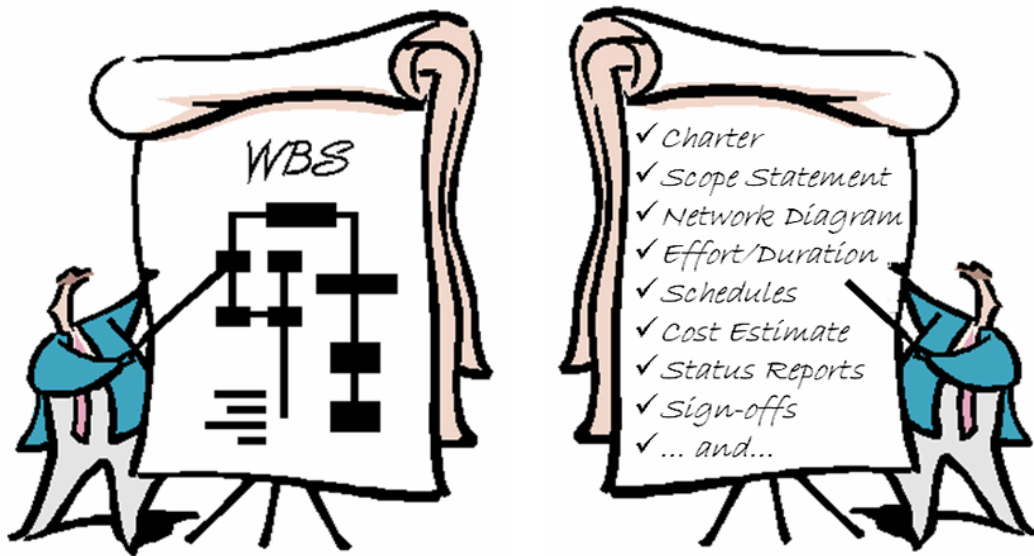


The PM Minimalist Quick Start Guide: *The Absolute Least You Can Do!*

A Web-Published Tool by Michael Greer
Michael Greer's PM (Project Management) Resources –
<http://michaelgreer.biz/PM-Minimalist-Quick-Start-Guide-Ver-2.pdf>



▲ Included here:

- ☑ **Project Management Minimalist Quick Start Checklist**
- ☑ **Quick Start Post Mortem Worksheet: Audit, Adjust, & Keep It Simple!**
- ☑ **PM Minimalist Values Checklist**
- ☑ **PM Minimalist Values Explained**

Overview

This Quick Start Guide is designed to help you plan and manage your first project using the PM Minimalist approach, as detailed in the e-book *The Project Management Minimalist: Just Enough PM to Rock Your Projects!*

You don't need the e-book to follow the steps outlined here. After all, they are "the absolute least you can do." So they don't involve anything that is all that complicated. **However, the e-book contains worksheets and guidelines that might help** you do these Minimalist chores more quickly and easily. So it's your call; get the e-book for reference or just follow the Quick Start Checklist without it.

Contents

- ☑ *Project Management Minimalist Quick Start Checklist*
- ☑ *Quick Start Post Mortem Worksheet: Audit, Adjust, & Keep It Simple!*
- ☑ *PM Minimalist Values Checklist*
- ☑ *PM Minimalist Values Explained*

Instructions

- ▲ Use this Guide to plan and manage your first project using the *Project Management Minimalist* approach.
- ▲ If you feel you must add more PM tools or processes, then go to *The Project Management Minimalist* e-book's, "Nuts and Bolts" section and add only the extra stuff you really need.
- ▲ **REMEMBER: Keep it simple!**

This Document Copyright © 2011 by Michael Greer

But you're welcome to share it with anyone, as long as you copy it intact, links and all!

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, the author assumes no responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein. The author wants to emphasize that the information contained herein may not be in accordance with various recommended practices within specific organizations. The material represents the author's preferred practices and processes based on the author's professional experience in various organizations and industries.

