



Microsoft Project

Review From A Customer



From IT Central Station, the leading review site for enterprise technology solutions.

Review by a Real User

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Delivery Manager of EPM

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WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

We actually help and assist organizations in implementing their processes, and workflows to this particular product. Suppose you want to go on the enterprise environment, then you have your own process flows, your own workflows, your own forms and configurations, your user set and your resourcing. With this solution, we can help you configure the system.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

We have implemented four domains like telecom, construction, banking, insurance, health sector and pharmaceuticals. We have worked, to some extent, in each of these domains. Of course the customization, configuration and implementation varies from user to user requirements as to how they want to, and to what extent they want to do it. For example, currently I'm working for a manufacturing domain. They wanted to implement this particular thing because they want me to monitor their projects, which is running into multiple verticals within the organization and we're unable to gauge as to exactly where we are with the project status, and how we are aligned with the resourcing and the costing part. They have their own set of workflows and processes. We help them create that within the Project Online environment, configure their process, their workflows, their information, and all the project related documentation. It's based on the SharePoint environment. Everything that you can do within the SharePoint environment is available here as well. So content management can be configured, as per the needs and configurations and workflows. Of course, the reporting part is a key essential for any organization. You can build your dashboards, your reports, you have a support of actual reports. You have support for PowerPoint reports, power builder. I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but all of this is supported by the environment. So you can have all the dynamic reporting and dashboards as per your requirements.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

Most importantly, there are three aspects that I have seen most beneficial: **Project tracking:** This really helps the users as to where they are with each of the projects, and what are the status details within those projects. **Resource utilization:** Most of the time you do not know how your resources are aligned. You cannot take up projects because you do not know whether this set of resources are available to you within that particular time frame. If you have all your resources within the enterprise environment, just one click and you are able to see that this resource is available during a specific time. So, I can pick up this project and assign this resource. **Cost:** Most of the time, we're unable to note exactly how much cost has gone into the project, because some of the numbers go into the documents that we put in, but the real numbers are really not captured all the time. Here, you will be able to capture your manpower cost, your material costs, your travel costs, and any other costs that's associated with your project and see that as direct impact on your project progress. Half of the time you might have a certain budget for it, but because of mismanagement within the project, the increase of scope and other such reasons, you end up spending more than what the budget really was approved for you. You are able to capture and see: financial status, usual status and project status.



FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

More than five years.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

So far I haven't faced any issues with scalability because everything that we have wanted to achieve, we've been able to. It is a scalable product. I've worked in multiple domains, and each domain has its own set of requirements. We have close to like 5,000 all users. That was a really huge implementation, and we had to get into a firm deployment and that went on to like 14 servers also, because there were so many services and so many other things that you needed to put in place, and of course give it to high availability and high performance also.

HOW IS CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

Usually we have this onsite and offshore supports in place. At the onset we prefer an onsite support because that's more like filling in the knowledge gaps that the users will face, because they do not know the environment, they do not know the working of that environment. Then with the stability as the time moves, like a month or two months down the line, we turn it into an onsite offshore support with reduction of resources. That's totally based on your other kind of user base you have. Like for example, currently I am catering to a user base of approximately 1,000 up people and we are doing an onsite offshore support. A few people are placed on site to help the user immediately take care of their concerns, and some people are working at the offshore to take care of whatever comes into the hill test environment and then manage that. This depends on the organization's requirements, but you have both the models available. The response has been really wonderful.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

It's a straightforward deployment. If you're going into a Project Online, you don't have to do any setup. It's just the basic configuration, which I will be connecting to your active directory to pick up your resources, and I will be configuring the environment for role security permission and stuff. Then of course, the custom information like your verticals, your divisions and stuff that you want to align your projects with. So the configuration is very easy. Of course, only if you want to bring your own workflows and customization into the environment. That's the development rule, but even those development periods are not very long. Like four months, five months is max that we get into. After that, just mostly support and enhancement.

WHAT WAS OUR ROI?

There has been a lot of improvement in terms of the return on investment for ordinary resources, as well as the costing. We were able to see that the same project which they completed earlier in six months, now they could timeline and complete within like three and a half months time, or four months time with the better utilization of resources. Along with that, they were able to have their projections also in place, that pipeline also in place. Like you don't just have the projects in here, you also have the concept of proposals in here. So automatically, you know that these products are in the pipeline in form of proposals, and they will be executed within the timeline.



WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

The standard diversion of Project Online or Microsoft Project, is that it automatically has so many built in features that you really do not need to invest much in terms of trying to configure it to suit your requirements. It has all the standard practices, built in practices, all the pin book concepts already aligned within the product.

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

There are some serious competitors in this sector. For instance, there is Clarity from CA, Planview and HP PPM. These are some of the other competitors that you have on the market. I think the Microsoft products are very user friendly, the ease-of-use is an asset.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

The only drawbacks are the customization. Generally what happens is everybody wants it to be an automation tool, and this is not the use case for this solution. It is a platform for project management. You don't want an automation to be in place. The system does not do it automatically because you as a project manager are expected to see that the input received, the status received from your team members is correct and accurate. Then that information is available for the rest of the team. You don't want that to be automated. So when the user comes back from this kind of mindset that everything should get automated, then no. I will not suggest that because this is management, this is project management. This is not an automation tool, although to a very large extent, a lot of things can be automated to workflows in other ways. If that is your requirement, might as well go and build a custom tool yourself if that's what you're looking for. Then even that won't help you because project management is so related to so many other things that you'll not be able to encompass that all within the environment. You won't be able to think of that. I have been working with Microsoft for 18 years now. Obviously, their experience and understanding of project management would any day be more than any other solution.