

SECOND EDITION
Advancing Project Management
Professionalism and Culture in your Company

By Morten Fangel

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1. Introduction to 12 instruments for advancement

The effort to continuously advance project management professionalism is part of every successful project-based company.

This advancement process is a task not only for company management and various specialists dealing with competence and method development. *Your own competence in managing projects* includes contributing to an on-going and constantly improved management of projects – at both the project level and the corporate level.

This article offers you an opportunity to evaluate the effort delivered until now by yourself or your company toward advancement of project handling – and to learn how those efforts can be improved.

A portfolio of 12 instruments is presented for your use. They cover two types:

- Classic methods, such as development of guidelines and training.
- More recent methods, such as coaching, sparring between project managers, and organizational changes.

Based on the checklist of 12 instruments, you can refer to corresponding reports of practical experience gained during successful advancement of project management professionalism in organization and corporate settings.

Further, we explain how the Scandinavian National Competence Baseline can be used as a tool for self-assessment of your competencies level and as a resource for developing other advancement initiatives.

2. Managing the advancement process

The first step is to define the scope of the advancement effort

The task of advancing the level of project handling can be considered broadly:

- One possibility is to *open up for ad hoc initiatives*, e.g., participation in external courses and the ad hoc introduction of new methods and tools.
- Another possibility is to plan a *coherent advancement process* based on an analysis of requirements, with focus on describing selected methods and tools as well as organizing relevant courses.
- A third possibility is to apply a broad spectrum of instruments in an *integrated development process* aimed at advancing the *exercised* competencies of project managers and achieving real improvements in practice.

Concerning organization of the advancement effort, options are available within three alternative concepts:

- One option is simply to handle the advancement initiatives within units in the *line organization* as an existing staff function of Human Resources Development.
- Another option is to *apply the project management concept*, i.e., to handle the advancement initiatives as a cross-organizational project (but perhaps using the term “process” or “program” to avoid confusing the process contents with the management concept).
- A third option is to form a *unit in the organization*, e.g., a Project Management Office, to manage the advancement processes and act as a “Centre of Excellence.”

Please, characterize in Figure 1 your company’s present efforts toward improving PM and indicate how the task is expected to/should be defined and organized in the future.

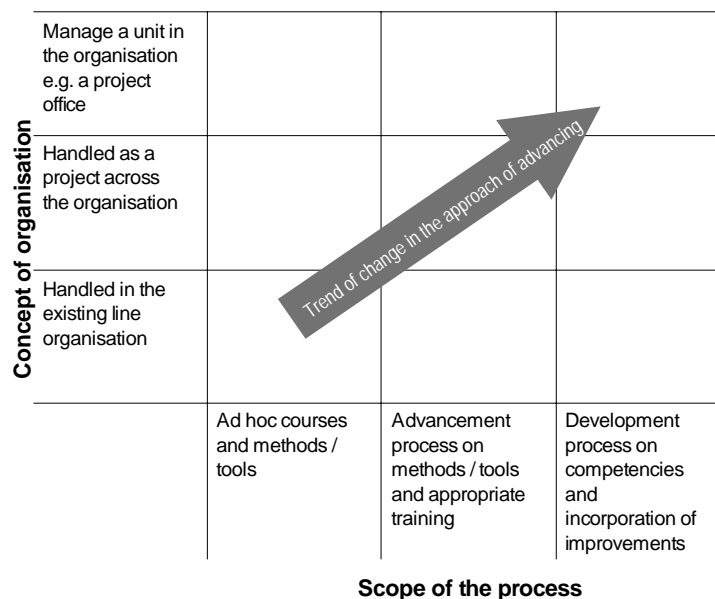


Figure 1: Scheme for characterizing definition of the present and future scope of the organization’s efforts toward advancement of project management.

3. Methods for advancing project management Published in PM World Today - May 2007 (Vol. IX, Issue V)

The total advancement process can be divided into three main focus areas:

- *The entire advancement process* including process management, anchoring of the advancement, and clarification of the advancement requirement.
- *The project level* including advancement of project methods, training for project involved, coaching of project managers, and assistance to project management
- *The company level* including promotion of exchanges of experience, career path for project managers, organizational initiatives, development of portfolio management, and evaluation of the advancement effects.

Figure 2 lists the 12 instruments according to each of the above-mentioned areas. This scheme can be applied as an overall working structure of content to use in planning a total process to implement or advance the management of projects in an organization. But the scheme is not intended to be a milestone plan, although there is a logical structure behind the selected rank of listing. The relevant focus areas and instruments, as well as the timing, should both be considered when planning the advancement process in your company.

In general we recommend applying a *broad range of instruments* to ensure that the requested improvements take place in the practical performance of project management. Further, we have learned from experience that the effect is increased when the advancement process focuses on *achieving a limited number of selected improvements*.

Therefore, we recommend defining a limited number of targeted improvements and implementing these by using a broad range of instruments. Do not rely on one single method – such as issuing new internal project guidelines that cover nearly all aspects of project management. If you want to do everything, you end up with nothing!

Further, we recommend that all processes be closely linked to the management of specific projects and project portfolios – and that a step-wise anchoring takes place based on visible results and achieved effects.

