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PRAXIS®

A Pocket Guide

The community framework for
projects, programs and portfolios

Emma Jones

PRAXIS®
A POCKET GUIDE

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PRAXIS[®]

a Pocket Guide

THE COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK
FOR PROJECTS, PROGRAMS
AND PORTFOLIOS



Colophon

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Foreword

Ideas start as simple concepts and work very well but as they become more widespread they also become more complex. People often find it easy to add to whatever exists and the idea and the underlying principles become more complex and at times confusing. Rarely do we have the opportunity to stand back and review where we have reached and start again.

The Praxis Framework does exactly that. The authors have stood back and looked at the mass of program and project management literature, guidance, standards, frameworks and bodies of knowledge, they have consolidated all that wisdom and associated noise, into a single framework.

The Praxis Framework combines knowledge and processes and much more to provide a view on competence and capability and ways this can be assessed easily and routinely in the delivery of programs and projects.

This pocket guide goes further and distils these ideas into this simple to read book. Anyone thinking of introducing a program and project management framework into their organization should certainly start with reviewing the Praxis Framework if they want to keep things simple.

Richard Pharro, CEO APM Group Ltd.

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1 Introduction

Praxis is a free, community-driven, integrated project, program and portfolio (P3) management framework which focuses on all aspects of the disciplines of P3 management. The Praxis Framework was originally launched in 2014 and is continually being developed as a freely accessible online tool to develop best practice.

1.1 Do we really need another project management guide?

P3 management is well served with bodies of knowledge, methods and standards from many different organizations. So why do we need another guide?

All of these guides broadly align with one, or two, of four basic areas: knowledge, method, competence and capability maturity.

- ‘Knowledge’ covers the functions that make up the discipline of project management, such as stakeholder management, risk management, planning, etc.
- ‘Method’ describes processes that can be used to manage the phases of the life cycle and also describes typical documents.
- ‘Competence’ covers the knowledge and performance criteria required for someone to perform the functions and processes effectively.
- ‘Capability’ maturity describes attributes of organizations as they progress through five levels of effectiveness in project delivery.

To develop and maintain an effective project delivery infrastructure, you would need to reference guides from all four areas, but would soon encounter different structures, different terminology and different principles that would need to be mapped against each other to produce a complete set of integrated guidance. Mapping will

inevitably highlight gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies between your chosen guides.

Praxis is designed to provide that integration. It takes the principles of existing, proven guides and adapts them so that they have a common terminology, structure and approach, all within a single intuitively linked framework. It supports these with a library of information, tools and techniques drawn from published experts and the practical experience of the P3M community.

1.2 The purpose of this guide

This pocket guide provides a summary of the knowledge and method sections of the Praxis Framework, along with a selection of the tools and techniques. It is intended to provide a quick introduction as well as a structured overview of the framework, and to act as a reference for those who have studied the framework in the past and want to use the framework now in the day-to-day management of their projects. Further guidance on all sections of the Praxis Framework is freely accessible at www.praxisframework.org, along with a library of support material and a Maturity 360 assessment tool.

1.3 The structure of the Praxis Framework

The structure of the Praxis Framework will be familiar to users of existing guides. The knowledge section adheres to the format and principles of the APM Body of Knowledge, the process model combines the principles of PRINCE2 and MSP into a single approach to projects and programs, and the capability maturity model is based on CMMI-Dev. The difference is that Praxis applies all these principles using a single taxonomy and terminology.

By making the framework freely available on the World Wide Web, Praxis is demystifying the P3M discipline and detaching it from heavily copyrighted brands and their corporate marketing.

The Praxis framework has five interconnected elements, see Figure 1.1.

