

# Project Management Advisor

## A Playbook Covering the Bases to Help Your Next Project be a Winner

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### Objectives

Every project, including each Oracle E-Business upgrade, has a unique set of challenges. What they share in common is a need for solid project management. A team at the UW- Madison Division of Information Technology (DoIT), recognizing the need, researched industry best practices, and developed the web-based Project Management Advisor (PMA) to aid DoIT project managers. This paper will introduce you to PMA, highlight how it was used to assist a challenging Oracle 10.7 to 11i reimplementation effort, and let you know how to access and leverage it for your own organization's projects.

### Introduction

For many of us in the IT field, most of our initial training and much of our experience has been along a technical track. That doesn't mean we don't appreciate the importance of or haven't learned a lot about project management. We have experienced or at least heard of software projects that have either been ill-conceived, didn't have a clear mission, had a poorly defined scope, inadequate resources, encountered unforeseen risks, or struggled in some other fashion. The results too often are cost overruns, schedule delays, dissatisfied customers, and ultimately project failure. While it seems that "To err is human", to mess things up on a larger scale requires a poorly managed project.

What can we learn from these experiences? How do we avoid the pitfalls? What about the exemplary projects that have guided efforts through a minefield of risk and enumerable challenges to deliverables that exceeded expectations? How did they manage to enjoy clear objectives, a shared vision, adequate resources, well-defined roles, effective communication, teamwork, etc? What were their secrets?

DoIT's original Oracle E-Business 11i upgrade employed outside consulting project management. Upper management considered the project an unqualified success. However, the internal IT staff team members including myself, responsible for supporting the resulting system, had a less favorable assessment. With a smaller 11i upgrade to a subsidiary's system on the horizon, I strove to make the case for managing it internally. With limited visible project management experience, I looked for tools, resources, and a mentor to support our efforts and encourage management that the project would be in good hands. I found what I was looking for close to home.

### Project Management Improvement Initiative

In 2005, senior project managers launched a project management improvement initiative at DoIT. The goals of the initiative included:

- Improving customer satisfaction with the quality of our products and services
- Increasing expertise and consistency in project management practices though out the organization
- Enhancing communication and participation among stakeholders and team members
- Providing management with greater control of organizational budget, timeline, and staff resource allocations

The initiative involved multiple components including tools, skills development, cultural changes, and developing a project management framework to guide users through a proper order of project activities. This web-based framework, called the Project Management Advisor, was based on extensive research of project management profession best practices.

## Project Management Advisor (PMA) Overview

The Project Management Advisor (PMA) covers the activities needed to manage a project. Guidelines, instructions, templates, and examples are included for most of the approximately 50 standard activities identified, spanning 5 stages of a project's life cycle.

The screenshot displays the Project Management Advisor (PMA) web interface. At the top, a navigation bar shows '5 Project Stages' with icons for CONCEPTUALIZE, INITIATE, PLAN, EXECUTE & CONTROL, and CLOSE. The 'INITIATE' stage is selected, and the page title is 'Stage 2: Initiate the Project'. Below this, a 'Content by Activity' section is visible, showing details for the 'Define Requirements' activity. The interface includes a sidebar with a list of activities, a main content area with tabs for 'What it is', 'How to', and 'Templates/Examples', and a search bar.

**5 Project Stages**

1 CONCEPTUALIZE 2 INITIATE 3 PLAN 4 EXECUTE & CONTROL 5 CLOSE

HOME **DOIT Project Management Advisor v2.2**

Stage 2: Initiate the Project [Glossary](#) Search PMA:

**Activities by Stage**

Activities

- 1. Define scope
- 2. Define requirements
- 3. Identify high-level roles
- 4. Develop high-level milestones/timeline
- 5. Develop high-level budget
- 6. Identify high-level control strategies
- 7. Finalize Project Charter & gain approvals

**Deliverable:**

A Project Charter (finalized & approved)

**Evaluate lessons learned**

**What it is: Define Requirements**

**Description**

Defining requirements specifies the capabilities, features or attributes of the project's deliverables. Stakeholder needs, wants and wishes are analyzed to derive the requirements. Requirements are prioritized to determine which requirements will be included and excluded from the project.

**Rationale/Purpose**

Defining requirements specifies the capabilities, features or attributes of the project's deliverables. Stakeholder needs, wants and wishes are analyzed to derive the requirements. Requirements are prioritized to determine which requirements will be included and excluded from the project.