The author assumes no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any purchaser or reader of these materials. Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

✓ Michael Greer, email: pm.minimalist@gmail.com or visit <http://michaelgreer.biz>

Quick Start Checklist: The Absolute Least You Can Do

*Get your project rolling quickly, with Minimum effort, by doing these Minimum chores. (For more info on each, see the suggested section in **The Project Management Minimalist**.)*

- Mini-Charter:** Write a one paragraph description of your project's tangible finished product. Get this reviewed & approved by your boss or customer.
*(See Step 1: Define the project concept, then get support and approval. *)*
- Team:** Get together everyone who'll help build the finished product, who'll use it, or who might cause trouble or force it to be changed if they don't like it.
*(See Step 2: Get your team together and start the project. *)*
- Go wide:** Working as a team, brainstorm to create a "wide view" list of "wished for" deliverables. (Pretend you could build anything you wanted on this list.)
*(See Step 3: Figure out exactly what the finished work products will be. *)*
- Slash & Burn:** Working as a team, divide the "wide view" list of deliverables into three equal-sized lists: 1) Those we "must build," 2) Those we "could build," and 3) Those we "can wait to build."
*(See Step 3: Figure out exactly what the finished work products will be. *)*
- The To-Do/Assignment List:** Working as a team, list the tasks required to create the "must build" items and assign these tasks to specific people.
*(See Step 4: Figure out what to do... & Step 2 [Responsibility/Acct. Matrix]. *)*
- The Schedule:** Still working as a team, make your "best guess" about how long it will take to complete each task. Then, referring to a calendar, make a schedule. Include each task, specific deadlines, dates, and the names of people assigned to each task. (**CAUTION:** If your project schedule exceeds 1 month, try to break it into a series of smaller projects.)
*(See Step 5: Estimate time, effort, resources & Step 6: Build a schedule. *)*
- Get started:** Do the tasks as described in the schedule.
*(See Steps 8: Keep ... moving, 9: Handle scope changes, & 10: Close out... *)*
- Inspect and correct:** While the project is under way, find out:
 - Are "must build" items on time?
 - Are "must build" items of high enough quality?
 - Is everyone doing what they promised?
 - Do people need more help or need obstacles removed?
 - What must we correct or fix to finish the project on time?*(See Steps 8: Keep ... moving, 9: Handle scope changes, & 10: Close out... *)*
- Post Mortem & Lessons Learned:** When the project is over, look back & figure out how you could have improved it. List Lessons Learned, then use them to make you next project better.
*(See Step 10: Close out phases, close out the project. *)*

** For detailed info on this Step (i.e., Results, Process, Tools/Worksheets, etc.) see **The Project Management Minimalist: Just Enough PM to Rock Your Projects!** (http://michaelgreer.biz/?page_id=636)*

Quick Start Post Mortem Worksheet: Audit, Adjust, & Keep It Simple!

After you've used your Quick Start Checklist (preceding) to manage at least one project, use this Worksheet to figure out if you need to do less (drop some processes or tools), do more (add some processes or tools), or change your PM approach.

(For examples of some tools you might want to add or use as inspiration for your own custom-made tools, see the suggested section in **The Project Management Minimalist**.)

- Mini-Charter:** Write a one paragraph description of your project's tangible finished product. Get this reviewed & approved by your boss or customer.
(See Step 1: Define the project concept, then get support and approval. *)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- Team:** Get together everyone who'll help build the finished product, who'll use it, or who might cause trouble or force it to be changed if they don't like it.
(See Step 2: Get your team together and start the project. *)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- Go wide:** Working as a team, brainstorm to create a "wide view" list of "wished for" deliverables. (Pretend you could build anything you wanted on this list.)
(See Step 3: Figure out exactly what the finished work products will be. *)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- Slash & Burn:** Working as a team, divide the "wide view" list of deliverables into three equal-sized lists: 1) Those we "must build," 2) Those we "could build," and 3) Those we "can wait to build."
(See Step 3: Figure out exactly what the finished work products will be. *)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

The Project Management Minimalist Quick Start Guide: The Absolute Least You Can Do!