4. Application of National Competence Baseline

In our consultancy, we have benefited from applying the National Competence Baseline (NCB) for Scandinavia when assisting organizations to advance their project management professionalism. The NCB has been developed by the project management associations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden – based on the International Project Management Association (IPMA) Competence Baseline (ICB). The NCB was initially developed to use in individual self-assessment of project management competencies when applying for IPMA Certification®

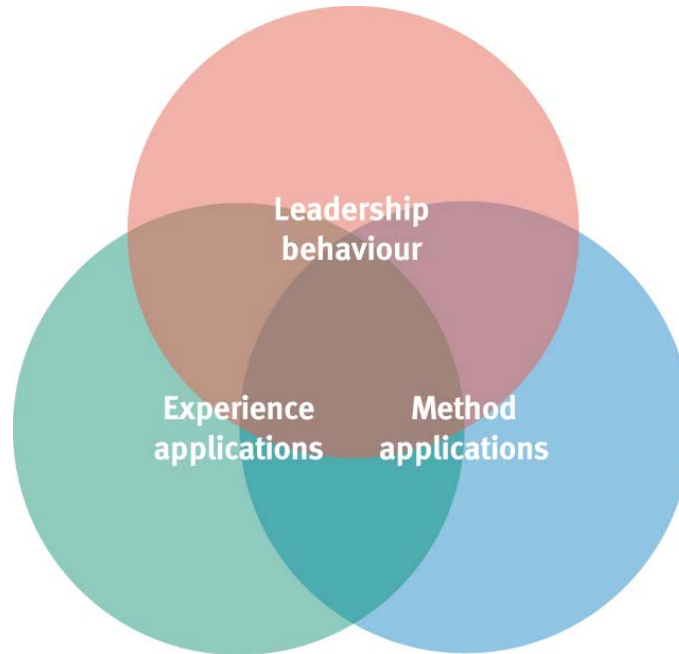
The NCB describes elements and aspects of project management which represent the typical requirements which should be met by project managers. As here defined, the term *competencies* covers the following three abilities:

- to perform *leadership behavior* adequate to the project and its situation,
- to *apply methods* for project management utilizing both knowledge and experience with these,
- to learn from managing projects and *apply the experience* when managing new projects.

Figure 2: Instruments for advancing project management and project management culture

Advancement process	<p>1 Managing the advancement process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning coherent advancement process • Establishing internal advancement group as initiators <p>2. Anchoring the advancement initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchoring the effort solidly at the company management <p>3 Clarifying need for advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of strong / weak points in the project handling • Inspiration via conferences or introductory seminar / course • Benchmarking as to other companies / projects • Evaluation of total level of maturity as to project culture <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Suitable improvements of the management of projects in brief</p>
Project level	<p>4. Developing project management guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project guidelines with focus on improvement • Paradigm for project manual with forms • Platform for virtual communication in the projects • References to good examples and experience of colleagues • Method description in literature or course materials <p>5. Training project personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal basic courses for project managers, project participants and project owners • Extended training courses for project managers • Course sessions incorporated in current project process <p>6. Coaching of project managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on planning and evaluation of the project management • Sparring / coaching of the project manager during the project process • Review / audit of the management effort in the project <p>7. Assisting project management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator at organization of introductory / start-up seminars • Project guides assist in the daily routine • Facilitator at final evaluation of the project handling
Project company level	<p>8. Facilitating exchange of experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules for learning and communication concerning management of projects • Internal forum / network for project managers and other involved parties • Participation in seminars / symposia – prepare and give lectures <p>9. Project managers' career paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification as a lever for competence development • Ensure status for project managers via formal career path <p>10. Changing company organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project office as initiator and support for improved handling <p>11. Advancing portfolio management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the scope of project orientation in the company • Graphic presentation of all projects incl. the anchoring • Prepare priorities and reporting of the projects • Management pro-active role as to the projects <p>12. Evaluating effect of PM advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic estimate of short- and long-term effects

It is through the *integration* of leadership behavior, method application and experience application that project management is performed in a qualified manner:



In Figure 3 we have listed the various ways in which we have been applying the NCB in relation to the 12 types of instruments. Several of these applications are also supported by Internet-based tools.

For example, the 34 method application competencies discussed in the NCB have been used as a “rack” for guidelines which mainly consist of references and links. Further, there is evidence of good results obtained by applying the 34 method applications competencies as described in the NCB to make a systematic evaluation of the company’s total level of maturity concerning management of projects.

5. Successful Advancement of Project Management Professionalism

It is the company management’s responsibility to initiate advancement processes related to management of projects in the company and to organize and control the advancement effort. Part of this task is to *allocate time* for project owners, project managers, and project participants to master the requested competencies. The effects of many good courses have been limited only because training of new methods and improved behavior has not been possible in the hectic everyday life existing in most companies.

It is also a company management task to *change its own methods and own conduct* in order to achieve the needed advancement of project management professionalism and project culture. But it is also important to ensure that improved management of projects is a joint responsibility for all those involved in the specific projects. As project owner, project manager or project participant, you should be competent not only to handle your tasks “as usual.” You must also be *competent* to contribute to an ongoing advancement of the way we manage our projects!

References

Morten Fangel, Editor, *Competencies in Project Management* The Scandinavian Competence Baseline, The Danish Project Management Association 2005. ISBN 87-985726-8-7

Figure 3: Application of “National Competence Baseline for Scandinavia”

Advancement process	1. <i>Managing the PM advancement process</i>	
	2. <i>Anchoring the advancement initiatives</i>	
	3. <i>Clarifying need for advancement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating present and needed level in the company
Project level	4. <i>Developing project management methods</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management model with links to literature and examples
	5. <i>Training project personnel</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing requirement specifications as objectives for training process
	6. <i>Coaching of project managers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making self-assessment a part of the coaching process
	7. <i>Assisting project management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project guidelines to be used as check list for evaluation of project management
Company level	8. <i>Facilitating exchange of experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a “rack” for structuring and communication of experiences
	9. <i>Developing project managers’ career paths</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used by the project managers at certification
	10. <i>Changing company organisation</i>	
	11. <i>Advancing portfolio management</i>	
	12. <i>Evaluating effect of PM advancement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of achieved results



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