Delivering project value

Exploring the true cost of project administration

A cynic, according to Oscar Wilde's famous definition, is someone who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. By that same measure, more and more project managers are in danger of becoming cynics – and it's current corporate practice that is making them so.

Status reports and reconciliations; weekly updates to the PMO; numbers to the project board and a paper to the executive committee. In their zeal for better governance, companies are placing so many demands for project and program information that beleaguered project managers end up knowing not just the cost, but also the current status of everything.

In theory, that might seem a benefit. But in practice, it means that project managers become little more than a funnel for information, and the very act of reporting evolves into something self-defeating. The data is there, in black, white and sometimes red, but having spent all their time compiling it, the project managers have had no time to act upon it.

As a result, it's only when completing the weekly report that the project manager spots a deadline missed, or a cost threshold exceeded. It's only when updating the risk register that it becomes apparent that a particular task is going off the rails.

> " *The data is there, in black, white and sometimes red, but having spent all their time compiling it, the project managers have had no time to act upon it.* "

A working process or an all-consuming burden?

Some would claim this is evidence of a governance process that works: the critical issues are captured. But a more challenging perspective would argue that this is an opportunity missed; could these problems have been pre-empted and potentially avoided, had the project manager been able to focus on the true task of managing, instead of mere monitoring?

So where's the middle ground here? Clearly, the need to gather and share this project information is of real value to the business: without effective tools and processes for doing so, the project manager is reliant on instinct and good faith. But if the act of reporting itself becomes all-consuming, then the value of doing it evaporates.

The automated alternative

Consider then an alternative scenario, where reporting is automated. The business sets its requirements in advance, right down to producing templates for different reporting formats and audiences; the necessary information is recorded as part of everyday operations, in project plans, workflow and timesheets. Then, each week or where required each day, a report – or suite of reports – arrive in the project manager's inbox: fully formatted, readily analyzed, easily shared.

In this scenario, instead of spending their hours acquiring the necessary information, project managers can devote more time to reviewing it. They can spot ahead of time that a particular workstream is in danger of falling behind schedule, and take action to get it back on track. They can identify where a task is eating up its allotted resources fast, and investigate why.

Add in automated alerts around specific risks, and the project manager's ability to respond – to *manage* – proactively soars.

At a glance

- Most companies now expect project managers to produce a range of reports to help with good governance

- But sometimes the reporting requirement becomes so onerous, managers run out of time to manage

- Issues are only spotted once the report is complete, rather than at a time when they could be avoided

- By automating reporting, with KeyedIn™ Projects, the burden can be eased

- Instead of spending time monitoring and reporting, project managers can actually manage

- This not only makes better use of project managers' time, but also drives project success

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The easy way to save three months

For the business, the benefits are immense. Not only is the project manager's own time put to better use – after all, what company really wants to pay someone $68,000 a year to format some data each week? – but projects themselves run far more smoothly. Costs are controlled; contingencies addressed; risks avoided. Equally importantly, manual errors are cut out: while we all understand that, in all that paperwork, there's a chance of a typo slipping in as the project manager exhaustedly enters the same figures for the umpteenth time, it's something the business can well do without.

Even in an organization where the reporting burden is comparatively small, the potential savings from automation are impressive. If the average project manager in your business spends just three hours a week compiling status reports, automation with software such as KeyedIn™ Projects could save you as much as 12 days a year – for each of those project managers.

Running five projects? With automated reporting enabled by KeyedIn Projects, you've just saved the business three working months.

" Even in an organization where the reporting burden is comparatively small, the potential savings from automation are impressive. "

Automating change management

Of course, status reporting is far from the only administrative task that project managers face. There's the time spent preparing estimates and invoices, engaging contractors, updating project plans when scope changes. All of these too can be automated to real business advantage.

The latter case is a perfect example. A single change to a single task can affect Gantt charts, workflow, dozens of individual and team task lists and a host of related materials – across not just one project, but an entire portfolio. In a large and fluid program, managers might find themselves updating the master schedule almost daily, while other documents quickly become outdated, unless the business is prepared to invest the time and resource in making sure they are all correct. But down the line, a team is unaware of how their workload has changed – and so has not prepared for it. The result: further changes are necessitated and delays created.

If instead that entire process is centralized and automated, as KeyedIn™ Projects enables it to be, then every project document becomes linked. That one change to the master schedule is automatically replicated across all of the related materials. Instead of requiring the project manager to inform every team of what's changed, team task lists are updated automatically, meaning they can plan ahead. The impact and cost of those changes is absorbed and minimized.

From cost to value

So again, let's look at the bottom line. If managing changes takes an hour of a project manager's time a week, automating just that process of updating project documentation can halve that time – equating to a saving of nearly three days a year.

