Delivery Plan Guidelines for Change

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Creating your own Delivery Plan

The Delivery Plan is the mechanism used to ensure that those sponsoring the project will receive their deliverables on the agreed time. This is a core element of Agile Project Management because delivering on time has to be guaranteed, in exchange for the freedom to deliver the solution incrementally, and to enable the ideas to evolve over the life of the project.

To create a Delivery Plan, it is important to begin the process with a strong idea of the timeframe within which the project should deliver. This is based on business related deadlines so work collaboratively with the business sponsoring the project to establish:

- By what date should the new product/service be available?
- How much is the business prepared to spend to achieve the new functionality or levels of service?

Ask the business to explain their thinking about the proposed deadline and try to break this down into sub-deadlines i.e. further dates when getting project deliverables in front of the customer would help to build trust and demonstrate progress with the overall project.

Although the complete solution might not be known when the first version of the Delivery Plan is created it is important to break down the idea/concept into its constituent products or outputs. This will be repeated each time the Delivery Plan is revised as it is an evolving document that needs to be updated as more becomes known about the complexity of the work, the velocity of the team and the feedback on what additional functionality is required or what can be omitted from the project scope.

Product Breakdown Structure

The Product Breakdown Structure is a useful technique for identifying all of the outputs that must be created as part of the project. The expected output/solution from the project is put at the top of the diagram and then this is broken down into its constituent parts. Then each part is further broken down into its constituent parts and so on. The breakdown continues until there are no more components of the project solution to identify.

To ensure as many products can be identified as possible, consider different versions of a product as an output in its own right. For example, completing the delivery of a workshop which produces valuable information for the project is a product or output, but don't forget to include a Workshop Preparation product and a Workshop Follow Up product as well. The same rule applies for any development work, when it is

helpful to capture the iterations as pieces products: User Story; Developed Functionality; Demonstrated Functionality.

The most important thing is to try to ensure that all aspects of the project known at this time are included as this will help you identify the best possible content and number of increments.

What comes first?

One purpose of the Delivery Plan is to identify which components will be developed first and therefore, which elements of the project will be available for use first, and then after that what will be released to enhance this early functionality.
To make these decisions, review the Product Breakdown Structure and look for natural categories, groupings or themes of products that taken together would create something useful. In Agile Project Management we would consider these as a sensible increment of the project.

Identify what is to be created in the first increment, and consider how many increments you will have based on the groupings of products you have identified. Divide the available time for the project across the required number of increments. There is no requirement for each increment to be the same amount of time, so use your judgement about how long the work to create the outputs for each increment will take.

Increment management is an art form

Each increment should lead to an increase in the capability of the organisation: to be able to do something it could not do before; be able to offer a new or enhanced product or service to its customers; to be able to comply with a new regulation etc
In the first iteration of the Delivery Plan, you will be required to further sub-divide the increment into individual Timeboxes or Sprints. Again, these do not have to be the same amount of time, although many people find working on a 2 week sprint is appropriate, as it is not too long that they lose focus but it is not too short that they cannot get any meaningful work completed.

Deciding what to include in an increment is an art form. It requires imagination to identify what things are needed to create something meaningful, and what products are being included just because they would 'complete the set'.

The Delivery Plan concept relies on dividing the available into increments. So it makes sense to have a calendar in front of you when you are creating your plan. Look out for 'constraint dates' i.e. time when it would be a bad idea to deploy what has been created in the increment. For example, especially busy periods for the business, national holidays or summer working hours. Also look out for dates when being able to demonstrate progress on the project would be helpful e.g. Board Meetings, internal meetings and conferences etc.

Workshops are valuable

Workshops and demonstrations to generate feedback are a consistent part of agile projects. As diary management is often a major impediment to getting feedback from the right people, identify all the possible workshops and events as early as possible and send out the invitations for these. Even though you have no progress to show as yet, it is important to get these dates locked into the Delivery Plan to maximise participation of key resources.

If your project is over a number of months, it is worth considering including a Parking Bay product. This is a couple of days, often between increments when all those committed to the project can attend to other issues that build up as part of being in a large organisation. After all, during a sprint we need everyone to fully commit and focus on the project. Running sprint after sprint in this way means a backlog of issues builds up. If these are not addressed then people deal with them throughout the project which harms the overall productivity of the team. It is more effective to provide specific 'catch up' time that team members can use to book other meetings etc.

Melanie Franklin has a track record of excellence in project, programme and portfolio planning and delivery. In recent years she has focused on helping organisations move from waterfall to agile project management approaches in response to the increasing need to deliver projects on a shorter timescale.

Creating agile environments has grown in importance in recent years, and many executives are driving this adoption as they become aware of the benefits of agile thinking in responding to fast moving changes in the international business environment.

She is a respected author of 8 text books about project and change management. Her most recent book, 'Agile Change Management' proposed an approach to managing change initiatives that applies the principles of agile project management. This ensures that the exact deliverables from a change initiative can evolve in response to customer, regulator and market demand, project deadlines are still respected.

Melanie believes in authentic leadership, therefore, as well as using her training skills to develop the skills and knowledge of attendees on her courses, she also ensures she attends training to build her own skill set. Melanie is an accredited trainer in AgilePM and is a Certified Scrum Master and LeanKanban Practitioner. She is also an accredited trainer in Change Management, an examiner for the APMG Change Management Foundation and Practitioner qualifications and the Co-Chair of the Change Management Institute UK.

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