

Tool 2	<i>Techniques to Take Learning Beyond the Classroom</i>
Created 1/9/04	

Background:

Often the reason for project management training is that there's something within the organization that people want to change. There may be processes such as scheduling or resource management that need improving. There may be confusion about how project managers should effectively manage projects. Perhaps there's a lack of clarity about what project management is.

Because it's unlikely that a single training class alone, or even multiple classes, will accomplish the desired change, it's important to take actions before and after the seminar to ensure the desired change is implemented.

Purpose:

This tool provides a list of actions that can be taken to maximize the learning from a training session and to help ensure that the desired change indeed takes place. The template provides columns to identify someone responsible for implementing the action as well as a comments section for details about the planned action.

Before the Class

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1.	Hold brainstorming sessions on what's going well on projects and where there's room for improvement. Communicate what comes out of these meetings to the instructor before the class, if possible.		

Before the Class (cont'd)

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
2.	Communicate the value of the change being undertaken within the organization to those who will be affected. State how work life will be better for them with improved project management in place, why it will be good for the business, for the organization's customers, etc.		
3.	Establish expectations for project managers. These may include behavioral expectations (i.e. "lead others in developing estimates for the project in a structured way") as well as expected accomplishments. ("deliver project results within 10% of agreed-to budget," etc.)		
4.	Get managers on board with the value of and need for improved project management. (Communication with them prior to the project management courses may be appropriate.)		
5.	Solicit feedback on the changes being implemented, both before and after they're made, to establish buy-in.		
6.	Publicize benchmarking results showing that other organizations are making similar changes to their project management process.		
7.	Bring in an impartial party such as a consultant, member of the local project management chapter, or a manager from another organization that has made similar improvements to convey the value of improved project management.		
8.	Utilize knowledgeable, supportive and actively engaged project sponsors to mentor and motivate project managers to implement what was learned in class.		

Before the Class (cont'd)

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
9.	Choose the “right” people, those receptive to improving the way projects are managed and those with the skills to do so, to be project managers		
10.	Establish prerequisites for attending the training session to encourage thinking about the subject matter prior to the class. Prerequisites might include documenting observations about project management within the organization, assembling a high-level scope statement for a project to be further defined in the training session, or investigating templates available within the organization for managing projects. For advanced Microsoft® Project training prerequisites may even include completing a simple assignment in Project prior to attending the training session.		
11.	Demonstrate that the current way in which projects are managed is unacceptable, perhaps for financial reasons, patient or end-user satisfaction, inefficient use of resources, etc. thereby demonstrating and building commitment to the need to improve.		
12.	Designate a sponsor for the training who is responsible for helping the organization get the most out of the session and for seeing that the training runs smoothly.		

During the Class

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1.	Designate a training sponsor or other manager with a vested interest in improving project management to kick off the training session by sharing with those gathered the importance of the course content, the reason for the training, and the expectations associated with it.		
2.	Have the sponsor for the training as well as other managers responsible for leading the effort to improve project management attend the class. These managers can add organization-specific comments during the course of the training, make note of issues that surface that need to be resolved outside of the classroom, and provide leadership and direction for implementing the material in the workplace.		
3.	Don't overlook the opportunity that breaks and lunch hours represent to reinforce the training taking place! Informal hallway discussions among the participants can go a long way toward identifying how the material can be applied to the projects underway in the organization.		

After the Class

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1.	Reward good performance (monetarily, with additional opportunities, with visibility, by recognizing the “project of the quarter”, etc.)		
2.	Publicize successes achieved by applying the content of the course.		
3.	Identify and work with “project champions”, people who can be tipping points to lead by example and thereby get other project managers and key stakeholders on board.		
4.	Establish expectations based on the training content for project manager behavior and accomplishments and hold project managers to them.		
5.	Provide coaching and appropriate tools to improve the way projects are managed.		
6.	Link adopting the changes to personal performance expectations and formal performance appraisals.		
7.	Learn from mistakes and treat mistakes as learning opportunities. Ask “Did we learn anything in the training session that would have helped us to avoid this situation?” or “Is there anything we learned in class that will help us do this better the next time?”		
8.	Deal with those who don’t meet or follow expectations for the way in which projects are expected to be managed.		

After the Class (cont'd)

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
9.	Adapt new processes to reflect legitimate concerns and be open to listening to concerns voiced by those involved with projects. Build flexibility into the plan for rolling out any changes so that the new processes can be adapted accordingly based on what's learned as the rollout progresses.		
10.	Allow those who have been successful with the new project management process to talk about and share their successes. This can be done through formal presentations, through informal lunchtime get-togethers, or by dedicating a part of staff and status meetings to presentations and discussions of the new project management practices.		
11.	Evaluate progress toward the end goal. This can often best be done by tracking the status of pre-defined metrics like the number of plans that have been baselined, percent of projects coming in within 10% of the baselined budget and schedule, etc.		
12.	Empower project managers to take action, apply the content of the course, and get their projects done. Documented expectations for project managers in general as well as project-specific charters outlining the project manager's authority and responsibility will help in clarifying the latitude that the project managers have in performing their jobs.		
13.	Schedule follow-up meetings to discuss what participants have learned as they apply the course contents to their projects. These sessions may include open-ended questions like "How are the new project management methods helping or hindering getting projects done?" to more targeted questioning about the application of specific project management tools and techniques.		

After the Class (cont'd)

	<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Comments</u>
14.	Notify project managers that a portion of project status meetings should address how the presenting project manager utilized some of the newly learned project management process and/or tools.		
15.	Task a team of project managers with shepherding the change through the organization and working to make its implementation successful. Make some of the responsibility for a successful change theirs. Remove the ability to say, "It's management," "It's them making us change," etc.		
16.	Ask training participants to pick one thing to change or improve in the way projects are managed following the course. Have them commit to implementing it in the next 30 days. Identify a second change to be made in the next 60 days and a third for the next 90.		