken for the project at hand. It will be necessary to further decompose the timeline to reveal more details.

Let me give you an example: When we consider an ICT project, we could further decompose for example the "Conceptualizing" phase into the following four sub-phases:
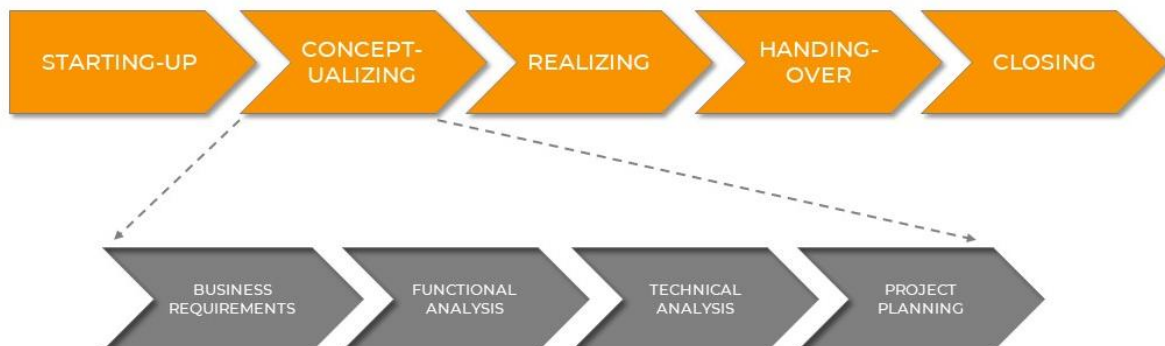
But that same conceptualization phase of the project management lifecycle for a construction project will look differently:

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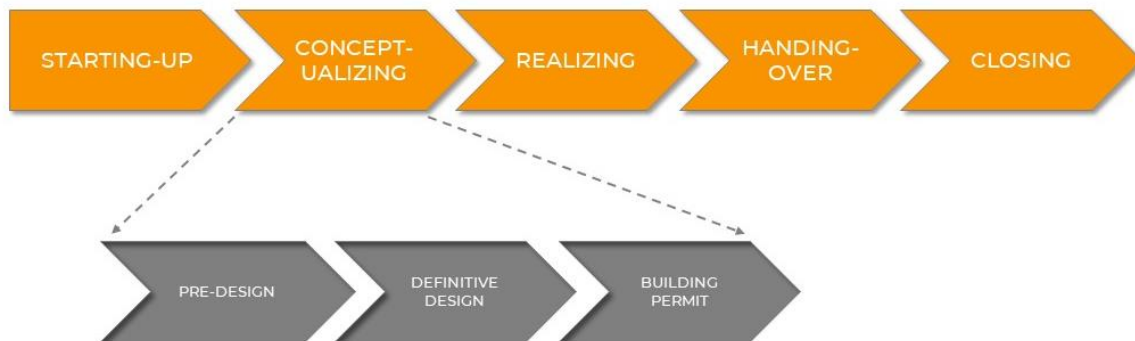
Note that even the number of sub-phases might be completely different..

WHY WOULD YOU USE A PROJECT DELIVERY LIFECYCLE ANYWAY ?

The purpose of the project delivery lifecycle is **quite identical** to the intended goals of the project management lifecycle, namely:

- Bringing structure in the project's timeline;
- Managing complexity by making the project parts "smaller" and therefore more manageable;
- Enable better project control points (approval gates between the phases);
- Organizing specific interactions with senior management of the organization where the project is performed in, often via so-called steering groups.

Additionally, we can add that the purpose of the project delivery lifecycle is to **overcome the weaknesses** of the project management lifecycle. It will allow you to:

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- Customize the generic management approach to the unique aspects of the project at hand;
- Further decompose the project's timeline into even more smaller and therefore more manageable chunks of work, more understandable to the project team members and without already going into too much details right from the start (as creating a project schedule would);
- Make the project and the intended approach more "speaking" to the subject matter experts and the project team members because the timeline is organized to the specifics of the project product and result.

HOW CAN YOU EASILY CREATE A PROJECT DELIVERY LIFECYCLE ?

