



Measuring the Performance of a Project Manager

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Often, a project manager's performance is equated to the project(s) that he or she managed. Though a project manager's performance is closely tied to the outcome of his or her projects, there is a fine line between a project's performance and the project manager's performance. If you want to learn more, you can find free downloads with knowledge to enhance your project management skills, including the Project Management Scorecard we have recently published, in our [Knowledge Base](#).

Project outcomes can be measured in many ways. One of the traditional measures is the "triple constraint" of scope, time, and cost. Did the project deliver the required scope, was it on time, and did it stay within budget? Other key factors could include satisfying stakeholder expectations and meeting or exceeding quality metrics.

Using these criteria, we can evaluate the success of a project, and by extension, the success of the project manager. Where this criteria falls short is in accounting for how the project manager steered the project to its result through his or her use of tools and techniques, "soft skills" such as communication and negotiation, and leadership skills. Ranking project managers strictly on project outcomes results in missed opportunities to further develop them. Where this ranking becomes difficult is accounting for both the "hard" and "soft" skills, or as described by project manager Philip R. Diab, the "scientific" and "art" parts of managing projects (Diab, 2011, 24 July). In this article, we will explore some of the ways to measure the performance not just of the project, but of the project manager as well.

Measuring Project Management “Hard Skills”

Project management “hard skills” relate to the tools and techniques needed to accurately plan, estimate, and track the execution of a project. These include the crucial pieces like project charter, work breakdown structure, project schedule, and risk register, but can also include other pieces as well. How the project manager tracks resource allocation, costs, and project communication are also essential pieces that can be measured.

One way to measure the “hard skills” is by performing a project audit. For each of the key project artifacts, organizations can set up measurements. For example, in initiation, an audit sheet could ask whether the project had a charter, and follow up with whether it was approved by stakeholders. With an audit or checklist, organizations can track the essential questions and customize the audit to their needs and their project managers’ particular roles. For example, scoring a project manager on procurement is not useful if he or she is not involved with contracts on a project. In PMI’s article, “How do you measure your success as a project manager?” Israr Shaikh, PMI-RMP, PMP, from Dubai, suggests to rate stakeholder group satisfaction from one to ten. (PMI, 2012, 19 October). Scoring the stakeholder satisfaction is one way to capture that element of the project outcome in a less subjective way.

Some organizations use a scoring system that combines objective and subjective criteria to measure all aspects of a project manager’s performance. Meredith Levinson, writing in CIO magazine, describes the score-based performance review system developed by Jason Zaitz for EDS (Levinson, 2008, 23 September). Zaitz’s methodology assigns a default score to a completed project, docking points for delays and defects found post-implementation. It also accounts for soft skills, project size, and “stretch goals” allowing for bonus points based on incentives. This kind of scoring methodology allows project managers to differentiate themselves and show their strengths while working on their weaknesses. Whether organizations deploy this kind of system or something simpler, they should find value in measuring not just the project result, but the steps the project team and project manager took to get there.

Measuring Project Management “Soft Skills”

Measuring project management “hard skills” is typically straightforward since it involves review of project artifacts, providing a more objective view. It’s safe to say that if a project did not have its own risk register, the risk management practices were probably mediocre at best. Measuring soft skills can be more difficult because these are not as easily shown in the final result. What “soft skills” are most important to measure, and what are the best ways to measure these? In LinkedIn discussions, four soft skills that were commonly identified were team-building, stakeholder management, leadership, and communication (Project Manager Community, 2012, 13 November).

Project manager John Eremic, quoted in PMI's article, argued that the project manager's ability to adapt to changes and delays is an important soft skill to measure (PMI, 2012, 19 October). Some level of change will occur in any project, from delays to lack of resources to unforeseen circumstances. Project managers can adapt to change more easily if they have strong risk identification, analysis, and response strategies. Having a solid risk plan can make it easier to weather the down times on any given project.

