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What is a Project Control Manager? Coverage, Reach and Roles

Project Control as a stand-alone discipline is often only formalized on large Projects. On smaller Projects, it is generally the Project Manager himself that effectively performs its duties. Still even when it is identified as a role its coverage and reach varies between organisations. In this White Paper we take position on what the Project Control Manager should cover to be successful in effectively supporting the Project Manager during the Project's execution.

Project Control coverage

What should be included

Based on our experience, Project Control should cover the following disciplines Coverage:

- Cost Control,
- Schedule Management,
- Project Risk Management,
- Main Contract Management (for Contractors),
- Document Management.

Contract management is sometimes considered to be a separate discipline that warrants a senior direct report to the Project Manager. However we believe that Project Control can only deliver its best value when the three dimensions of the famous Project triangle (Cost, Schedule and Scope management) are covered. Main Contract management actually deals with Scope, hence we believe that it should be included in the remit of Project Control. Contract management also includes accountability for proper flow-down from the Main Contract to Purchase Orders and Subcontracts, and review of deviations to these requirements during the procurement process; this has an essential link to Project Schedule and Risk Management.

Document Control as a process typically responds both to Project Control needs (physical progress measurement and scope control) as well as Quality Management needs and depending on the local preferences can be assigned to either function. However, because of the potential consequential effects of lack of performance control during engineering phase, it is recommended that Document Control be in the remit of Project Control to foster proper oversight. This practice has shown to deliver substantial value in EPC Projects.

Project Administration can sometimes be added for convenience to the Project Control scope.

What should be excluded

Procurement is sometimes merged together with Project Control, and the sum is then often called Project Services. This generally happens in organizations that consider procurement to be only a contracting exercise. Experience in Large, Complex Projects Management (or 'EPC' Projects) shows however that there are many additional competencies and processes that are necessary in the field of Procurement (also called Supply Chain Management). They range from strategic sourcing to supplier qualification and post-award management.

Therefore we believe that Procurement should be promoted to a function reporting directly to the Project Manager at the same level as Engineering and Construction, and should not be included within the remit of Project Control. Including Procurement activities will also distract the manager in charge from his strategist role, because of the numerous operational constraints associated with the day-to-day management of suppliers and contractors.

Because of the confusion between Accounting and Cost Control as functions (refer to our Cost Control Handbook), some organizations tend to merge the Finance/ Accounting functions within Project Control. This is not a good idea because:

- Accounting should serve as an independent line of defence from Cost Control, looking at the Project from another perspective,
- The Project Control Manager would be distracted by numerous financial reporting requirements, bank administrative requests and invoice payment issues,
- Accounting is run more effectively at the legal entity level than on the Project level.

We thus recommend keeping Accounting as a separate corporate function. While there needs to be a strong link with Project Control, it still needs to remain separate.

Project Control is needed as soon as the project is significant and complex or executed under a reimbursable contract

Project Control Terminology

Project Control is also often called Project Controls or Project Services.

We have chosen to use 'Project Control' in the singular rather than 'Project Controls' because we want to highlight the fact that control overall needs to be exercised on Project execution, and not just the implementation of a series of juxtaposed controls. Control needs to be comprehensive.

'Project Services' is often used when Procurement is part of the scope. It is also sometimes used when just Contract Management is added to Cost, Schedule and Risk. To avoid misunderstandings with organizations that use 'Project Services' in a very broad sense, we have preferred to use 'Project Control' in our handbook and in this White Paper.

When should a Project Control Manager be mobilized?

In general the Project needs to be sufficiently large to warrant such a position. Depending on the nature of the Project and its contractual setup, it might be useful to appoint a Project Control Manager for smaller Projects in particular if:

- the Project is executed on a reimbursable or detailed rates basis, which require a lot of precise administration,
- When it can be expected that the Project Manager will have to deal with specific complexity e.g. difficult stakeholder management, number of and distance between different Project offices.

Project Control should cover Cost, Schedule, Risk, Contract, Document management. It should not cover Procurement or Accounting.

- Developing and proposing a contractual strategy and relevant updates to the Project execution strategy to the Project Manager.

In addition, depending on the Project's organization and relevant other organizational parameters, the

Project Control Manager can also assume the following additional roles:

- Managing directly all internal Management of Change and internal/ external Interface Management processes,
- Organizing and managing the Project's administrative support (Project assistants team, travel arrangements, office arrangements etc.),
- Organizing the receipt, review and dispatch of the official Project correspondence, including assignment and tracking of actions,
- Setting-up and managing relevant Project-specific information management systems with a focus on Project Control (excluding specialized software for Engineering or Procurement).

Summary of Project Control Roles

The Project Control Manager can be seen as the keeper of the Cost – Schedule – Scope triangle. Hence most of his activities will revolve about maintaining control and consistency across these three dimensions, both in terms of Baseline, Actual and Forecast.

In a Project, the main responsibilities of Project Control are the following:

- Maintaining consistent Project Cost Model that reflect accurate actual data and proper forecasts and reflect the latest Project scope as per Contract management activities,
- Determining the minimum contingency reserve amount as per the organization's approved calculation method,
- Maintaining the required conversations about Opportunity and Risk and making sure they are reflected in the updated Project Risk register and associated action plans,
- Producing timely relevant contractual information, notification and correspondence; and in general, managing Contract administration activities and coordinating Change Orders issues,
- Ensuring that internal Management of Change and internal/ external Interface Management activities interface properly with all the relevant Project Control disciplines,
- Coordinating all Project periodic reporting activities (internal to the organization and external to Client and other stakeholders), including both Actual and Forecast in all dimensions,
- Establishing visual dashboards and making sure they are posted and updated continuously in the Project office and/or the Project war-room,
- Organising and managing the Document Control process in conjunction with the Quality function in particular when it comes to the development of as-built data,
- Developing appropriate scenario analysis when relevant to establish the best course of action when the Project is faced with alternatives,

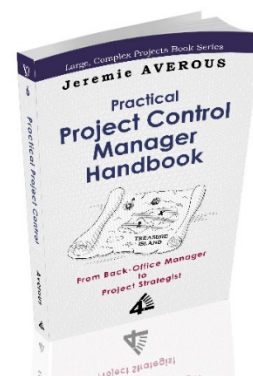
Conclusion

Project Control is an indispensable function in Large Projects. Reporting directly to the Project Manager, it covers a number of control processes that taken together, aim to give an accurate view of the Project's current and forecast situation.

Find all these principles of Project Control Management exposed in a comprehensive manner in our new Handbook,

[Practical Project Control Manager Handbook](#)

(now published, available in [Paperback](#) and [Kindle](#) versions!)



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