

Top 5 Proven Strategies to Boost PPM Software Adoption

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Abstract— Project Portfolio Management (PPM) software and tools are proven to increase project management efficiency and enhance business productivity by connecting people, projects and process together, however the PPM software adoption remains as a major challenge in most organizations. In this knowledge-intensive and competitive world, it becomes crucial to understand and address the PPM adoption challenges to improve project and business performance. This research paper is aimed to help decode some of proven strategies to boost PPM software adoption.

Keywords—Project Portfolio Management, PPM, Software Adoption

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern Project Portfolio Management (PPM) software and tools are designed to enhance business productivity by connecting people, projects and processes together, however most organizations are facing serious challenge with PPM software adoption due to various reasons such as user scepticism and fear, lack of awareness, lack of management support, unclear and complex workflows, no vision or sense of urgency, dread organization culture, internal politics and more. Stolovitsky [9] revealed that the majority of PPM technology adoption is slower in comparison to other software markets (such as ERP and CRM) with lack of maturity in implementing PPM processes and underestimated value of portfolio and project management perceived by this market segment. The State of Project Portfolio Management Report [10] also identified adoption challenges as one of the biggest PPM pain points, through survey in the form of an open-ended question generating hundreds of responses. This paper will reveal the top five proven strategies to address the underlying issue and increase PPM software adoption.

II. PROVEN STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PPM SOFTWARE ADOPTION

PPM software implementation is exciting and rewarding, but often stressful due to challenge in changing user behaviour to adopt the new technology. A Total Economic Impact (TEI) analysis revealed that a comprehensive PPM software investment is likely to provide an ROI of more than 250%, whether delivered on-premise or via software-as-a-service (SaaS). It's therefore essential to understand the success factors to boost PPM software adoption to achieve maximum benefit and ROI.

Table -1 illustrates the proven strategies which are mapped directly to user adoption factors to boost PPM software adoption, and these strategies are explained in the following sections.

TABLE I
PROVEN STRATEGIES & USER ADOPTION FACTORS

STRATEGIES	USER ADOPTION FACTORS					
	Interaction	Accountability	Awareness	Knowledge	Experience	Confidence
Trust & Credibility	X	X				
Automation & Simplification	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communication		X	X	X		
Training & Support				X	X	X
Performance Measurement & Improvement Actions	X	X	X	X	X	X

A. Trust & Credibility

The most essential strategy is to build and maintain trust and credibility among stakeholders or PPM software users (who are Project/Program/Portfolio managers, Director, VPs, Executives etc.) by involving them early in the process and setting clear expectations in order to increase user interaction and accountability. Covey [3] very well stated that "When trust is low, in a company or in a relationship, it places a hidden "tax" on every transaction: every communication, every interaction, every strategy, every decision is taxed, bringing speed down and sending costs up. Individuals and organizations that have earned and operate with high trust experience the opposite of a tax -- a "dividend" that is like a performance multiplier, enabling them to succeed in their communications, interactions, and decisions, and to move with incredible speed. A recent Watson Wyatt study showed that high trust companies outperform low trust companies by nearly 300%". Sharma [8] revealed the six principles to get stakeholders buy-in, they are as follows: Get to know about your stakeholders on who they are, what they care about and how they relate to the initiatives, engage them as early as possible as nobody likes to be surprised by change, listen their opinions and concerns and keep the door open for participation, communicate regularly to ensure that they are aware of the upcoming changes or initiatives, use policies as a supplementary compliance strategies to build buy-in and increase stakeholder participation, and create learning environment to build networks across the enterprise to create value that transcends the business objectives. It's clear that building trust and credibility among PPM users can boost adoption.

B. Automation & Simplification

Project Management is very complex with several knowledge areas and variety of tools and techniques which

project managers have to understand and use effectively. Although PPM software's provide rich functionalities, there is no one size fits all solution – each organization have unique needs. Organizations have to identify, automate best practices and mature processes and approaches (such as proposal review processes, project status reporting and notifications etc.) to increase user interaction, accountability, awareness, knowledge, experience and confidence which in turn boosts business performance and efficiency. All [1] revealed that automation plays a significant role in the adoption of hot technologies and it offers clear business benefits such as it enhances the user experience (mentioned 61% of survey respondents conducted by PMG), increases productivity gains (59%), sharing knowledge (52%) and delivering new products (46%). It's clear that simplifying PPM technology using efficient and matured processes can boost user interaction, accountability, awareness, knowledge, experience and confidence.

C. Communication

Communication is also one of the most critical factor to boost user adoption. Organization must plan and communicate clearly on all PPM initiatives (rollout, enhancement, training, support etc.) through all possible channels via emails, web sites, meetings, etc. to all stakeholders on right time (not too early or too late) to increase awareness and avoid any surprises. Hanford [4] emphasized that to increase PPM adoption, organization should take time to explain, communicate, influence and nag as needed to gain a sizable group agreement that there is a value to the organization in the adoption of PPM. It's clear that effective communication can boost user interaction, awareness and knowledge.

D. Training & Support

Training and support boost user knowledge, experience and confidence. Introducing a new technology in an organization is always a challenge, however organizations can overcome by providing comprehensive role-specific training and support. Rubio [7] emphasized that the user training long before the new system, or in the midst of go-live will be ineffective as users may be overwhelmed by their fears and anxieties, and may have already developed resistance to change therefore the training should be given right on time and the training should be based on scenarios, addressing fears in advance and allowing for practice time. It's clear that effective training and support strategy can boost user knowledge, experience, and confidence.

E. Performance Measurement & Improvement Actions

Performance measurement and improvement are essential to identify gaps and take necessary improvement actions. Adoption measurement metrics should be established early to keep track of progress such as how often the user are actively and consistently using the PPM systems, how often the data is updated consistently and accurately, how is performance pre- and post-training, survey to understand user knowledge and concerns, what are other factors affecting user adoption etc.. Hulgan [5]

stated that User adoption metrics should not be simply measure (such as who is logging into the new system), it should look not only at the system but also at factors outside the system such as identify the legacy process, creating KPIs for both the legacy process and new system process etc., It's clear that performance measurement and improvement actions can boost future user interaction, accountability, awareness, knowledge, experience, confidence and overall business productivity.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The final conclusion and recommendations are based on valuable literature review, qualitative and quantitative research findings in relation to address the major challenge with the PPM software adoption. This paper reveals on how organizations can overcome the major hurdle with PPM software adoption using the proven strategies which includes building and maintaining trust and credibility among users, simplifying PPM technology complexity by automating efficient and matured processes, implementing effective communication, training and support strategies and measuring performance to take necessary improvement actions.

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