



Do Your Part by Using Green Project Management Techniques

By Tom Mochal, PMP and Andrea Krasnoff, PMP

The world is going green – even in the United States. We are collectively realizing that we do not have an unlimited amount of air or water or space to continue to utilize resources as we have done in the past. The pending concern over global warming merely serves as the central rallying point for an environmentally friendly movement that has been underway since at least the 1970s.

How can we apply these “green” concepts to our project management discipline? One obvious way is that we can manage green projects more efficiently. For example, if you are the project manager on a project that will result in using less packaging in your products, it would be good if your project completed on time. The sooner that project ends, the sooner the green benefits will be achieved.

On the other hand, most project managers do not run these kinds of projects. Most of us deal with projects such as installing a new software package or upgrading network infrastructure. How can these projects become more environmentally friendly?

The answer is Green Project Management (GreenPM).

GreenPM is a concept where we think “green” throughout our project and make decisions that take into account the impact on the environment, if any. It is a way to ingrain “greenthink” into every project management process.

The point about green project management is not that we make every decision in favor of the one that is most environmentally friendly. The point is that we start to take the environment into account instead of ignoring it. You might make most decisions the same as you do today. But there might be some decisions you would make differently. Let’s consider a couple examples using scope change management and quality management.

Today your scope change process takes into account the business value of the change and the impact to the project. Let’s now add a third factor – impact on the environment. All we are proposing is that the impact to the environment be considered along with value and project impact. There are a couple of possible outcomes.

- There are no real environmental impacts. In this case, the process is the same as today. This will be the outcome of the vast majority of instances.



- There is an impact on the environment, but the scope change is approved as is because of the business value. Again same process as today, but the environment was considered.
- There is an impact on the environment, and the sponsor makes a different decision because of it. Perhaps the scope change request is modified to lessen the environmental impact. Perhaps the scope change request is not approved.

You see that in some percentage of cases, the sponsor might make different decisions on scope change requests if they only knew the impact of the change on the environment. Therefore, let's bring this information to the people who need to make project decisions, so they can at least consider environmental impact when they are making decisions.

Another example is in the quality management process. When seeking your stakeholders' requirements for quality, you may expand this discussion to include their environmental considerations of the project. Gather the requirements for green areas of interest and include these in your Quality Management Plan. You may then determine the project activities that will allow you to meet this level of quality. Ultimately, these may be incorporated into the project quality audits and project quality control activities.

If you practice GreenPM, you consider green aspects in the project management process and the decision making process. Ultimately it is up to the sponsor and client organization to make the final decisions. Over time, we may begin to understand how many decisions might be made differently if the environmental impact (if any) is taken into account.

PMOs currently act as the advocate for project management to the organization. Although GreenPM is in its infancy, it seems that there is a logical next step for PMOs to advocate and align environment-related items into its project management methodologies. The PMO can apply "greenthink" by incorporating environment-related factors into the products and services that the PMO is responsible for. For example, a PMO usually owns the project management methodology, but can also have responsibility for other processes such as portfolio management, business planning, development lifecycle and other organizational methodologies. These processes can be modified to determine when green thinking may be applicable. The PMO should not write processes that mandate environmental costs at the expense of providing business value. Instead, the emphasis should be placed on understanding when environmental factors should be considered.

We are barely scratching the surface on GreenPM techniques and processes. We do not want to adopt dozens of new project management processes. The point is to



adopt GreenPM into our existing project management methodologies. All projects cannot achieve the same level of environmental gain but all projects can consider an environmental component. If all projects consider an environmental component, you could easily see how small decisions could be multiplied by hundreds of thousands of projects. This would collectively have a positive impact on the environment.

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