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Welcome to Projections!

WE'RE A LITTLE red faced here at APCS head office. An unexpected, but very welcome, increase in our consulting business pulled me away from my monthly editing duties - and the February issue of Projections suffered as a result. Thanks to all who were concerned that they were missing their regular information fix. It's heartening to know that Projections is being read and is of relevance.

We've just returned from a very successful customer event at the Melbourne Grand Prix. Despite the sometimes atrocious weather, it was a terrific opportunity to get staff and customers informally mingling in our Brabham Stand corporate facility. We were also lucky enough to have Grand Prix ambassador Will Power, Celebrity Racers Eddie Maguire, Dermot Brereton and Steve Quartermain as well as V8 Supercar drivers Rick Kelly and Garth Tander drop by for a visit. Our good friend Trevor Marmalade and wife Kerry also joined the fun and watched the big race with us on Sunday. For anyone who wants to relive the big event - or perhaps catch one of their co-workers in a compromising pose - we've posted some photos on our [website](#).

This month we are strongly focussed on project governance. [Paul Eldridge](#) discusses the benefits of [reviewing projects](#) while they are underway and [Bill Lagerberg](#) talks about the importance of [good communications](#) within the Project Office. Part 5 of [Scott Coleman's Project Management Principles](#) touches on the vital approval process.

The importance of good [perimeter security practices](#) are explained in some depth by [Matt Fisher](#). Network security is a complex problem for many businesses and it has a habit of keeping the best IT professionals awake at night.

[Margaret Selianakis](#) has been looking into the reasons why so many [IT Projects fail](#). For a multitude of reasons IT projects have been consistently going off the rails since the dawn of the mainframe. Surely there are some lessons to be learned and applied. It seems that inadequate planning is at the root of the problem.

We're also inviting you to join our [AFL Footy Tipping Competition](#). This year 20% of the prize pool will be donated to World Vision - so even if you don't win you can be confident that the frustration of the footy season will be worthwhile!

Until next time.

[Craig Dennis](#)

PS: If you find APCS Projections interesting you might like to forward it to a [friend or](#)

Benefits of Reviewing Projects (before they end!)

By [Paul Eldridge](#)
Senior Project Manager

WE'VE ALL HEARD plenty about why projects fail. Here's a top ten famous last words:

1. I didn't use a methodology (how hard could it be – we don't have time for all that stuff)...
2. I wasn't entirely sure about the scope (seemed pretty clear to start with)...
3. I thought I knew what they wanted...
4. I hadn't figured on absolutely everything when I made my estimates...
5. The business promised that all the resources would be available when I needed them...
6. If I had been a bit closer to the business I may have seen a few more things coming...
7. I hadn't realized the business wasn't actually ready to handle this change...
8. I thought the suppliers would have been a bit more co-operative...
9. Perhaps if I'd had a few more project team meetings things would have been clear to everyone...
10. Maybe I should have kept that schedule up to date...

Formal reviewing of projects cover two areas – control (the management process) and project outcomes (the deliverables). Here's a few reasons why project reviews are important:

- Believe it or not they can actually help, especially with identifying risks and issues
- They can encourage good practices
- They can assist in Project Manager development
- They are an early warning system
- They can save money in the long run

Here's a few of the things that a project review can verify:

- Project scope
- Relationship between the project team and the customer
- Budget vs. actual
- Expectations
- Requirements
- Deliverables
- Communication planning
- Project processes
- Adherence to the schedule ("critical path")

There's a tendency to talk about Quality Assurance in terms of the management of projects but that's where it often ends. There's a raft of reasons ("excuses") as to why these activities don't take place.

- We lose sight of the need because they are never planned/scheduled
- We don't have time right now
- I don't have any budget for reviews
- Not enough skilled people to conduct reviews

While reviews are often based initially on checklists they are not a form filling exercise

nor are they are search for scapegoats – they are a concentrated interaction between professionals who should have a common aim – successful projects. Project reviews form part of Quality Assurance and need to be an integral of the project plan and its schedule. As such the project governance mechanisms (e.g. steering committee, PMO etc) must ensure that project reviews occur according to the plan. Allow 5-10% of the project budget for Quality Assurance including project reviews – but be reasonable and apply effort in proportion to project size and risk.

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Perimeter Network Security

By [Matthew Fisher](#)
Technology Consultant

PERIMETER SECURITY is an often forgotten network issue. Many organisations install a firewall and leave their border security strategy at that. Imagine constructing a huge wall around a castle that has many small open doors in it. The wall may stop a large tank getting through, but the doors will still allow foot soldiers easy access.

In a similar way, a firewall is very effective in blocking traffic from the Internet, but other important vulnerabilities may be forgotten or ignored.

For example, if your organisation has a private Wide Area Network (WAN) connections managed by a third party, is the WAN secure? How do you know its secure? How can you guarantee its secure?

Fortunately, some simple but effective strategies can be enforced if there is no level of trust between your network and your providers. Establishing your own private VPN mesh over your managed WAN is a primary example if this. (Follow this [link](#) for a description of VPN Mesh technology.)

What sort of traffic do you allow inbound from the Internet and how is it controlled or restricted? Many companies allow email (SMTP) traffic directly into their internal network. This may work and be considered an acceptable risk, but bear in mind that SMTP is one of the most attacked and exploited server types. A small flaw in the email software you trust could bring your network to its knees.

