



Post-Project Reviews

Why and When Are They Used?

Many organizations now make use of some kind of post-project review or evaluation. These represent powerful opportunities for learning — but they also carry risks.

How Do They Work?

On the positive side, PPRs work well when there is a structured framework against which to examine the project, exploring the degree to which objectives were met, the things which went well and those which could be improved, the specific learning points raised and the ways in which they can be captured and codified into procedures which will move the organization forward in terms of managing technology in future.

But such reviews depend on establishing a climate in which people can honestly and objectively explore issues which the project raises. For example, if things have gone badly the natural tendency is to cover up mistakes or try to pass the blame around. Meetings can often degenerate into critical sessions with little being captured or codified for use in future projects.

The other weakness of PPRs is that they are not so useful for the smaller-scale, regular incremental changes which make up a part of technology management. They are best suited to distinct projects — for example, developing a new product or service or implementing a new process.

A checklist for successful PPRs would include:

- Ensure involvement of all perspectives.
- Collect relevant facts and work with these *not* opinions.
- Ensure objective, non-judgemental, blame-free environment.
- Employ a facilitator to manage the process of the review.
- Ensure some capture of knowledge for next time — what actions could we take and how can we systematically ensure they take place?
- Define measures to detect and monitor progress.

Further Information

H. Rush, T. Brady and M. Hobday, *Learning between projects in complex systems* (Centre for the Study of Complex Systems, 1997).