- Establish consensus and common ground among project stakeholders and participants
- Form the basis for project deliverables
- Ensure the customer receives a product or service with the functionality requested
- Define stakeholder expectations as specific results
- Set the stage for effective project planning

**Who is involved**

Project Manager  
Project Sponsor  
Project Stakeholders  
Project Customer

**Result**

Exhibit 1: Once a particular project stage (top) is selected, the web-based PMA tool lists applicable activities (left). Upon selecting the individual activity, a third dimension, available definitions, instructions, templates, and examples (center) become available. The PMA is publicly available at <http://www.pma.doit.wisc.edu/>.

PMA content was designed to reflect the belief that project best practices and activities need to cover the same bases no matter what product or service the project delivers. PMA accommodates small, medium, and large projects by providing EZ versions of the templates for small projects. Individual project managers decide whether and to what extent to exploit the components of each activity. Note - the Conceptualize stage has not been completed.

## Pilot Project Objectives

The PMA tool was offered for pilot project use at about the same time discussions were occurring with an internal UW customer, the Department of Family Medicine (DFM), regarding the need to upgrade their aging Oracle Applications 10.7 General Ledger system to the 11i E-Business version. It would ultimately prove to be a 6-month, 6-person, \$100,000 effort. I volunteered to lead the project and was selected to become one of the Project Management Initiatives pilot project users.

My objectives for the pilot were to:

- Take advantage of the PMA standards and expert guidelines
- Selectively utilize the standard PMA templates
- Have the supplied project management mentor available for independent advice.

My manager's objectives included:

- Supporting the project management initiative with a real life project feedback
- Improving cost estimating
- Enjoying less stress knowing the project would be well managed
- Increasing the odds the effort would come in on time and within budget.

## Project Conception

The Conceptualize stage of a project identifies a need and discerns whether it is in the organizations best interest to initiate a project. The typical deliverable, if a project is to be initiated, is a project proposal document. See below for the activities entailed.

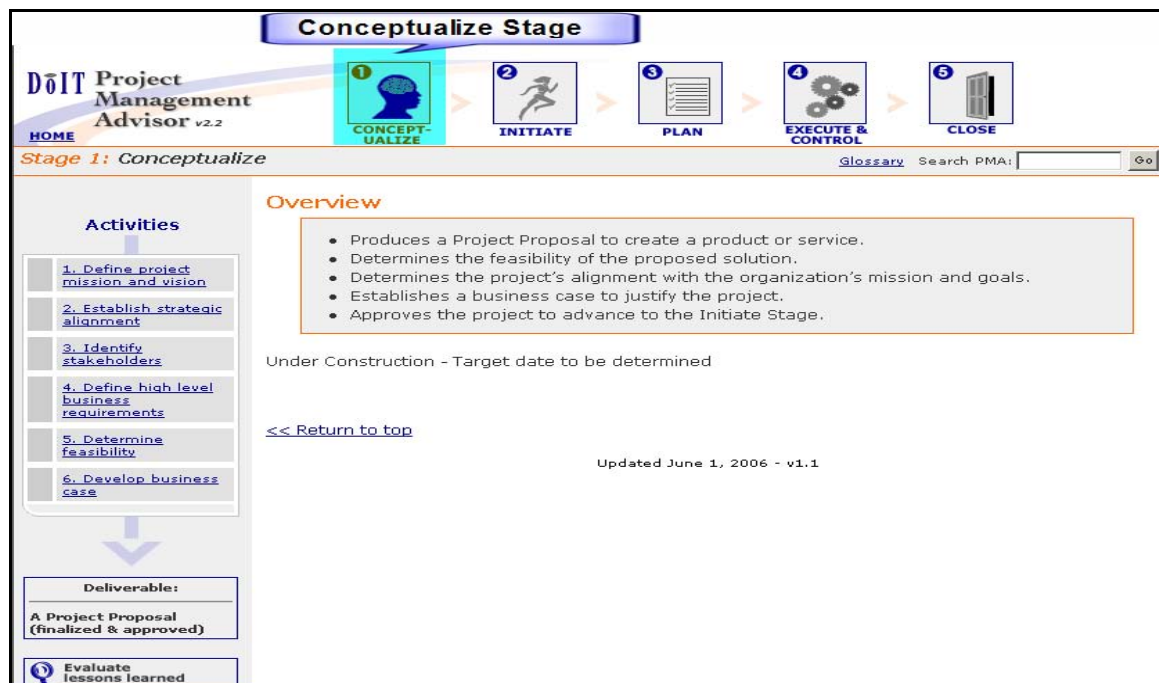


Exhibit 2: PMA Overview of the project Conceptualize Stage

The PMA tool currently has no content to provide for this stage. However, from past experiences I understood how important it was to champion the right projects for the proper reasons at the right time. The DFM pilot project benefited from a solid working relationship between low-level functional and technical staff. We concurred that now was the time to upgrade the system. A positive legacy from a long-

standing working relationship encouraged newer functional and technical management to support the effort and endorse the resulting single-page project proposal (see Exhibit 3 below).