A simple method of defining perimeter security is to assume that all traffic that does not originate from you local, wired LAN is untrusted traffic. With this policy in mind, direct all traffic entering your network from the Internet to a [DMZ](#) (Demilitarised Zone) which acts as a secure buffer between your LAN and the outside world, make sure that all non trusted connections operate over VPNs and ensure that all the traffic that is on your network is supposed to be there.

If you are not comfortable with the level of security that your network offers APCS is able to provide a comprehensive security consulting service that can include security audits, security policy development and penetration testing.

(Editor's note: APCS has no association whatsoever with businesses, products or services described in external page links that are incorporated in the above article.)

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The Importance of Planning

"Project Success rates for 'normal' Application Development organizations are dismal.

Without transparent, brutally honest planning and project management inadequate, incomplete, impossible or misleading project plans will cause organizations with poor planning and reporting processes to fail... at rates at least double of those of organizations whose planning techniques are rigorous and objectives in their planning techniques.

Enterprises must improve their success...It represents a bet-the-business project whose failure could mean the collapse of the business itself"

THIS SOBERING QUOTE from Gartner Group in 1998 only highlighted what most businesses already knew. Badly planned and executed projects fail. And fail expensively.

Unfortunately, with a number of factors diverting attention from the task at hand, a high percentage of IT focussed projects are set up to fail – even prior to their commencement!

The main causes are:

- No clearly articulated plans and no documented or measurable outcomes.
Without clearly understanding what you want to achieve from a project in terms of financial, functional and useability outcomes - there can be no agreed success. Defining measurable outcomes early in the project enables all stakeholders to understand the priorities and agree on what "success" is. It also ensures that those people delivering the project can re-assess their ability to meet these criteria prior to any work commencing.
- A lack of knowledge at senior levels on the complexity and interrelationship of projects.
The IT industry has made an art form of complicating technology to the point that senior management are almost afraid to ask questions for fear of looking stupid. Accordingly, the only part of a project that senior management feels that they can control are the costs and manpower issues. Naturally enough, this often leads to a resource shortage that will compromise the project. By speaking plain English and relating the project back to the business issues that need to be solved, senior management feel empowered to work with the project delivery team to ensure success.
- A poor budgeting and planning process.
The urge to get new, "bleeding edge " technology into a business often causes many of the ancillary, but vital, costs such as software licensing, hardware, migration, training and business continuity to be understated. Don't forget to include the fact that technologists are optimistic by nature and always play down the time needed to get work down and rarely, if ever, budget for risk.

The consequence of this is that you have a project doomed to budget and time overruns before it has even commenced. However, by spending the time to accurately include all the tasks and ancillary costs into the planning process, a true examination of the return on investment and project benefits can be had prior to commencement.

Oh, and by the way, by ensuring that the planning phase is accurate in all its detail, you have just doubled your chances of delivering a successful project!

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By [Scott Coleman](#)
Managing Director

Number 5

PROJECTS REQUIRE A clear approval process for sign-off by key stakeholders. Clear approval points, accompanied by formal sign-off by sponsors, management, and other key stakeholders, should be demarcation points in the evolution of project deliverables. It's this simple: anyone who has the power to reject or to demand revision of deliverables after they are complete must be required to examine and approve them as they are being built.

Next Month: Project Success

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Does a Program Office Have Value if Communication is Lacking?

By [Bill Lagerberg](#)
Senior Project Manager

HAVE YOU EVER worked on a project where changes are made on an ad hoc basis, project and test plans do not exist, software is not version controlled and changes are not documented? It is unlikely that the project achieved its objectives or met the budget allocated.

You ask yourself how to avoid the angst created by the situation on your next project. The answer is clear and espoused by all the consultants you discuss your problem with; *Introduce a Program Management Office (PMO)*.

So you set about introducing processes for change control, budgetary reporting, documentation, risk and issues registers, contingency plans, backout plans and steering committee oversight. You instigate meetings to promulgate the information prepared to all parties concerned and seek sponsor approval for scope modifications.

Now, with all of these best practice processes in place, you expect that all future projects are going to be delivered on time and budget and the project will throw up no surprises. However, unless you sell the idea of process to all your staff your projects will continue to fail. If team members and stakeholders are determined to ignore or subvert process then the process is worthless.

In fact it is a worse situation as it creates a false sense of security.

To combat this all too common problem you will need to ensure compliance with your new processes through educating staff in their value and also by including process compliance Key Performance Indicators in your team's position descriptions. You'll also need to incorporate details of the project management processes used in your company's induction packs.

Of course, I've assumed that you have position descriptions and induction programs within your organisation. This may not be an accurate assumption but discussion on these topics is a subject for another day!

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APCS Footy Tipping Competition

WE ARE AGAIN running our popular online [AFL Footy Tipping Competition](#) and you're invited to join the fun!

This year, in lieu of a last prize, we will be donating 20% of the total prize pool to our preferred charity, World Vision. Entry is \$25.00 and must be paid by the commencement of Round 4.

COMPETITION DETAILS:

Comp Name: APCS 2005.

Password: apcs2005

Entry Fee: \$25

1st Prize: 50%

2nd Prize: 20%

3rd Prize: 10%

World Vision Donation: 20%

JOIN ONLINE

To enter, click the below link:

<http://www.footytips.com.au/jc.cfm?c=29169&P=apcs2005>

Note: You must create (or use an existing) personal username and password. Alternatively, you can search for this competition via the <http://www.footytips.com.au/> website.

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