

## JEAN MONNET CHAIR – UNIVERSITY OF GRANADA

### "PM2 by European Commission. Open, free and common project management framework for all European institutions, companies and citizens. – PM2EU+"

Germán Martínez Montes –Chair Holder. [gmmontes@ugr.es](mailto:gmmontes@ugr.es)

Begoña Moreno Escobar – Academic Coordinator. [bgmoreno@ugr.es](mailto:bgmoreno@ugr.es)

## WHITE PAPER

### **Project management methodologies have to adapt to projects and never the vice versa (and others thoughts).**

We have just reviewed an international publication whose research base was a survey of project management practitioners<sup>1</sup>. It has been an interesting read as it provides what should never be lost sight of: project management tools only make sense if they ultimately provide a practical and facilitating character, improving efficiency in the application of resources, always limited, to achieve the project's objectives.

One of the aspects that most caught our attention is that when asked the question "What project management methodology / method do you use in your organisation?", more than half of the respondents answered "internal methodology", or in other words a methodology developed "ad hoc" within the organisation itself.

This result is linked to a principle in project management that, on many occasions, far from being fulfilled, complicates the tasks to be carried out by project managers. This premise reminds us that: it is the project management methodology that has to adapt to the project and never the vice versa".

Starting from this point, characteristics that are requirements for any project management methodology are that it should be simple, easy to apply and adaptable to any type of project, whatever the type and scope in which it is developed.

In other words, the use of complex methodologies with vast extensions, complex conceptual frameworks and a multitude of components can be a waste of resources and a cause of project failure. We must not spend efforts out of where we really need: the project deliverables and the satisfaction of the client and the rest of the stakeholders.

Another trend in project management, derived from digitalisation and the possibilities of virtual communication, is the formation of work teams that are geographically and culturally diverse. These teams need methodologies not excessively complex (if something has to be complex, it should be determined by the nature of the project and

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Keith McGrath, Stephen Jonathan Whitty, (2020), "Practitioner views on project management methodology (PMM) effectiveness", The Journal of Modern Project Management, Issue 23 Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 188-212. <https://doi.org/10.19255/JMPM02310>

not by the own methodology) and that share a common language to avoid communication problems and misunderstandings.

The prevalence of a particular project management methodology is often determined by the geographical location of the project (PMI-USA; OpenPM2-IPMA-Europe; AIPM-Australia; PRINCE2 - UK; AJPM-Japan; etc.). If in the coming years the members of a project management team may work in different places around the world, it is necessary that the project management methodologies are lightweight, and have as many elements in common as possible. It will make easier to find a core body regardless of which methodology is finally chosen for a project.

In recent years, the importance of change management capacity has become increasingly important in the day-to-day management of projects. This circumstance obliges both professionals and tools to have a structure that internalises change management as one of the fundamental elements.

This fact has accelerated in recent times by the latest events that, worldwide, have substantially changed the way we relate to each other, the way we communicate and the way we carry out our work.

A methodology in which the whole community can contribute experiences, challenges and lessons learned is a benefit, as it provides an up-to-date tool that adapts to the changing needs of organisations and the projects they undertake.

All of this gives meaning to open source initiatives in which contributions and proposals for improvement could come from very different cultural and working contexts.

This consideration makes sense when the same language is shared and used, allowing the participation of the greatest number of agents and stakeholders in project management (professionals, organisations, public institutions, etc.).

However, there is still some way to progress in this respect. The development of a common glossary of terms and meanings related to project management would be very useful. This glossary could be developed and supported by the international well-known organisations in the project management arena. All of them could commit to using it in all the documentation, methods and tools.

In conclusion, the project management community is coming to accept that the discussion of whether to work with traditional (waterfall) or agile methodologies needs to finish. Not all projects are the similar and not all teams find the ideal solution in one type of methodology. This is why hybrid use has gained a lot space in recent years and will continue to do so for the near future.

This trend reflects the fact that is “ad hoc methodologies” that provide the best service and efficiency in project management. The principle that gives the title to these reflections will be fulfilled: the methodology has to be adapted to the project and not vice versa. The adaptation could be built by highlighting the positive aspects of each of the traditional and agile worlds.

## **Acknowledgements**

This work has been made possible thanks to the collaboration of the European Commission, through the Erasmus + Programme, Jean Monnet Actions and Project No. 619648-EPP-1-2020-1-ES-EPPJMO-CHAIR.

## **References:**

Alvarez-Dionisi, L. E., Turner, R., & Mittra, M. (2016). Global Project Management Trends. *International Journal of Information Technology Project Management (IJITPM)*, 7(3), 54-73. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJITPM.2016070104>

APM (2019) Projecting the future. A one-year-on update on the big conversation. The adaptive project professional. Download from <https://www.apm.org.uk/projecting-the-future/> (3rd February 2021)

Bogojević, P. (2017, December). Comparative Analysis of Agile Methods For Managing Software Projects. *European Project Management Journal*, 7(1).

Clegg, S., Killen, C, Biesenthal, C & Sankaran, S. (2018) Practices, projects and portfolios: Current research trends and new directions. *International Journal of Project Management*, Volume 36, Issue 5, Pages 762-772, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2018.03.008>

Gemuenden, Hans & Schoper, Yvonne. (2015). Future Trends in Project Management. Conference: IRNOPAt: UCL The Bartlett London.

J. J. Ng (2019) "Understanding Project Management Directions From Project Management Trends," in *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 128-132, 1 Second quarter, june 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1109/EMR.2019.2903183>

Kloppenborg, T. J., & Opfer, W. A. (2002). The Current State of Project Management Research: Trends, Interpretations, and Predictions. *Project Management Journal*, 33(2), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/875697280203300203>

KPMG, AIPM & IPMA (2019) The future of project management: global outlook 2019. Download from <https://www.aipm.com.au/resources/reports/the-future-of-project-management-global-outlook-2.aspx> (3rd February 2021)

Kwak, Y. H., and Anbari, F. T. (2008) Impact on project management of allied disciplines: Trends and future of project management practices and research. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.

McGrath, J. & Kostalova, J. (2020) Project Management Trends and New Challenges 2020+. Hradec Economic Days 2020. <https://doi.org/10.36689/uhk/hed/2020-01-061>

Paredes, Catia & Ribeiro, Pedro. (2018). Future Trends in Project Management. 637-644. <https://doi.org/10.1109/IS.2018.8710551>

Špundak, M (2014) Mixed Agile/Traditional Project Management Methodology – Reality or Illusion. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 119, Pages 939-948, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.105>

Stephen Keith McGrath, Stephen Jonathan Whitty, (2020), " Practitioner views on project management methodology (PMM) effectiveness", *The Journal of Modern Project Management*, Issue 23 Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 188-212. <https://doi.org/10.19255/JMPM02310>