<p>Department of Family Medicine (DFM)</p> <p>Oracle General Ledger Upgrade Proposal</p>
<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>DFM, a department of the UW Medical School, operates patient care clinics across Wisconsin. They acquired the Oracle Applications General Ledger (GL) module under a DoIT-hosted arrangement in 1998. While sharing software and support, DFM's system consists of unique test and production database instances. DoIT technicians worked with DFM financial and technical staff to analyze, design, implement, and support the system. The chart of accounts is involved, but the system has few customizations with most developed and maintained by DFM technical staff. The system interfaces with campus accounting and the UW Medical Foundation. DFM paid initial acquisition fees and implementation costs. They pay a monthly service fee to CBS (approximately \$1000) and any DRMT and ADI direct labor charges. For fuller details of our arrangement with DFM see the <a href="#">DFM Oracle GL acquisition document</a>.</p>
<p><b><u>Current Situation</u></b></p> <p>DFM has been running Oracle Applications 10.7 Smart Client since the initial implementation. The DoIT/DFM partnership and arrangement has been very positive for both parties. However, we now have multiple support concerns including Oracle's limited extended support for 10.7 ending on July 31, 2005 and the expired support for the 7.3 database. DFM acquired a new director (David Dadds) and a new CFO (Steve Hall) in 2004. The Oracle GL DoIT and DFM support team met with them in October to provide a historical and system overview, raise the support concerns, and chart a future direction. Consensus was reached on a desire to upgrade Oracle GL to 11i. DoIT was asked to investigate and confirm several related assumptions. For fuller details see the <a href="#">DFM Oracle Meeting Summary document</a>.</p>
<p><b><u>Proposal</u></b></p> <p>Work with DFM to analyze and plan the upgrade to Oracle Apps 11.5.10, Oracle 9i, and related tools. Implementation will follow DoIT's upgrade, if DoIT's implementation is Summer or early Fall of 2005. DFM's upgrade will actually utilize the reinstall rather than the migration route. Reinstalling or reimplementing is cleaner, presents less risk, reduces DBA resource demands, allows clean-up of obsolete data, offers the potential for design changes, and the ability to run a system parallel test. Reimplementing will require system setup and a data conversion effort, which we believe is manageable.</p>
<p><b><u>Next Steps</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Seek your support to begin planning for a DFM upgrade now and implement as resources (Carrie, Carol, and John) are available. Work would be secondary to DoIT's upgrade but the goal would be to closely follow it.</li><li>2. Complete a key issues, upgrade analysis document.</li><li>3. Complete the DFM Current System documentation.</li><li>4. Draft and review the DFM upgrade project charter.</li><li>5. Begin detailed project planning, analysis, system evaluation, and training.</li></ol>

Exhibit 3: Conceptualize Stage Project Proposal Document Example

## Project Initialization

The Initialization stage of a project covers the activities needed to define the project and gain agreement to proceed to subsequent stages. This includes a project's description, business need, goals, scope, requirements, and roles. High-level strategies for managing risks, communications, quality, change control, and issues are identified. Initial high-level projections of key milestones, timelines, and budget expectations are made. Its primary deliverable often is an approved project charter.

**DoIT Project Management Advisor v2.2**

HOME

**Initiate Stage**

1 CONCEPTUALIZE → 2 INITIATE → 3 PLAN → 4 EXECUTE & CONTROL → 5 CLOSE

Stage 2: Initiate the Project

Glossary Search PMA:  Go

**Activities**

- 1. Define scope
- 2. Define requirements
- 3. Identify high-level roles
- 4. Develop high-level milestones/timeline
- 5. Develop high-level budget
- 6. Identify high-level control strategies
  - Communications strategy
  - Quality management strategy
  - Issue Management Strategy
  - Change Management Strategy
  - Risk Management Strategy
  - Procurement Strategy
- 7. Finalize Project Charter & gain approvals

**Deliverable:**

A Project Charter (finalized & approved)

Evaluate lessons learned

**What it is:** Define Scope

**Description**  
 Defining the scope of a project develops a common understanding of what is included in and excluded from the project. The scope builds upon the project concept developed in the Conceptualize Stage.

