The Cycle of Life: Project Management

Context

From the initial days of Information Technology (IT), practitioners have always recognized the need to establish and apply a suite of industry recognized best practices. One of these best practices is used to develop and maintain computer applications. This is the cycle of life for software.

A number of lifecycles have been developed to address specific disciplines within IT – examples include Project Management Lifecycle (PMLC), Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC), and Software Testing Lifecycle (STLC). In all cases, these lifecycles are made up of a number of phases, each containing a set of deliverables.

Project Management Lifecycle (PMLC)

The project management life cycle (PMLC) is used to initiate, plan, oversee and deliver IT applications and systems from inception to fully operational in a production environment. It is used across an organization and is applied from the beginning of a project (development or maintenance) through a successful implementation of the required solution. Though a multitude of PMLC's exist, they commonly rely on and are executed using a "phased" approach, pre-defined deliverables, and standard naming conventions. The project management lifecycle (PMLC) traditionally acts to guide the software development lifecycle (SDLC) and the software testing lifecycle (STLC).

The following provides an overview and explanation of the sequenced phases of a generic project management lifecycle (PMLC).

Initiate

Initiate is the first phase to be performed within the project management lifecycle (PMLC). It is the process of formally recognizing that a project exists and has been authorized to continue. The purpose of this phase is twofold :

- First, to assess and determine a business need.
- Second, to translate high-level business requirements into a set of requirements from which the project team will build the product and confirm the requirements can be fulfilled.

This iterative process is lead by the project manager who requires input and expertise from both business and technical IT resources assigned to the project.

Plan

The Plan phase is executed upon the authorization of a project. It is an iterative process used by a project manager to devise, maintain and execute a workable plan to ensure the business solution is effectively implemented. The workable plan must address:

- Project scope
- Resource requirements, project team roles
- Deliverables to be prepared throughout the project
- A schedule to define how and when the project will be completed
- The activities to be applied to ensure quality is incorporated into the implemented solution

Execute and Control

The Execute & Control phase is an iterative process that aims at coordinating the activities of the project team resources to ensure the project can be completed according to the project plan. The progress of the project activities are monitored against the project plan, and the appropriate corrective action are taken when the project is deviating from the project plan. The Project Manager prepares and utilizes a number of specific deliverables to ensure project procedures are available to the project team, the project management deliverables are maintained throughout the life of the project, deviations to scope, schedule and resources are addressed in a timely fashion.

Closure

Closure is the final phase of the project management lifecycle. Its purpose is to document a true reflection of how the project evolved from start date through to its completion so that future projects can benefit from the knowledge and experience gained on the project. Future project teams can then leverage this knowledge to increase the efficiencies on delivering business solutions to their clients.

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