What's more, there's also a saving on the delivery side. If we assume that prioritizing, reprioritizing and dealing with changes takes an hour a week here too (a conservative estimate), the use of KeyedIn Projects to automate the process – essentially, meaning that the admin side of this is done for delivery teams – is estimated to save around three days a year, per person. The bigger the team, the greater the saving.

But to return to where we began, it's not just a question of costs and time savings: what matters is the value that delivers. Instead of spending a chunk of their days shuffling priorities, project teams are able to focus all their efforts on the task in hand. And that means a greater likelihood of the project being delivered on time, on budget and to the client's satisfaction.

Even the most cynical of project managers – and yes, there are some – can't argue with that.

> *It's not just a question of costs and time savings: what matters is the value that delivers.*

Product focus: Six ways KeyedIn™ Projects helps you achieve lasting cost savings

KeyedIn Projects is a fully integrated suite of business applications designed to support professional services organizations at every stage of project and program management. Available via SaaS, it gives you the ability to automate essential project management tasks – freeing up your project managers to focus on proactive management instead of pure administration.

With KeyedIn Projects, you can:

1. **Automate everyday tasks like status reporting**
   KeyedIn Projects allows you to streamline a wealth of different administrative tasks – meaning documentation can be created automatically at pre-defined trigger points (e.g. a weekly status report) or on-demand, with a single mouse click. All project data is recorded within KeyedIn Projects, from overall plans to individual timesheets. You can then create reporting templates and rules, across the business, and KeyedIn Projects will populate them. It's fast, straightforward and for the project manager, invaluable.

2. **Simplify change management**
   When changes occur to tasks or timelines, it can mean a major administrative undertaking to update all the related documents. With KeyedIn Projects, that whole process is cut down to just one change; you update a master schedule centrally, and all related documents are updated automatically. Project management time is saved, and so costs are saved.

3. **See potential issues earlier**
   From delays to heightened risks to resource conflicts, there are a whole host of potential issues that can compromise project delivery – and that project managers have to address. KeyedIn Projects helps you see those issues earlier. It not only gives you the additional time to view the overall project status, but also the granular visibility into each task so you can understand precisely what the issue is. That gives you a greater chance to resolve it, before it affects project costs.

“ *It's fast, straightforward and for the project manager, invaluable.* **”**

4. **Minimize errors**

   Mistakes cost money, whether simply causing work to be re-done, or creating more substantial issues. KeyedIn™ Projects helps you eliminate manual errors in everyday admin. Instead of having to re-enter data in multiple locations, with KeyedIn Projects, information is entered once and then shared across the entire system. There's no duplication of effort, but also less chance of an error slipping in.

5. **Focus on process improvement**

   With project administration significantly streamlined through KeyedIn Projects, managers have more time to focus on identifying opportunities to improve processes and drive efficiencies. What's more, KeyedIn Projects makes it easy for them to do so: processes can be changed centrally, and the impact is immediate.

6. **Empower project teams and staff across the business**

   It's not just project managers who can save time and effort with KeyedIn Projects: individual employees do too. KeyedIn Projects makes essential tasks like timesheet entry far simpler, with an intuitive, web-based interface that enables employees to record time and expenses quickly and from any location. By spending less time on admin, they can spend more time on project delivery.

> *" There's no duplication of effort, but also less chance of an error slipping in. "*

Discover how

Wish your business could be a bit less cynical? Then liberate your project managers from intensive admin to focus on what matters with KeyedIn Projects. Talk to KeyedIn today: because of our SaaS delivery model, you could be up and running with KeyedIn Projects in just 2 weeks. Contact us on 888-960-5472 to find out more.

Put us to the test: visit www.keyedinpso.com to sign up for a free, no-obligation 15-day trial.

About KeyedIn™ Solutions

KeyedIn Solutions is focused on helping organizations simplify processes, improve performance and drive results. The company's Cloud-based software systems not only offer greater flexibility, but effectively scale as business needs dictate and can be implemented quickly, delivering a measurable ROI months, or even years ahead of on-premise systems. And KeyedIn offers a true SaaS model, making its solutions affordable for every budget.

KeyedIn Manufacturing is an ERP system that helps custom manufacturers work smarter so they can increase productivity and bring new products to market quickly, for a distinct competitive advantage. KeyedIn Projects, the company's project management suite, helps businesses and professional services organizations improve everything from project initiation to execution by managing programs based on top-line strategy and delivering profitable projects to the bottom line. And when new solutions need to be developed quickly, KeyedIn clients turn to KeyedIn Flex, the company's rapid application development (RAD) platform for affordable applications designed just for them.

When businesses need results fast, they look to the Cloud – and turn to KeyedIn Solutions. You should too. Keep up with us at **www.keyedin.com**

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*Driving Business Performance
with Cloud Solutions*

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