Scope is usually defined by:

- Project Business Need
- Project Goals
- Product Description
- Project Customer, Project Sponsor, Project Manager
- Project in Scope, Out of Scope
- Project Critical Success Factors
- Project Assumptions
- Project Constraints
- Project Deliverables

**Rationale/Purpose**  
 Defining a project's scope helps establish a common understanding for all project stakeholders. It is the foundation on which the schedule, budget and staffing plans are built.

Scope also serves as the basis for future project decisions. The documented scope helps address "scope creep" by making changes obvious.

**Who is involved**  
 Project Manager  
 Project Sponsor  
 Project Stakeholders  
 Customers

**Result**  
 This information is included in a separate section of your project charter often referred to as "Project Scope".

Exhibit 4: PMA Overview of the project Initialization Stage

I began this stage of the DFM pilot project by doing an initial assessment of the situation, which noted the project's strengths (such as the experienced team with a shared vision) and challenges (such as technical unknowns and an external deadline). The new customer sponsor was invited to a lunch where we discussed our working relationship, project goals, and I gained his support for utilizing the project management framework laid out in PMA.

Use of the PMA tool lead the team to include areas we may not have otherwise formally addressed in the charter such as acceptance criteria, critical success factors, a communications strategy, a quality strategy, and requesting approval signatures. Given the relative small size of the project, we elected to use the EZ Charter template (see Exhibit 5 below). We supplemented it with a valuable FAQ document, which asked and addressed pertinent questions from our customer's perspective.



The one challenge the PMA did not help us conquer was the struggle to arrive easily at early project cost estimates and time-lines. Budgeting was especially difficult given we had known 11i installation problems looming with solutions that would require an unknown amount of Oracle Support interaction and wait time.

<b>Project Name</b>	DFM Oracle 11i Upgrade
<b>Project Manager</b>	John Schmitz, DoIT
<b>Sponsor</b>	Steve Hall, DFM
<b>Customer</b>	Department of Family Medicine (DFM)
<b>Document Version and Date</b>	Version 2.0 – 02/02/06
<b>Project Scope</b>	
<b>Background &amp; Business Need</b>	<p>DFM, a department of the UW Medical School, operates patient care clinics across Wisconsin. They acquired Oracle Applications General Ledger (GL) version 10.7 in 1998 via a cooperative arrangement with DoIT. DFM's version of Oracle Financials (now called the E-Business Suite) and much of the underlying architecture has been de-supported by Oracle. DoIT staff feel they can no longer guarantee system operational integrity.</p> <p>DoIT and DFM staff met in the fall of 2004 and tentatively decided to follow DoIT's planned upgrade to the latest Oracle release. DoIT upgraded to Oracle E-Business Suite 11.5.10.2 in January, 2006.</p>
<b>Project Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Move to Oracle supported, manageable, and more state-of-the-art database, tools, and overall technical environment.</li> <li>- Move to a supported server platform.</li> <li>- Upgrade, at a minimum, to the Oracle GL version used by DoIT.</li> <li>- Convert from existing system while maintaining needed functionality and retaining desired data.</li> <li>- Use an implementation approach that minimizes loss of system availability.</li> <li>- Upgrade with minimal enhancements to existing functionality beyond included features to reduce project costs and risks.</li> <li>- Move off the existing DFM production servers in a timely manner.</li> </ul>

Exhibit 5: EZ Project Charter Word Document Example

## Project Planning

During the Plan stage of a project the hard work of detail planning occurs. Here is where the heavy lifting, of breaking down the tasks, schedules, assignments, and costs required to accomplish the stated objectives, needs to be completed. If the project is a software development effort, this stage will also encompass detail analysis and design activities. Strategies for managing risks, communications, quality, change control, and issues identified earlier will need to be revisited and developed further.

PMA has a comprehensive list of recommended activities to consider and provides extensive suggestions on how to attack each activity. Project managers can choose between the EZ and full project plan templates at a starting point.