Creating a project delivery lifecycle often **starts with a template**; often provided by a recognized project method.

It is very important to understand that there are methods that are more specifically oriented towards managing a project and other methods that are more related to creating a project product.

Because of the touching points between project delivery, being creating a project product like a software package or a new building, and the project management, most methods **cover both** project delivery and project management aspects. But each method always has one focus, placing them in or the management methods or the delivery methods category.

You can consider the **PMBOK-guide** and the **PRINCE2**-method more as the **management methodologies**.
They will explain how you can structure and organize your project, but they will not provide you with a lot of information on how you can actually build a new factory or how you can develop a software. That is the purpose of the delivery methods.

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So, these delivery methods will then give you more details on how the project product can be created and what a typical approach would be best fitting to do so. The delivery methods will inspire you on which specific tasks you need to undertake to realize the end result, but they will not give you a lot of details on how you have to manage that proposed collection of tasks.

In a software development context, **SCRUM** and **Agile Software Development** are good examples of iterative project **delivery methods**, whilst Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC), and most proprietary ERP implementation methods, are the typical waterfall or linear delivery method examples.

Be aware that next to software development methods, there are also other custom made methods related to specific certain subject matter. For example for testing, the so called "**V-model**" is well known in the industry, and for change enablement, often a reference to the "**ADKAR**"-method will be made.

In fact, you can find methods for almost any subject matter or discipline. Think about construction methods, contract methods like FIDIC, process engineering frameworks, research & development methodologies, and so on.

You see that for one project, it will be needed to **implement a combination of different project delivery methods and their lifecycles**, with one project management methods and lifecycle.

Let's be honest, how many ICT projects do you know that doesn't require testing, or that doesn't require change management, next to the development of the software itself? Or what if you are responsible for a project that needs to realize an industrial machine which is fully automated by using the latest ICT technology?

Anyhow, I like to create different **realization streams in parallel of each other**, when all realization has to be combined within one project and when program management would not be recommended. Each stream would

then be based on one specific project delivery method and the related delivery lifecycle.

Choosing the right project delivery method becomes therefore one of the key important tasks of the project manager, right in the beginning of the project. When making that decision, hopefully, the project manager is assisted by subject matter experts during that decision making process.

Once decided which methods are relevant for your project, you can start designing your project lifecycles, with the template-lifecycles provided by the chosen project delivery methods.

WHAT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ?

When creating a project delivery lifecycle for your project, you can take the following four consideration into account:

1.
It cannot be said enough, but make a wise choice which delivery method or methods you will use as your starting basis for creating the project delivery lifecycle. Do not attempt to make that choice too late in the project's duration and do not make the mistake of choosing the methods by yourself without consulting the subject matter experts.

2.
Always make an early decision whether you would use a linear or waterfall approach VERSUS an agile or iterative approach. Both have pros and cons, but depending on your project's situation, one will be more beneficial than the other.

Take a construction project; it will less benefit from an agile approach than an ICT project. If you have to pour concrete and you're doing an agile approach and in the agility it would prove that you need to change

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something, concrete is very difficult to remove! So, construction projects typically benefit more from a linear approach.

3.
Always customize the chosen method and its proposed delivery lifecycle to the unique aspects of the project and the project product. A one-size-fits-all solution does not exist in project management.

4.
The fourth consideration is not really mandatory, but highly recommended to keep things as simple as possible. Try to align the project delivery lifecycle with the project management lifecycle.

Try not to have delivery lifecycle phases run beyond the phase ends of the management lifecycle. All the delivery lifecycle phases should have a latest end-date that is equal to or less than the end date of the project management phase it belongs to.
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven GOEMAN is a certified project management professional and a licensed Master of Neurolinguistic Programming with more than 20 years of project (management) experience. He is the creative mind behind the renowned brand "**The Project Management Mentor**", enabling him to share his expertise on portfolio management, program management and project

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Steven founded **GAPS BV** (https://www.gaps.be) in 2005 from which he successfully assisted many individuals and organizations with project management related mentoring, coaching and consulting services.

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