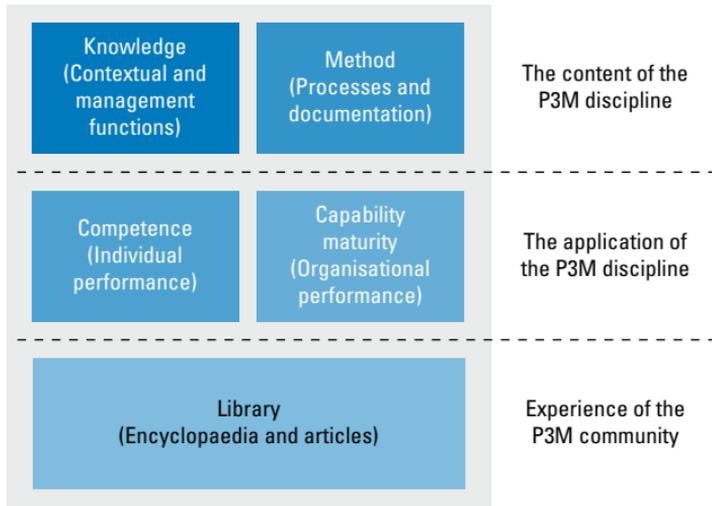


Figure 1.1 Overview of the Praxis Framework

The **knowledge** section contains the contextual and managerial functions that collectively make up the discipline of P3 management. These functions are integrated in processes that correspond to the phases of the life cycle.

The **method** section contains the processes and documentation descriptions for each phase of the P3 life cycle.

The **competence** section describes the knowledge and performance criteria required of an individual to perform the functions and processes effectively.

The **capability maturity** section describes how an organization can develop its culture and infrastructure leading to consistent P3 delivery.

All of these sections have been written to be fully integrated and intuitively linked using one terminology, one structure and one style of presentation.

1.4 How to use this pocket guide

The pocket guide can be read from cover to cover. However, for a quick introduction to the Praxis Framework, you are advised to read the introductory chapters (chapters 1 and 2) together with chapter 3, Introduction to the Praxis Framework Management Functions, and chapter 17, Introduction to Praxis Framework Method.

P3 senior management is advised to read in addition chapter 19, Sponsorship Process.

2 The context and concepts of the Praxis Framework

There is no such thing as a typical project, program or portfolio, and Praxis is not prescriptive in the way its components are applied. The framework is designed to provide building blocks of the discipline of P3 management that can be tailored and assembled to suit all manner of different contexts.

Continuum of complexity

A key concept of Praxis is that the dividing lines between projects, programs and portfolios are blurred. Some ventures will exhibit characteristics of all three. The underlying principle is that the terms ‘project’, ‘program’ and ‘portfolio’ simply represent points on a continuum that is described by the complexity of the work being managed.

In simple terms, initiatives with low complexity are projects. As the complexity increases we may choose to manage the initiative as a ‘complex project’ or a program. As the complexity increases even more it becomes a portfolio.

Praxis suggests that the complexity in which we should really be interested is ‘complexity of scope’. The distinction between the organizational structures and techniques used in projects, programs and portfolios are all (either directly or indirectly) related to the complexity of scope.

So, “Is it a project, program or portfolio?” is the wrong question. The right questions are “How complex is the scope?” and “How do I need to manage that complexity?”

It’s time to drop quality

Praxis is not really saying we should drop the idea of quality in P3 management, but that we should look at it in a different way.

The fact is that any project is a compromise between what you get, when you get it and how much you have to pay for it. Praxis uses the terms ‘time’, ‘cost’ and ‘scope’ because quality should be inherent in all aspects of a project – not something to be traded off against time and cost.

Project management is about defining and producing outputs that are fit for purpose – that is, it is all about quality. Quality is not a separate function of project management – it is implicit in all functions.

By making quality a separate function we mentally put it in a box, detached from managing time, cost, risk etc. What we should really do is to put quality, in the forms of planning, control and assurance, at the heart of every function. That is the real route to achieving quality in P3 management.

2.1 Project, program and portfolio management

Project, program and portfolio management (P3M) is the application of methods, procedures, techniques and competence to achieve a set of defined objectives.

The goals of P3M are to:

- deliver the required objectives to stakeholders in a planned and controlled manner

- govern and manage the processes that deliver the objectives effectively and efficiently.

The central elements of both project and program management are:

- having a clear reason why the work is necessary
- capturing requirements, specifying objectives, estimating resources and timescales
- preparing a business case to explain that the work is desirable, achievable and viable
- securing funding for the work
- developing and implementing management plans
- leading and motivating the management and delivery teams
- monitoring and controlling scope, schedule, finance, risk and resources
- maintaining good relations with stakeholders
- closing the project or program in a controlled manner when appropriate.