**Plan Stage**

1 CONCEPTUALIZE → 2 INITIATE → 3 PLAN → 4 EXECUTE & CONTROL → 5 CLOSE

HOME **DoIT Project Management Advisor v2.2**

Stage 3: Plan the Project [Glossary](#) Search PMA:  Go

**Activities**

- 1. Hold Project Kick-Off Meeting
- 2. Develop work plan
  - Develop work breakdown structure (WBS)
  - Develop project staffing plan
  - Develop project schedule
  - Develop project budget
- 3. Develop project control plan
  - Communications plan
  - Quality management plan
  - Issue Management Plan
  - Change Management Plan
  - Risk Management Plan
  - Procurement Plan
  - Support Transition Plan
- 4. Finalize Project Plan and gain approvals

**Deliverable:**  
A Project Plan (finalized & approved)

**What it is:** Hold Project Kick-Off Meeting

**Description**  
The Project Kickoff Meeting formally recognizes the start of the project. The project manager uses this meeting to communicate a shared view of the project to ensure understanding of the approved project charter and to clarify next steps involved in producing the Planning Stage deliverables.

**Rationale/Purpose**  
The Project Kickoff Meeting provides an opportunity for the following:

- Introduce Official Sponsor(s) and Project Manager
- Introduce Key Customers and Stakeholders
- Review Project Scope, Definition and Objectives
- Review High-level Timeline & Milestones, Roles, and Budget
- Review Deliverables
- Review Challenges
- Explain Next Steps

This meeting allows the Sponsor(s) to relay commitment to the project's outcomes. It provides an opportunity for the Project Manager to review the approved project charter, answer any questions to ensure understanding, and explain the next steps contributing to development of a Work Plan and Control Plan in order to finalize the Project Plan. Including Stakeholders in this meeting builds communication and coordination, making project success more likely.

**Who is Involved**  
Project Manager  
Project Sponsor(s)  
Project Stakeholders

**Result**  
The Project Kickoff Meeting ensures that all Stakeholders are familiar with and share a common understanding of the approved Project Charter and that they are aware of the next steps to complete the project Work Plan and Control Plan. The more complete the resulting plans, the more likely project implementation will progress efficiently and effectively.

Exhibit 6: PMA Overview of the project Plan Stage

For our pilot project, the proposed PMA project plan activities and template served as a welcome cookbook during a whirlwind of intense activity. I considering each ingredient, including most, omitted those that didn't suit the size or nature of our efforts, and adding elements that could better describe or prepare us for the work ahead. (See Exhibit 7 for a graphical example.)

Preparing for two implementation schedules, a desired target date and a plan B date; allowed us to strive for an aggressive best-possible scenario while employing a safety net if unforeseen delays occurred. For the detailed work breakdown structure, a 330-line spreadsheet met our needs.

