

What's New in Glossary v6.1?

By R. Max Wideman, FCSCE, FEIC, FICE, FPMI, FCMI
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Introduction

It is self evident that projects need people capable of understanding a project's requirements, if those people are to produce a product that satisfies the project's client. This relationship between people, requirements, and product clearly requires communication. By the same token, successful projects require successful communication; and successful communication requires a shared vocabulary; especially one that is relevant, focused and succinct.

Put another way, using the right terminology for a particular type of project is key to running a smooth operation that produces a successful outcome. Conversely, failure to adopt a glossary of terms relevant to the work at hand puts your project at high risk of miscommunication. Such misunderstandings lead to incorrect work that then requires unnecessary, and costly, rework. Hence, there is a need for glossaries containing terms that are specific to the occasion. In this version 6.1 we have attempted to offer a solution to this problem by creating a number of distinct glossaries out of sets of terms selectively extracted from our database.

Our extensive work in pursuit of this goal has convinced us that not terms and their definitions fit all circumstances. Indeed, to think that all project management terms can be boiled down to one generally agreed definition for each — is a happy delusion!

Our last Glossary update was Version 5.5 issued in 2012. Based on a whole long list of some 6,000 project management terms, it was produced through a custom database process to establish links to other relevant terms to give each definition more depth. This time, with over 7,000 entries, our idea is to see if it could prove useful to identify different terms with different groupings. In so doing, can we show that it is unreasonable to expect one glossary to serve all, or in many cases, even one term and its definition to serve and be accepted by all project management potential users.

Time will tell if this concept catches on.

So, as indicated earlier and in pursuit of the goal of "usefulness", we have decided to break the glossary entries up into different segments that are more specific for potential users. This has not been easy, but the outcome is that Glossary v6.1 now appears as a number of different collections to choose from. We'll explain all of this in a moment, but first a little background

Background

In the intervening five years since the issue of Glossary v5.5, we have continued to collect new or revised terms and their definitions and add them to our database. Interestingly, during this period our research of the literature and numerous books has revealed that authors have found the desirability of introducing many new terms and definitions that suit their purpose in project management writing. Moreover, amongst many of the terms and their definitions that we have picked up, some authors have tended to shift the focus and intent of a given term. This is done either through elaboration, for purposes of clarifying their intent, or shifting direction for making a particular point.

A good example of this is the definition of the term: **scope**. The definition provided in the original *PMBOK Glossary of 1987* was: "The work content and products of a project or component of a project."¹ The definition in the current *Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, 5th Edition* (2013) is "The sum of the products, services, and results to be provided as a project."² Perceptive readers will observe the shift from the focus on the management of the work to the focus on the delivery of the deliverables. Today, in the Information/Technology arena, the idea of the "scope" of a project inevitably includes even more such as connecting with the project's customers to ensure that what is to be delivered is what they really want.

Thus we find that quite a number of project management definitions are specific to particular environments, and not others. Consequently, the issue for us has been how best to divide up an extended glossary into some set of useful groupings? And for that matter, what about those terms whose definitions are either universal, or otherwise on the margins of a group, to the extent that they should be recognized in more than one grouping? The challenge is considerable and the answer very often quite subjective.

At the same time in this intervening period between 1987 and 2017, a lot has also happened in the world of project management. For example, project management has continued to expand, or be recognized, in a whole new range of industry sectors, as indeed it should be. And these typically represent broad but quite distinct areas of project management application. In addition, there is increasing agreement that the scope of project management is more than the successful management of a single project with its associated tools and techniques. Rather, its scope now extends into program management, project portfolio management and even project management governance.

A new goal for our Glossary

It would be nice if everyone could agree and understand the same meaning for a given term and its context. But language is a living lexicon leading to changes by general consensus over time and, in any case, experts, authors and users are entitled to define terms in their own way to suit their particular purpose. Language serves us much better this way. Unfortunately, the inappropriate application of copyright to terminology can also lead to numerous attempts to say the same thing, but using different words to get around copyright infringement. Clearly this practice is not helpful.

So, as indicated in our introduction, we have set a new goal. That is to produce a set of separate and much more relevant Glossaries each of which are trimmed down to be more relevant, focused, and succinct. Accordingly, we have conducted a thorough review of our master collection, removed a number of definitions that we now consider obsolete, and added many new definitions. At the same time, we have undertaken the arduous task of examining each and every definition and flagging it according to its evident usage.

The result is a collection that is extensive but which reflects different "dialects" according to the type of outcome or product, the technology involved, and even the whims of the sponsoring organization associated with each individual term. The background of many of the terms in these collections can be determined by their source. However, the selection of many terms for a given grouping has been subjective based on our research of publications, or on our personal experience.

Accordingly, we decided to divide our list of definitions into two broad categories: The first is the Project Management Domain, i.e. focused on management of the project, and the second is the Area of Project Management Application, i.e. focused on the development of the product. The following table

shows the glossaries chosen, together with referencing used, and a brief description of type and hierarchical level.

Group	Glossary Name	Ref**	Type	Level in Group hierarchy and Comments
Project Management Domain	GoVernance	V	Corporate Policy	Overarching all PM activities
	PortFolio	F	PPfM Discipline	Level 1-Incl. relevant T&T High
	ProGram	G	PgM Discipline	Level 2-Ditto
	ProJect	J	SPM Discipline	Level 3-Ditto
	Tools & TechNiques	N	PM Processes	Level 4-All T&T only Low
Industry/Product Sector (Area of PM Application)	Construction	C	Tangible-Craft	Group Category 1 Low
	Healthcare (Administration)	H	Intangible-Craft	Group Category 2
	Manufacturing	M	Tangible-Intellect	Group Category 3
	Info Technology (& High Tech work)	T	Intangible-Intellect	Group Category 4 High
Combo	PM Gov + PPfM	V + F	Both in one	See entries above
Combo	SPM + T&T	J + N	Both in one	See above for details
Single Doc	Entire Listing	SD	One single vertical file, no links	Prints to about 400 pages.

Note (See Ref** col.): The reference letters shown are primarily used to allocate terms to different Glossaries. They also serve to show if the term appears in related Glossaries. This latter provides an indication of the degree of universality of the term in question.

Description

As you see from the table on the previous page, *Project Management* (PM) is more than the successful management of a *Single Project* (SPM) and its associated *Tools and Techniques* (T&T). Rather, it is broken down into five distinct glossary levels. These therefore include *Program Management* (PgM), *Project Portfolio Management* (PPfM), and even *Project Management Governance* (PMGov).

For practical purposes, the Area of Project Management Application or, more particularly, the Industry/Product Sector, is broken down into four glossary product sectors. These are: *Construction* (C), *Healthcare/Administration* (H), *Manufacturing* (M) and *Information Technology* (T). In both cases, each of these has their own set of relevant terms and definitions. The rationale for arriving at these particular divisions will be described in a future paper.

Note that the placing of an individual definition and its description is not necessarily unique to one particular level or sector. That's because these resulting glossaries are intended to be useful for a variety of users. Consequently, many definitions appear in more than one glossary to make each more complete for the audience intended. Further, it has not escaped us that some who are responsible for more than one domain, such as project governance and portfolio management, a "combo" glossary may be more useful.

We hope that these results are more user-friendly, and will be more useful and informative for their respective users.

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R. Max Wideman

¹ *Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) Glossary of Terms*, p27, Project Management Institute, PA, 1987.

² *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, 5th Edition, Glossary, p562, Project Management Institute, Inc. PA, 2013