Other soft skills, such as effective communication with the team and stakeholders, negotiation and leadership skills, and high emotional intelligence, can be measured indirectly through the project manager's relationships with his or her team and the project stakeholders. Among LinkedIn group discussion participants, some added subjective criteria to their scorecards, while others suggested EVM or 360-degree reviews (Project Manager Community, 2012, 13 November). The responses in PMI's article contained a common theme of team motivation, good relationships between the PM and team as well as the project manager and stakeholders, and the success of a project leading to more requests to manage projects with the same client (PMI, 2012, 19 October). NK Shrivastava, one of this article's authors, was also quoted, saying that for him, "Success is when people are fighting to get you on their projects, when you become the stakeholders' and sponsor's first choice to lead a project. They want to rehire you and keep hiring you as a project manager forever" (PMI, 2012, 19 October).

An Example Score

Figures 1 and 2 on the next page contain tables scoring selected "hard" and "soft" skills across three different projects. A spreadsheet like this could easily be used to track performance at a glance across projects. These scores would be taken from the results of surveys given to stakeholders. The Net Promoter Score, discussed further below, could also be included.

Figures 1 and 2: Hard Skills and Soft Skills Scorecards

Project	Date	Hard Skills							
		Project Charter	Stakeholder Analysis	WBS	Resource Allocation	Schedule	Comm. Plan	Risk Register	Performance Reports
A	6/30/2014	9	8	7	6	8	9	10	7
B	9/30/2014	9	8	6	6	9	8	8	7
C	1/30/2015	8	7	7	5	8	9	8	7
	Average	8.7	7.7	6.7	5.7	8.3	8.7	8.7	7.0
	Mode	9	8	7	6	8	9	8	7

Project	Date	Soft Skills						
		Communication	Stakeholder Expectation Management	Conflict Resolution	Negotiation	Team Building	Listening	Problem Solving
A	6/30/2014	9	7	8	9	10	7	8
B	9/30/2014	8	8	8	9	10	7	9
C	1/30/2015	9	7	8	8	9	7	8
	Average	8.7	7.3	8.0	8.7	9.7	7.0	8.3
	Mode	9	7	8	9	10	7	8

Tying “Hard” and “Soft” Skills Together with Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Net Promoter Score is a simple metric used to gauge loyalty of customers, separating them into promoters, detractors, or neutral based on their response to a simple question on a scale from 0-10 (Net Promoter Community, 2015). The advantages of using this system to evaluate project managers are that it is simple and can be deployed quickly to stakeholders, including project team members. The survey consists of a question asking respondents how likely they are to recommend services to a friend or colleague; in this case, the service would be the project manager being evaluated. Respondents assigning a score of 9-10 are promoters, 0-6 are detractors, and 7-8 are neutral. The Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting detractors from promoters; neutral respondents are not counted. For example, if the score was 10 promoters, 5 neutral, and 15 detractors, the NPS is -5. It is not surprising to see negative scores with NPS, so a positive score is considered very good. Using NPS is one way to bridge hard and soft skills and predict whether sponsors and stakeholders will recommend project managers to manage future projects. Figure 3 on the next page contains an example scorecard for NPS.

Figure 3: Net Promoter Scorecard

Project	Date	Net Promoter Score (Promoters minus Detractors)
A	6/30/2014	15
B	9/30/2014	15
C	1/30/2015	-5
	Average	8.3
	Mode	15

[Please visit our website if you would like to download our Project Management Scorecard.](#)

Conclusion

A harsh reality of project management is that projects can fail despite being managed properly. Funding may dry up, key personnel may leave, or a project may be cancelled due to shifting strategic priorities even if it is going well. Given this reality, why is it important to measure the performance of a project manager? As the popular saying goes, “you can’t improve what you don’t measure.” Following from that, measuring performance is key to helping project managers grow; without it, identifying areas for improvement will be more difficult, and this may stunt the project manager’s development. Diab provides another important reason in a story he relates about an executive who questioned the need for a project manager after having negative experiences with them (Diab, 2011, 24 July). For the profession of project management to continue to be associated with high business value and maintain a strong reputation, such negative experiences need to be avoided as much as possible. Effective project managers cannot prevent a project from failing, but they give projects the best chance of succeeding through the way they manage both the art and science of project management.

Looking for more knowledge to help you increase your project management performance? RefineM offers a variety of training courses in project management topics. Look up our [Trainings page](#) for more details.

References

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