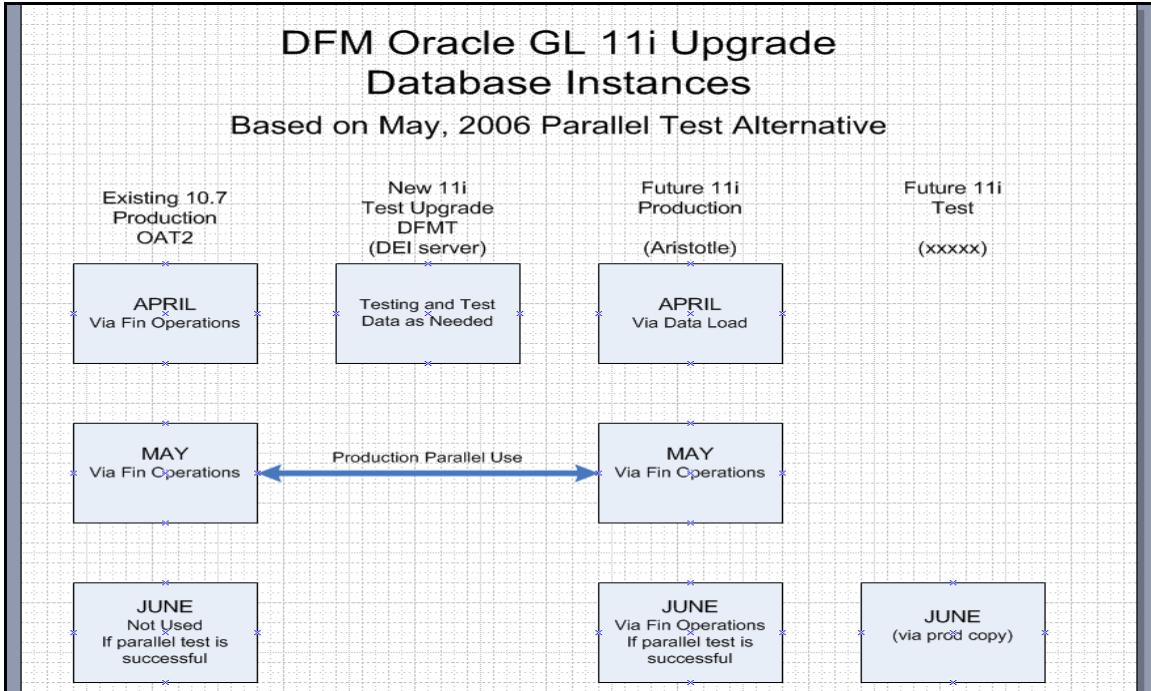


Exhibit 7: Plan Stage Supplemental Planning Diagram Example

### Project Execution and Control

The Execute and Control stage performs the work of the project. As the PMA overview states, this stage -

- Creates and delivers the end product or service.
- Executes the tasks in the schedule.
- Relies heavily on the plans from the Plan Stage to control the project.
- Expend most of the project resources.



The screenshot shows the 'Execute & Control Stage' of the DoIT Project Management Advisor v2.2. The interface includes a navigation bar with five stages: 1. CONCEPTUALIZE, 2. INITIATE, 3. PLAN, 4. EXECUTE & CONTROL (highlighted), and 5. CLOSE. Below the navigation bar, the current stage is 'Stage 4: Execute & Control'. The main content area is divided into three tabs: 'What it is', 'How to' (selected), and 'Templates/Examples'. The 'How to' tab displays 'How to: Hold Project Team Kick-Off Meeting'. This section includes 'Recommended actions and strategies' and a table with four rows detailing tasks and their execution methods. A 'Deliverable' section at the bottom left indicates 'Executed & Controlled Project'.

**How to: Hold Project Team Kick-Off Meeting**

**Recommended actions and strategies**  
The table below describes actions you can take to conduct a Project Team Kick-off Meeting:

*Tip:* Consider doing a periodic checkpoint to review the scope and requirements with the project sponsor just to confirm there are no assumptions about changes to be made.

What to do	How to do it
1 Schedule Project Team Kickoff Meeting	Determine when team members are available and schedule the meeting.
2 Prepare Agenda and Meeting Materials	Several days prior to the meeting, prepare and send the agenda, completed Project Plan, and Management Methods/Expectations Worksheet to team members.
3 Hold Project Team Kickoff Meeting	Gather in a room conducive to presentation and discussion.  Review and discuss details of the Project Plan.  Hold a discussion to refine and clarify the management methods and expectations for the Execute and Control Stage.
4 Project Team Kickoff Meeting Follow-up	Keep the conversation focused and note all contributions using flip charts, projected computer screen, or other.  Send meeting minutes to team members and invite additions/corrections.  Include team input in the Management Methods and Expectations Worksheet and send this to team members for a follow-up review. Invite additions/ corrections.

**Deliverable:**  
Executed & Controlled Project

Exhibit 8: PMA Overview of the project Execute and Control Stage

The desired deliverable is a well-managed project utilizing teamwork and effective communication to produces the needed outcome. (See exhibit 9 for a color-coded standard PMA status-reporting template.)

For the DFM pilot project, this was a time of intense activity. Balancing the dual roles of project manager and technologist became a challenge for me as both resources were in demand. Another challenge was choosing among a variety of tools to find efficient mechanisms to manage a project calendar, issue tracking, project document management, status reporting, and the frequently changing detail plan status log. I learned that the best alternative is sometimes neither the most elegant nor technically comprehensive one.

Although challenging, this stage of the project was a satisfying one. Our earlier decision to re-implement versus upgrade the system was validated, the team pulled together to complete priority tasks, and we were able to meet our planned target date.

