

Project Delivery **RENEW**

At Continuum Performance we are periodically called upon to review projects that are not meeting their delivery objectives and recommend improvements that might be made to improve upon project performance. These reviews are always done with an eye toward the efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery execution rather than as an audit of project management processes. As a result, much of the focus is on production management and the interaction of project management techniques with the day-to-day execution of work. By necessity this means that our reviews are based on where the project is at currently and where the opportunities lie to make it conform to a desired future state (e.g., time, cost, delivery certainty, etc). Historical information is used as a basis for improvement rather than a point of criticism. Experience has shown significant improvements to delivery performance can be achieved when the right mindset and focus are brought to the improvement efforts. In other words, the delivery environment can be “renewed” - the project results don’t have to continue to erode. It is out of a desire to help projects achieve success even when they appear in distress that the Project Delivery Renew program was developed.

What We’ve Learned...

“By waiting until projects are on fire to take effective action means that much will already be burned.”

In project delivery reviews we have performed and the improvements that have resulted from them have created a number of key learnings:






- 1. Rigorous management of work execution always improves delivery results – even if done badly.** We have consistently seen that where the day-to-day execution of work is managed in way that ensures all of the tasks required to do the work are identified and properly sequenced; constraints to successfully completing tasks are removed prior to starting; and work is prioritised based on a delivery strategy, then delivery results are measurably improved. This has been true even in cases where the rigour and discipline in applying these management processes was suboptimal.
- 2. The key to successfully improving project delivery results is effective leadership.** In all cases, the difference between teams that have successfully taken on board recommendations to improve delivery performance and those that have not is the presence of effective leadership. Effective leadership comes through focusing on opportunity and getting the very

best from the team’s capability rather on recovery. Although this leadership almost always starts with the project’s management, there are times where it has come from within the team.

“Many of the things that adversely affect delivery performance are artefacts of traditional project controls approaches.”

3. **Many of the things that adversely affect delivery performance are artefacts of traditional project controls.** The need to demonstrate progress (or earned value) drives the propensity to start a great deal of work rather than complete work in a strategic sequence. Also, as CPM scheduling methodologies generally assume unlimited resources and unconstrained access we tend to use capacity as the main lever to address performance issues – the only certainty around this remedial approach is that it ensures that costs will go up. Finally, the size and scale of completions activities are a direct reflection of the delivery team’s ability to complete their work – often a direct consequence of the two points above.
4. **Most importantly, when the team is seen as the solution and not the problem, troubled projects don’t have to continue to erode – they can be renewed to deliver successful project outcomes.** In nearly every case, the performance issues with the projects we have reviewed were addressed when the full capability of the team was brought to bear in an effective and structured manner. Teams that were previously underperforming began to consistently deliver very effective outcomes – the same people became more engaged and motivated to deliver on the project’s objectives. Interestingly, the initial remediation measures that the teams put in place for most of these projects actually made matters worse.

Moving from Recovery to Renewal

Results Trajectory	Renewal Stage	Focus
	Excelling	Possibility
	Improving	Purpose
	Arresting	Power
	Recovering	Control
	Undermining	Results

Through our work we have seen that the move from recovery mode to a renewed project delivery environment goes through developmental stages. At the lowest levels, trying to affect results by obsessing over the results or bringing ever-greater levels of control tends to result in projects that continue to under-perform. It is when the leadership focus moves from results and to putting in place the actions and activities that begin to tap into the power of the team that performance renewal begins. Initially, we arrest the decline in performance but have seen situations where under-performing projects begin to excel.

Progressing through these renewal stages requires a leadership approach that actively seeks to engage and motivate the team. This approach emphasizes the following:

- **Focus.** A shift in focus away from the results and onto the actions and work processes that deliver the results.



- **Capability.** Begin to tap into the capability of the team rather than managing its capacity. By unleashing this capability we better leverage our leadership and increase contribution from everyone in the team.
- **Opportunity.** Look to identify and exploit opportunities for improvement. Too often our corrective actions centre around “fixing problems” – minimizing the loss – rather identifying opportunities that create wins for the team.

It is in the interaction of these areas of emphasis that team engagement and motivation lives. Getting the depth and breadth of your capability focused on doing the right activities at the right time in a structured manner is the source of your power to power to perform – it creates momentum. Ensure that the team’s focus is on seeking out opportunities gives them purpose – purpose drives motivation. By bringing the team’s capability to bear on these opportunities and realising them through action changes the mindset to one of possibility. Bringing these elements together is what engages the team and allows them to deliver true business value.