- The To-Do/Assignment List:** Working as a team, list the tasks required to create the “must build” items and assign these tasks to specific people.
(See Step 4: Figure out what to do...& Step 2 [Responsibility/Acct. Matrix].*)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- The Schedule:** Still working as a team, make your “best guess” about how long it will take to complete each task. Then, referring to a calendar, make a schedule. Include each task, specific deadlines, dates, and the names of people assigned to each task. (**CAUTION:** If your project schedule exceeds 1 month, try to break it into a series of smaller projects.)
(See Step 5: Estimate time, effort, resources & Step 6: Build a schedule. *)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- Get started:** Do the tasks as described in the schedule.
(See Steps 8: Keep ... moving, 9: Handle scope changes, & 10: Close out...*)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- Inspect and correct:** While the project is under way, find out:
 - Are “must build” items on time?
 - Are “must build” items of high enough quality?
 - Is everyone doing what they promised?
 - Do people need more help or need obstacles removed?
 - What must we correct or fix to finish the project on time?

(See Steps 8: Keep ... moving, 9: Handle scope changes, & 10: Close out...*)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	Notes:
--	--------

- ❑ **Post Mortem & Lessons Learned:** When the project is over, look back & figure out how you could have improved it. List Lessons Learned, then use them to make you next project better.

*(See Step 10: Close out phases, close out the project. *)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do less?• Do more?• Change process?• Change tool?	<i>Notes:</i>
--	---------------

** For detailed info on this Step (i.e., Results, Process, Tools/Worksheets, etc.) see **The Project Management Minimalist: Just Enough PM to Rock Your Projects!** (http://michaelgreer.biz/?page_id=636)*

Suggested Process for Using This Tool...

1. Ask each of your key team members or other important project stakeholders who may have strong opinions about the Quick Start PM processes or tools to work alone and complete the worksheet above.
2. Organize a meeting in which you all compare notes on your worksheets and decide how you will change your PM processes or tools for your next project.
3. Try another project using your modified Minimalist process.

Remember: Unless there's a really strong case for making things more complicated – keep it simple!

PM Minimalist Values Checklist

Got a difficult decision to make about your project? If you're determined to "go Minimalist" with your PM practices, keep these PM Minimalist Values* in mind as you make your decision:

- Create fewer deliverables with fewer features.
- Do less work.
- Absorb or neutralize (but don't ignore) anyone who can reject or rethink your deliverables.
- Work as fast as quality permits – maybe faster!
- Deliver something – anything – as soon as possible.
- "Make it real" as often as possible with models, mock-ups, prototypes, & samples.
- Revise or reject something as soon as possible.
- Give up on the project earlier; cut your losses.
- Ignore external-to-the-project "professionals" who would have you puff up the project or its work processes.
- Enjoy creating; don't put up with simply slogging through.

* Want more info about each of these PM Minimalist Values? Turn the page...

PM Minimalist Values Explained

These PM Minimalist Values may be applied to any project in any industry or professional practice. The object of each of these is to **challenge you to apply “just enough” project management (PM) discipline to your projects** to keep them running smoothly, **while challenging you to drop the PM stuff that bloats** your schedules & makes people crazy.

*(The “nuts and bolts” tools to support PM Minimalism are not discussed here. See **The Project Management Minimalist** e-book [http://michaelgreer.biz/?page_id=636] for specific, practical tools to help your project team to “hit the ground running.”)*

Create fewer deliverables with fewer features.

Every deliverable, every feature shoots out tendrils and roots all through your project. Every little item you leave on your wish list will chew up time and effort as your team works to define it, create it, revise it, and finalize it. So the object of the game here is to consciously set out to create a little less than you might need. That way, when the inevitable swelling of your deliverables or list of features happens, your budget and schedule aren't completely blown away. (And who knows: Starting with a lean set of deliverables and features might force the team to create a cleaner, more elegant finished product!)

Do less work.