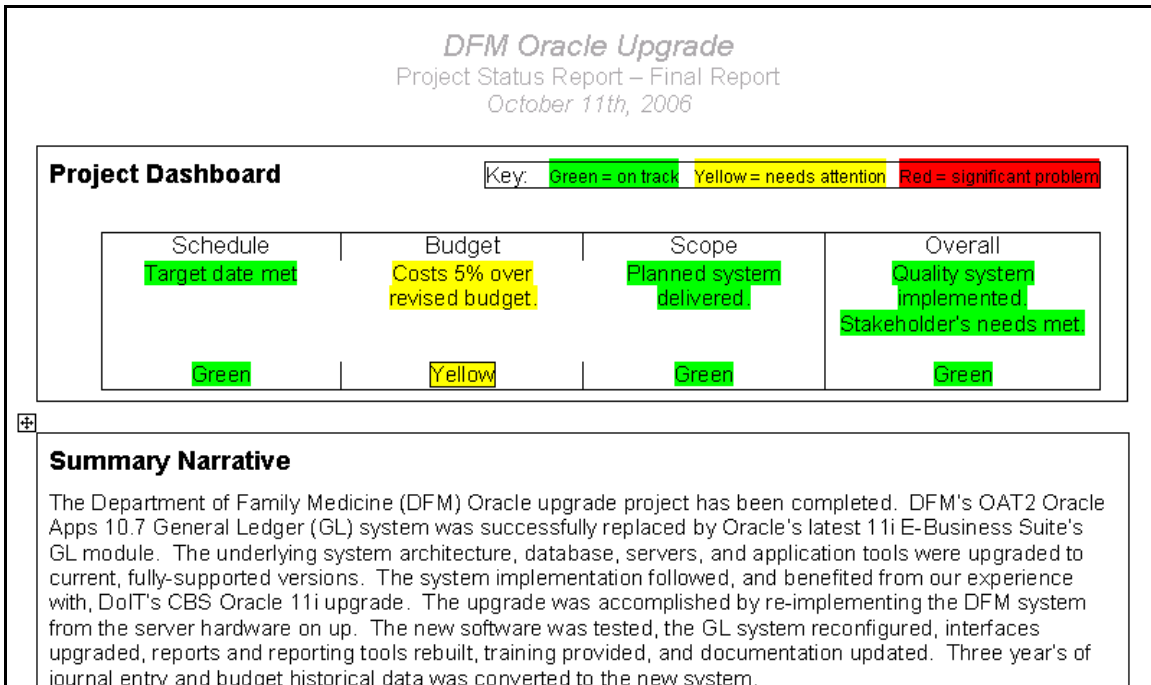


Exhibit 9: Execute and Control Stage PMA Status Reporting Template Example

## Project Closure

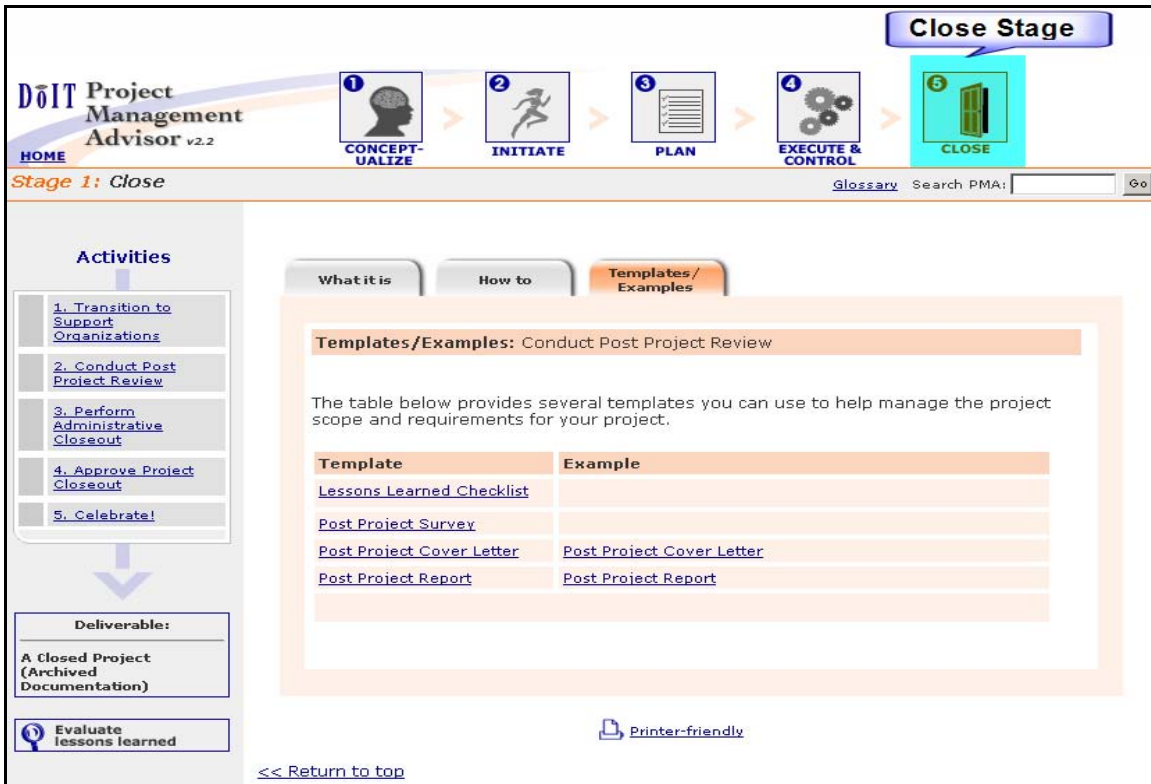


Exhibit 10: PMA Overview of the project Close Stage

The Close stage covers the concluding project activities. The PMA overview summarizes them best:

- Concludes all project activities.
- Administratively closes the project.
- Turns the delivered product or service over to a support group.
- Assesses project outcomes and team performance.
- Documents best practices and lessons learned.
- Celebrates project success.

At this stage we make the important transition to ongoing support of the supplied product or system. We consider parked or later phase items. We assess project performance, reflect on lessons learned, celebrate and affirm accomplishments, and hopefully are able to enjoy the fruits of our labors.

With project objectives met, this stage was thankfully a positive experience for the DFM Oracle GL Upgrade pilot project team. We then engaged the PMA post-implementation survey service to measure team and sponsor satisfaction in four major areas:

- Project goals and team performance
- Project Communication
- System Implementation
- Final Product Quality

Open-ended questions gave respondents the chance to express their opinions on what aspects of the project went well and what could have been improved. (See Exhibit 11 for a PMA post-implementation survey example).

A PMA recommended activity that we wholeheartedly pursued was a post-implementation celebration. This took the form of a thank you luncheon where the contributions of team members were acknowledged in the form of Emmy-like awards. Another enjoyable task was developing and reviewing a list of project success factors.

Top of Form							
<b>DFM Oracle 11i Upgrade Post-Implementation Review</b>							
<b>Respondents:</b>	6 displayed, 6 total			<b>Status:</b>	Open		
<b>Launched Date:</b>	09/18/2006			<b>Closed Date:</b>	N/A		
<b>Display:</b>	Display all pages and questions						
Bottom of Form							
<b>1.</b> Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:							
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A	Response Total
1. We had appropriate and adequately defined project goals.	83% (5)	17% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>6</b>
2. Project goals, tasks, and priorities were clearly understood by team members.	50% (3)	50% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>6</b>
