

Project Management Practices: A Compendium on a CD
by the Project Management Institute
(Product Review by R. Max Wideman)

A collection of templates assembled and available from the Project Management Institute
Web: <http://www.pmibookstore.org>

Introduction

One of the Project Management Institute's latest products is a set of working templates covering typical project forms, worksheets, and flowcharts complete with explanations, examples, hints and tips. According to the blurb on the jacket:

[This] User-friendly, interactive CR-ROM makes every project easier.

As a project practitioner, you know the importance of being organized and thorough. That's why you'll appreciate the comprehensive set of reference documents and forms the project management Institute (PMI) has compiled on this CD-ROM. This handy resource helps you identify key practices that may be critical to the management of your projects, shown logically within the context of the Project Management Process Groups.

The PMI® Compendium of Project Management Practices includes:

- Explanatory notes for each of the five Project Management Process sections and definitions in each *Compendium* entry taken from *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide – 2000 Edition)*.
- Information to help you decide whether or not to use a given practice in your project; for instance, alternative terms, application areas/intended users, chief advantages, and references for additional reading.
- At least one interactive customizable template, checklist, or outline to assist you in your work for each *Compendium* entry.

Every project practitioner from novice to seasoned professional will benefit from The Compendium. It brings together all the tools you need to orchestrate an efficient, effective, successful project . . . from initiation to close.

Commentary

The CD is promoted as a practical learning tool, but it will also be a valuable asset for the established practicing project manager. The templates, 79 in all (59 as Word documents and 20 as Excel) are wrapped in an Adobe Acrobat PDF environment that provides easy access links to its contents. These contents are grouped by the PMBOK®'s five management process groups. You know, the ones that look like the project life cycle: Initiating; Planning; Executing; Controlling and Closing; but are really intended to be the management process cycle.

Associated with each content entry are buttons that automatically load the relevant document in Microsoft Word or Excel, assuming that you have Microsoft Office on your machine. Some of the templates contain macros that help to automate modification of the templates, especially in Excel.

Indeed, the tips provided with the Excel templates will even help users to learn how to get more out of their Microsoft software. The CD contains about 65 MB, of which 42 MB is an Installer for Acrobat Reader version 5 for those who do not have it already. Users wanting to adapt the templates for an active project may wish to transfer the remaining 23 MB to their hard drives for quicker access.

Such users may also want to customize the templates with their corporate or project specific logos for authenticity. Of course, not every one will be satisfied with the various contents – they have, after all, been based on a simplistic project as envisioned in the PMBOK® Guide. But then, the reality is that there is not a lot of agreement between the conducting of a project in the various areas of project management application, across industries, or even between companies in a single industry. For example, a recommendation in the Cost Estimating Checklist for a budget of 10% of total cost for project management will be rich for some and lean for others. It all depends on what you mean by "project management"! Still, the real value is in having a starting point for that essential report or process document that you just need in a great hurry – and in electronic form.

Summary

That the CD "brings together *all* the tools you need to orchestrate an efficient, effective, successful project" (my emphasis added) may be a bit of a stretch. Nevertheless, The Project Management Institute and their supporters must be congratulated on preparing a really useful product covering almost all aspects of a project.

Is there anything missing? Well, probably, yes. For example, what about a template for a Business Case? But then that's not covered by the PMBOK® Guide either, so that's not the fault of the CD's authors. Still, we hope that it will be possible to buy upgrades as both the PMBOK and the contents of the CD mature.

Since the whole is in cross-platform Adobe PDF format, the CD works just fine on either a PC or a Mac computer. Automated Graphic Systems, the folks responsible for the technical work must also be congratulated for a well-implemented product. Is it worth it? For someone actively involved in leading projects, at \$89.95US (member price, \$124.95 non-member price) yes, I think it is.

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