**Project Planning Guide**

Project Initiation phase

1. **Vision - define what the success**of the project looks like and the needs of the audiences as best you can
2. **Situation / issue you are trying to improve (keep it simple and focused)**
3. **Your investment in** the project in terms of time, quality:– what gives you the biggest value for your effort and is most aligned with your values and moving you in the direction you want to go
4. **Segment the audience**(identify those target groups that are key to the success of the project)
5. **Quantify the objectives**(SMART) per target group (often additional target group research is needed). Make sure to define every deliverable
6. **Is it doable?** Perform a real evaluation at the end of this phase
7. Define Critical Project Milestones
   * Project Planning phase
   * formulate short **messages in the ‘language’**and ‘mind frame’ of the target group, that appeal to them, contain a promise and a proof that it is possible and make concrete what the target group can do contribute
   * make creative use of those **media that are credible**and effective sources of information for the audience, if possible by involving people and media from the target group itself;
   * map out **benchmarks to monitor**the process, provide positive feedback and adapt the approach where necessary  
     Perform a real evaluation at the end of each phase; Make sure to examine every deliverable
   * Project implementation phase
   * Perform a real evaluation at the end of each phase
   * Project closure- evaluation phase
   * Perform a real evaluation at the end of each phase
8. Identify Project and Team Requirements

* Make sure that each individual working on the project is clear about their task and what they are providing upon completion
* Plan how you will communicate to keep all up to date
* Project leader role - A key role in project management is the project leader. In this position, you will need to cultivate good and positive team dynamics and act as a coach and/or mentor to all team members

1. Keep the Communication Lines Open

One of the most critical steps in the [project management](http://www.villanovau.com/resources/project-management/project-management-qualifications/) process is to ensure that the communication lines are open.

Keep a communications plan and stick with it. Throughout the entire project, communication should be consistent, open, honest and clear. Make sure you keep in touch with all key stakeholders and team members during the project process. Ensure that everyone has the information necessary to make decisions and proceed with the project. You can also keep everyone on the same page by creating status reports based upon the project information and updates

1. Document your project
2. Manage Project Risks- what are they likely to be? Since a risk is only a potential problem, you want to take care of it before it becomes an actual problem. As one of the most imperative best practices in the project management process, risk management is essential to project success

12 Avoid Scope Creep

[Managing scope creep](http://www.villanovau.com/resources/project-management/project-management-scope-creep/) in project management is another essential element to project success. Although some change is inevitable in any project situation, you will want to keep your project from creeping into chaos. In general, scope creep happens when new elements are added to a project that’s already been approved, but no consideration is given to increasing the budget, adding more time to the schedule and/or adding more resources to compensate for the revised project. If the project’s scope does need to be revisited, you can participate in the rescoping process. Make sure to have the proper documentation and have all stakeholders sign off on these changes before proceeding.

Tip 9: Test Deliverables

Deliverables should be tested at every critical milestone and the final product must meet the project requirements. Before moving on to the next phase of the project, you need to be sure that the product is coming along as planned. An ITToolkit.com article states that, “As a project evolves, various types of deliverables are produced to support project continuation, to measure progress, and to validate plans and assumptions … Results are expected and must be delivered at every stage of the project lifecycle.” At the end of the project, the deliverable must meet or exceed the customer expectations to be considered a success. The final phase of the project is closure. This grand finale is a sign of achievement for you as a project manager, as well as the rest of your team and stakeholders. Once the project is complete and the customer is happy, your mission is complete.

Tip 10: Evaluate the Project

What lessons have you learned along your project management process? Each project can be a valuable learning tool. You will want to review the project as a whole, as well as analyze various project components. What were the project victories? Where were there project disappointments? Make informed conclusions about the project’s quality and the product’s performance. Compare the planned return on investment (ROI) to the actual ROI as one way to understand the level of your success. You can use the lessons learned from each project to minimize future failures and maximize future successes.

<http://www.villanovau.com/resources/project-management/project-management-tips/#.VGC6k_mUePs>

1. Do the right project. Using benefit cost analysis or ROI, and looking at opportunity cost, look at the project that gives you the biggest value for your effort and is most aligned with your company’s strategy, moving you in the direction you want to go.
2. Define scope clearly and precisely.
3. Plan the whole project. Make a plan for each of the nine areas.
4. Do good architecture. Work with words and pictures to bring people with different perspectives onto the same page, contributing to and committed to the project.

Prepare your team in just two steps:

1. Get the right team. Using the WBS, define the skills needed, and get people with those skills. Be honest about gaps, and close them by taking time to learn to get it done right.
2. Get the expertise you need. Know that being expert in one area means not being expert in other areas—sometimes closely related disciplines. Recognize that project, being unique work, require learning from and collaborating with experts. Remember, hiring experts you can work with is less expensive than not hiring experts you can work with.

**Cover all the bases with the nine knowledge areas:**

1. Scope. After defining scope clearly, teach the cost of changes to reduce change requests, then manage all changes, adding to the project only when it is essential.
2. Time and cost. Use unbiased, accurate estimation techniques. Set up systems to gather, track, and analyze time and cost information, so you can keep them under control
3. Quality. Focus on quality at all three levels to ensure value. At the technical level, trace requirements and design checking and testing throughout the project to reduce errors. Then design a test bed, and implement the tests. At the project level, work to prevent error, then find and eliminate the errors that slipped through. Do as much testing as you can as early as you can. Allow time for rework and retesting to ensure you’ve eliminated errors without letting new ones creep in. At the business level, include customers in testing, and remember that the goals are customer delight and added value.
4. Risk. Plan for uncertainty; prepare for the unexpected. Perform risk management with your team every week of the project.
5. Human Resources. Help each team member step up in self-management and technical expertise. Teach everyone PDCA so that they can improve. Then teach them to work together, until you have a great team of great people.
6. Procurement. Get the supplies and resources you need. If your project involves contracts, be sure to keep the contracts in alignment with project value and specifications, not just generally associated with goals and work.
7. Communications. Have a communications plan, and follow it so that you are in touch with all stakeholders throughout the project. Make sure everyone knows what they need to know to make decisions and get work done. Analyze status information to create status reports. Be prompt and decisive.
8. Integration. Constantly direct corrective action. Evaluate all events that could change the project schedule, and all scope change requests. Review the effects of any change on all nine areas before making a decision, and then implement a revised plan with rebaselining.

**Keep the project on track with stages and gates:**

1. Use a life cycle. At a minimum, put a gate at the beginning to clearly launch the project, and then a gate after planning, a gate after doing, and a gate after following through.
2. Every gate is a real evaluation. Bring every deliverable—parts of the product, product documentation, technical documents, the project plan and supporting documents—up to specification. If a project can’t deliver value, be willing to cancel it.

**Use feedback with your team and focus on scope and quality in the doing stage:**

1. Use feedback at all four levels. Teach workers to stay in lane and on schedule; ensure delivery of milestones; manage project risk; and manage project change. Watch out for continuing problems that indicate a serious planning error, such as lack of attention to one of the nine areas or a poor architectural decision.
2. Focus on scope and quality. Get it all done, and get each piece done right.

**Follow through to success:**

1. Deliver customer delight. Seek to exceed customer expectations while leaving customers delighted with every encounter with your team. Use every success and every error as a chance to learn to do a better job.
2. Remember ROI and lessons learned. Compare actual ROI to planned ROI, so you can be honest about the degree of your success. Compile project historical information and lessons learned to make future projects easier.