3. My individual deliverables were achievable.	50% (3)	50% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>6</b>
4. Roles and responsibilities of the team members were clear.	67% (4)	17% (1)	17% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	<b>6</b>

Exhibit 11: Close Stage PMA Post Implementation Survey Example

## **PMA Related Benefits**

Based on the pilot project effort, I believe the PMA tool can provide the following benefits for project managers:

- A sequenced list of recommended activities
- Controlled checkpoints and approval processes for proceeding to subsequent stages of the project.
- Excellent core content of instructions, guidelines, and examples
- An opportunity to standardize on a set of project templates
- The ability to adapt PMA to fit a variety of environments, projects, and styles
- The credibility of utilizing a project management methodology
- A roadmap to help ensure the success of future project management endeavors

## **Summary**

The Project Management Advisor (PMA) is a helpful guide to successful project management. It offers standardized instructions, templates, and examples for best-practice activities covering five stages of a project's life cycle from conception through detail planning to project close. PMA content and templates were designed to accommodate projects of various sizes. This paper highlighted how it was adapted and successfully employed for a small Oracle E-Business upgrade project. The PMA URL is provided, making the tool available for other project leaders to use, whether implementing a software project or delivering some other product or service. Individual project managers decide whether, and to what extent, they'll utilize the components of each activity.

## **Resources**

Key resources for this paper were the DoIT Project Management Improvement project charter, the Project Management Advisor web site, and the DFM Oracle Upgrade project documents.

## **Additional Information**

- The Project Management Advisor (PMA) is copyrighted by the UW Board of Regents.
- PMA is publicly available and can be assessed at <http://www.pma.doit.wisc.edu/>
- Use the PMA contact procedures for inquiries, including information for obtaining the source code to tune to your own environment
- The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) is the University of Madison campus central IT shop. It employs approximately 700 full-time and student employees and serves the 55,000 UW-Madison faculty, staff, and students.
- You may contact the author at [john.schmitz@doit.wisc.edu](mailto:john.schmitz@doit.wisc.edu).