Components that relate to scope complexity, and are therefore typical characteristics of program management are:

- project coordination: identifying, initiating, accelerating, decelerating, redefining and terminating projects within the program
- managing interdependencies between projects, and between project's change management activity
- transformation: taking project outputs and managing change within business-as-usual so that outputs deliver outcomes
- benefits management: defining, quantifying, measuring and monitoring benefits.

The sponsor and manager share responsibility for these elements, with the sponsor being ultimately accountable for achievement of the business case. The manager is responsible for the day-to-day running

of the project or program. Where the scope of work includes benefits that include organizational change, business change managers are responsible for successful transition and benefits realization.

Commonly identified areas of complexity for projects and programs include the following:

- Scope
- Uncertainty
- Change
- Innovation
- Dynamics

Ultimately the point of understanding complexity is to understand the diversity of work that can be tackled with P3M and the essential need to tailor all aspects of the discipline to specific circumstances

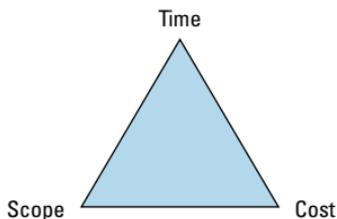


Figure 2.1 The triple constraint

The triple constraint shows the relationship between the objectives of the work (scope), the time it will take to produce them and how much it will cost to complete the work. The principles of the triple constraint as they affect a project or program have to be established early in the life cycle.

Any attempt to make changes to one corner of the triangle will have an immediate impact on the other two.

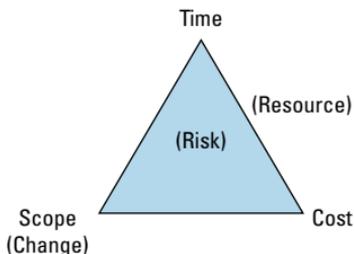


Figure 2.2 Expansion of the triple constraint

The Praxis delivery functions address these three constraints, but Praxis also identifies three other fundamental components of delivery: **risk**, **change** and **resource**.

Change is primarily related to scope. It is necessary for the achievement of benefits, and will affect time and cost through that relationship.

Risk is related to all three corners of the triangle, and risk management should assess how any specific risk event will impact on each of the three corners.

Resource is most directly related to time and cost, and resource management is concerned with sourcing resources that can perform the required work on time at an acceptable cost.

2.2 The P3 life cycle

A P3 life cycle illustrates the distinct phases that take an initial idea, capture stakeholder requirements, develop a set of objectives and then deliver those objectives.

The goals of life cycle management are to:

- identify the phases of a life cycle that match the context of the work

- structure governance activities in accordance with the life cycle phases.

The project and program life cycles have many similarities and follow the same basic approach. The simplest life cycle is a serial project life cycle that is only concerned with developing an output (Figure 2.3).

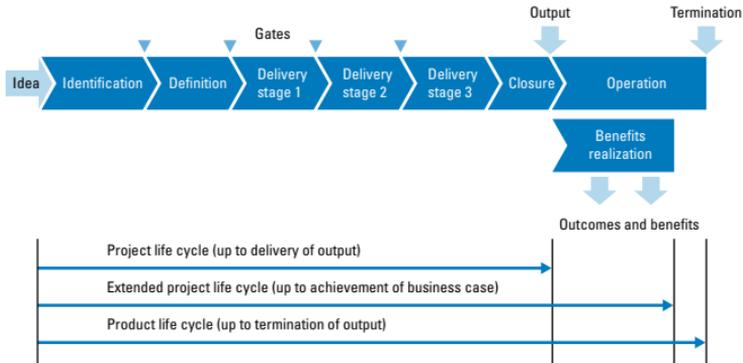


Figure 2.3 Serial project life cycle

An idea triggers the identification phase.

- Identification – the initial idea is developed and a project brief is created. A sponsor is appointed and, if possible, a project manager. At the end of the phase there is a gate where a decision is made whether or not to proceed to more detailed (and therefore costly) definition of the work.
- Definition – the requirements are assessed in greater detail and the preferred solution specified. The management plans, delivery plans and business case are developed; these have to be approved by the sponsor before progressing to the next phase. Once again, this ends in a gate where a decision is made whether or not to proceed to the delivery phase.