

Project Office Automation

White Paper

COMPUTER AID, INC

PROJECT OFFICE AUTOMATION

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Introduction

IT organizations must systematically develop and maintain world class applications that meet the demands of the business. They are responsible for enabling the current and future viability of all organizations. Because IT is so ubiquitous, it is the enabler for many critical business functions:

- day to day operations
- costs control
- risk reduction
- innovation
- competitiveness
- new opportunities exploitation
- regulations compliance

When a software project fails, it jeopardizes an organization's very existence. That said, statistics show that the implementation of a successful project remains alarmingly rare. In fact the Standish Group's CHAOS Summary Report uncovered the following statistics:

- 32% 'Succeeded': The project was delivered on time and on budget.
- 44% 'Challenged': The project was delivered over budget or past deadline.
- 24% 'Failed': The project was never completed.

Throughout the software development lifecycle (SDLC) difficulties are encountered. For the most part, many of the issues are avoidable. The earlier an issue is caught, the less cost is incurred to fix the issue. In situations where the issue is fundamental to the application, and it is not caught until systems testing - or after deployment - the cost to the business could be monumental. A desperately needed application might be un-usable or a significant amount of additional time and effort might need to be expended to correct the issue... from the ground up!

Once an application has been implemented, the risks inherent with maintaining it might change, but they are not eliminated. According to a recent Gartner study, 81% of the effort of IT organizations is focused on the running of IT. As such, the impact of a realized risk in the production environment is equal to if not greater than the risks associated with developing an application. As with the application development process, the majority of these risks can be recognized early on.

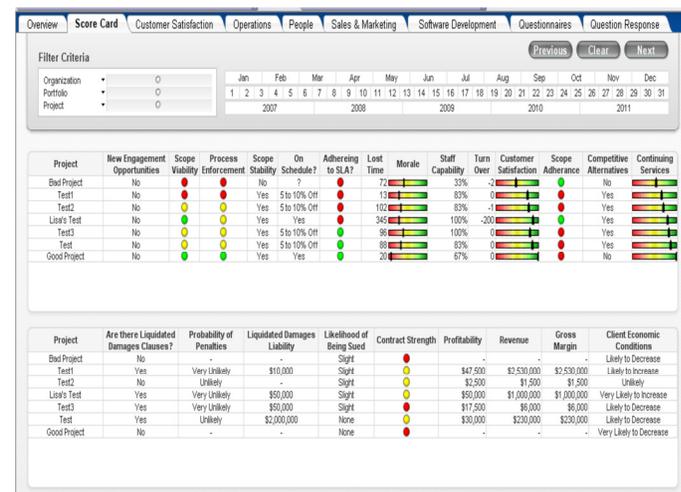
The success of IT development projects and support initiatives depends on great project managers, realistic estimates and expectations, and adherence to robust best practices. Manager's that can communicate, have knowledge and experience, provide insight to management, and are proactive in assessing and escalating risks are critical to the IT organization's success.

These managers know that mitigating IT project failure and ensuring the successful completion of IT projects can be achieved as a result of emphasizing six critical success factors:

- Known and consistently used best practices
- Visibility into expended effort
- Awareness of potential risks
- Monitoring and managing expended effort to estimates and expectations
- Effective quality assurance reviews
- Leverage experience and learn from mistakes

The APO Solution

To address the needs of the IT organization, CAI developed Automated Project Office (APO). The tool offers a unique, practical solution for managing risk throughout the entire IT organization. The backbone of APO is a knowledge base that starts with lessons learned from actual experience and proven best practices from a variety of industries and IT organizations and incorporates existing or company-specific practices and processes. This allows APO to deliver an extensive knowledge base upon implementation and grow with ongoing use. Along with an intuitive, easy to use risk management process, we have assembled the summation of numerous key features into a unique tool.



Hindsight is 20/20. One of the problems with risks associated with developing and maintaining applications is that they are often not recognized until they are realized. Or, if they are recognized early, they are often left to chance.

APO takes steps to remedy this situation. Through non-invasive questionnaires, APO invites team members and stakeholders to provide quantitative and qualitative status updates on a predefined timeline. The questionnaires, which are the heart of the risk recognition strategy, are in a simple multiple choice format that address potential risks related to the current phase of the SDLC and the respondent's role. Out of the box questions can be configured to meet the needs of the specific organization. The answers are weighted, and through a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) APO identifies areas that are of concern for the well-being of the project as a whole.

Conclusion

APO is a robust, complex system which is simple to use. The application is based on a SaaS foundation and is fast and easy to implement, requiring minimal startup effort. At a high-level APO:

- Provides visibility into accurate real-time project status so you're not surprised
- Has "at your fingertips" access to data and opinions about important activities and efforts
- Ensures consistent quality assurance and risk assessment processes
- Enforces processes and standards through continuous monitoring

- Has the ability to immediately incorporate lessons learned into organizational processes
- Provides efficient and effective governance

Conversely, APO is not:

- Replacement for MS Project or any other detailed project management or scheduling system
- Complete substitute for certain detailed, highly regimented, project reviews.

Key features of APO include:

- Best practice assessments to identify risks
- Portfolio risk roll-up
- Issue management
- Key performance indicators dashboard
- Exception alerts and reporting
- User defined data and reporting
- Historic trends
- Risk scoring
- Customizable risk assessment framework

APO provides an extensive range of user defined content and performance. Questions can be tailored to specific company policies, and answers can be weighted to reflect importance. KPIs or thresholds can be defined at multiple levels of roll ups to manage when notification will change status and draw attention.

The application can be molded to fit any existing project office model or portfolio management office efforts. Essentially, the APO can be customization to fit any situation.