The Program

The Project Delivery Renew program is an on-site project delivery review that is aimed at ensuring that effectiveness and efficiency in project delivery are at the heart of improvement activities. The approach is one of facilitation and coaching rather than audit and report – the goal is to conduct an interactive review with the project team such that observations and recommendations are discussed and passed on for them to consider/ action progressively. Reporting should largely consist of the things that the team is putting in place as a result of the review rather than a laundry list of items that need to be fixed.

The Project Delivery Renew is focused on execution of the work in a manner that efficiently, effectively delivers the project objectives for both the owner and the delivery organisation(s). It is not intended as a traditional project management review with a heavy focus on project controls processes.

Who is it for?

The program is applicable to any design and construction or construction-only project where certainty and/or efficiency of delivery against project outcomes is of concern or is perceived to be at greater than normal risk. This includes projects that are showing signs of distress or performance reporting is vague or inconsistent with observations.

When should it be done?

The program is design to be initiated at any delivery phase of the project, but as soon as concerns manifest themselves and prior to initiating other mitigation strategies. Although this timing is meant to maximise the value added to delivery of the project, experience has shown that potential improvements can be realised at any stage of project development.

How is the RENEW structured?

The RENEW comprises the following stages:

Project background review and familiarisation.

This consists of reviewing some basic project background documentation and conducting teleconference interviews with key project personnel. This not only allows us to gather basic background information about the project and become familiar with the current status of project development, it also allows us to set the stage for the onsite process so that we efficiently use people's time and create a framework for what we are trying to accomplish.

Onsite review.

The primary bases for this review are observation of team activities, analysis of project delivery processes and documentation, interviews with a cross-section of project team members and facilitated sessions where the team outline their proposed approach to managing work execution. Although various forms of documentation are reviewed for their developmental process, detail and completeness, they are not subjected to detailed audits for voracity and quality (e.g., arithmetic accuracy, logic links, etc). For the typical small-to-medium size project, 3 to 4 days of review in the project office(s) is required. Every effort is made to conclude the onsite visit with a discussion of the initial findings and recommendations with the project delivery leadership.

Report of findings and recommendations.

After concluding the onsite review, the findings, actions put in place during the review and recommended follow-up activities will be documented in a report for both the project team and project preview sponsor. It is highly desirable for this findings and recommendations report to be accompanied by a presentation – either via teleconference or in person.

Recommendations follow-up and mentoring.

As the ultimate goal of this program is to take actions that lead to project delivery success, it includes three monthly follow-up sessions via a mentoring webinar. It's an opportunity to connect once a month to ask questions, share challenges and get conceptual blocks removed. The mentoring webinars help to maintain clarity, boost motivation and remind the project team to stay focused on positively impacting the production environment.

Given the framework outlined above, the approach that is used to undertake this review includes assessment of a range of key questions in the following critical areas of delivery performance.

- **Delivery Strategy.** Is there broad-based understanding and alignment on how the project is to be delivered to meet the overall objectives?
- **Design Optimisation.** Is it a design that the team is happy to build, procure and commission?
- **Work Execution Planning and Control.** Are day-to-day activities in service of your strategy and how will you ensure their reliable execution?
- **Supply Chain Optimisation.** Is there a clear procurement strategy and defined supply chain management processes in place?
- **Integration of Project Controls with Work Execution.** How is status and forecasting information to be made an accurate reflection of the work that has been completed and is yet to be done?
- **Risk Management.** Do the team understand their delivery risks and are there measures in place to proactively transform risks into defined mitigation activities?
- **Continuous Improvement.** Are there structured processes in place to identify and action opportunities for delivery performance improvement?
- **Team Effectiveness.** Is the team organised and operating in a manner that will foster collaboration and efficiency?
- **Operational Efficiency.** What is the observed efficiency and effectiveness of the team's delivery performance?

To Learn More...

For more information about the Project Delivery RENEW program or any of Continuum Performance's programs and services, contact us at info@continuumperformance.com.au or +61 414 829 070.

About Us...



Jeff is passionate about projects.

He loves the power that is tapped when business and people come together to make things happen – the power of possibility that exists within a fully engaged team. Projects are the vehicle for harnessing that power. It takes courage, commitment and a sense of purpose to move the needle, to make a difference... to dent your universe a little. Jeff can help make your people a more powerful force and your business more successful by helping you understand the science and art of projects.

Jeff utilises his 30 years of project experience – leading them, studying them, fixing them and making them sing – to explain what makes them succeed and fail and how anyone can adopt a project mindset.

It was his passion for helping teams deliver truly exceptional outcomes that led Jeff to found Continuum Performance in 2010. We look at how people can work together to achieve amazing things. We explore the power commitment, collaboration and purpose can have in making a difference to your business.