Agile Portfolio Management

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New: Manage Your Project Portfolio: Increase Your Capacity and Finish More Projects

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How Many of You Like Multitasking Among Several Projects?
What Are You Supposed to Do First?
What’s the Problem?

* Too many simultaneous projects
* Too much interrupting work
* Technical work and multitasking is invisible
What Some Project Portfolios Look Like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project1</td>
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<td>Project5</td>
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## What These Portfolios Are Missing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/Projects</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
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<td>Project1</td>
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<td>Project2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unstaffed Work</td>
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<td>Project3</td>
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<td>Project5</td>
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## Combination View: Low and Mid Level

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Week of June 1</th>
<th>June 8</th>
<th>June 15</th>
<th>June 22</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Sept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BECKY</strong></td>
<td>PROJECT 1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 wk vacation</td>
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<td>1 wk interaction</td>
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<td>1 wk vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BRIAN</strong></td>
<td>PROJECT 1</td>
<td>1 wk interaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 wk vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ILYA</strong></td>
<td>PROJECT 2</td>
<td>2 wk interaction</td>
<td>PROJECT 2</td>
<td>2 wk interaction</td>
<td>2 wk vacation</td>
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<td>USER GROUP MGT</td>
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<td><strong>SCRENE</strong></td>
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<td>2 wk interaction</td>
<td>PROJECT 2</td>
<td>2 wk interaction</td>
<td>2 wk vacation</td>
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<td>USER GROUP MGT</td>
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<td>GREAT PLAN PREP</td>
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<td>USER GROUP MGT</td>
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<td><strong>UNSTAFFED</strong></td>
<td>PROJECT 3</td>
<td>PROJECT 3</td>
<td>PROJECT 3</td>
<td>PROJECT 3</td>
<td>USER GROUP MGT</td>
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<td><strong>WORK</strong></td>
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What is the Project Portfolio?

* Organization of all the projects (and all the work) the organization is attempting to manage
  * When they start
  * When they end
  * Which one is #1
* Decide when projects are done--or done enough
  * Decide when to stop, kill, or cancel projects
So What?

* The portfolio of work-in-progress tells you what is happening and when you can change it

* Similar to a product backlog

* Requires cross-organizational commitment
Use the Portfolio to Make Decisions, Tradeoffs, and Assignments

- Move between the strategic view to the tactical view
- Create a rolling wave plan
- Provide transparency into the organization’s work
Consider Lean

* Iterate on value, redefining it over and over...
* You have more choices if you can see demos as the projects proceed
* If you can see the work in progress, you can manage it
Project Portfolio Flow

Pipeline of projects: emergencies, status quo projects, projects that could lead to growth, projects that could lead to transformation

List of collected work in rank order

Decide how to transform the project and commit to it once it's been transformed

Transform

Commit/Kill/Transform Decision

Commit

Fund the project and get out of the team's way

Kill

Project comes off the list of collected work. If you must keep it, put it into the parking lot.

When to Make Decisions

* When some feature or iteration finishes--project cycles
  * Concept of a MMF, Minimum Marketable Feature
* When you have enough information about the next version of a product--planning cycles
* When it's time to allocate budget and people to a new project--business cycles
How to Make Decisions

- Qualitative questions
- Quantitative questions
- Only do work that’s currently valuable
Qualitative Questions

* Should we do this project at all?
* How does this project fit in with all the others?
* What is the strategic reason for this project?
* Is there a tactical gain from completing this project?
* To make this project successful, are we ready to adequately fund it?
* To make this project successful, are we ready to adequately staff it?
* Do we know what success looks like for this project?
* Is there waste associated with the lack of this project?
Quantitative Questions

- When will we see any monetary return from this project?
- What's the expected revenue curve for this project?
- What's the expected customer acquisition curve for this project?
- When will we see retention of current customers from this project?
- What's the expected customer growth curve?
- When will we see reduction in operating costs from this project?
- What's the expected operating cost curve?
- **How will this project move the organization forward?**
Doing Work that’s Currently Valuable

- Rank the products
- Rank the features for a product
- Requires market knowledge to know when the team has done enough
Three Kinds of Projects

* Projects that keep the lights on—that support the organization
* Projects that grow the business
* Projects that create new opportunities
Why Manage the Project Portfolio?

- People can only work on one project at a time
- Project portfolio makes it clear where the time is being allocated—and where the time is not allocated
- Makes it possible for the organization to optimize at the organization level, not at the person level
- Staff the most important work
- Not staff the least important work
Why Does Agile/Lean Work?

* Agile helps:
  * Finishing running, tested features
  * Have release-able product periodically (every timebox)

* Lean helps
  * Creating a culture of not having a lot of work in process
    * Instead, finish things and move on to the next one
100% Utilization is for Machines
It doesn’t matter how many projects you start.

What does matter is how many projects you finish. And when.
References and Resources


* Tons more on jrothman.com

* If you want to me to stay in touch with you, give me your card or fill out a yellow form to sign up for my email newsletter, The Pragmatic Manager, jrothman.com/pragmaticmanager/