In an ideal world, project deliverables would be built by experts who, working all by themselves, take exactly the right actions and expend “just enough” effort to get a great finished product. And, in this ideal world, these experts wouldn't need to sync their work with reviewers or other experts or anyone else. They'd just do what needs done and get great results. Unfortunately, most of us can't work like this. We almost always have to involve other people and use review/revise cycles to build our deliverables through a series of successive approximations. But that doesn't mean we should allow the work process to get so complex that it sucks all the joy out of the practice of our professions.

So here's the test: Ask your experts – the people who are building your deliverables – to tell you the fewest number of steps they would use to complete their work if it were up to them, working all by themselves. Then compare your experts' minimalist list of steps to the usual list of steps your projects endure. What can you cut? How can you streamline? How can you do “just enough” work to get the job done, without making people jump through a bunch of unnecessary hoops? The object of the game: Do less work, while making sure the work you must do has real added value.

Absorb or neutralize (but don't ignore) anyone who can reject or rethink your deliverables.

Usually the most irritating and demoralizing challenge any project team faces is unnecessary rework – being forced to redo your deliverables because somebody has “come out of the woodwork” with their own unique specifications and perspectives and challenged what you are doing. What a waste of time!

There are two ways to deal with this situation. You can prevent it from happening by making sure you include on your project team, right from the start, everybody who has this “reject or rethink” power. In other words, you absorb them into the team and

make their thinking part of the project definition. On the other hand, if they can't or won't work on your team, there's only one thing to do: You gotta neutralize them. And you do this by getting some sort of formal approval, preferably in writing, from your sponsor or customer that it's okay to simply disregard this person's input.

One thing's certain: You can't just ignore them. If you try, they will eventually (maybe after you've invested loads of hours and money in your project), start screaming and you'll be stuck with a major "do over." So deal with them the right way: Absorb them into the team or formally neutralize them with your sponsor or customer's support.

Work as fast as quality permits – maybe faster!

Everyone wants a quality finished product. But that doesn't mean that you have to slowly and methodically polish everything before you hand it off for review or hand it over to the next team member for their enhancement. Most projects can't afford such perfectionism.

In fact, there are three reasons why perfectionism doesn't make sense for most projects. First, perfectionism is often nothing more than an idiosyncratic perspective held by one person – a different person looking at the same product might define "perfect" in a different way. Second, almost all projects that involve more than one person are iterative – the deliverables are almost always "works in progress" that are continually evolving by moving from person to person and getting tweaked in one way or another. So trying to get them perfect before you hand them off can be a waste of time. Finally, perfectionism simply takes too long and is impossible to achieve. Anything that has ever been created by any human is subject to the view held by another human that it could be improved in some way. So there is no "perfect."

The point: Your project team should forget about wasting time on perfectionism and instead work as fast as they can to get reasonably good results.

Deliver something – anything – as soon as possible.

The object of the game here is to "smoke out" any objections or desired changes from reviewers as early as possible. This way you are less likely to invest a lot of time in building something only to have reviewers ask you to build it differently. By giving them something to look at early (no matter how raw), you get a chance to modify it early. This saves everyone time. And it saves your experts the frustration of having to make changes to something in which they've invested a lot of effort and creativity.

"Make it real" as often as possible with models, mock-ups, prototypes, & samples.

The object of the game here is the same as in the suggestion above: to "smoke out" any objections or desired changes as early as possible. However, the emphasis here is on transforming vague or abstract specifications into tangible realities that reviewers can experience more accurately. So, for example, instead of looking at a list of written specs that require them to imagine what's coming, they get to handle a model or a prototype and come to know more deeply what you're doing. Either way the goal is the same: less rework and fewer painful changes.

- Revise or reject something as soon as possible.

Are you seeing a theme here? The preceding two suggestions were designed to help your team find out about objections and desired changes ASAP. This suggestion extends that same theme: Take action quickly to revise – or reject, if necessary – any of your project’s work products that aren’t working right. In this way you can salvage as much of your schedule and budget as you can instead of allowing broken deliverables to suck up too much time or effort.

- Give up on the project earlier; cut your losses.

You gotta know when to quit, already! If you are reworking and reworking and getting nowhere or if you are begging for resources that never appear or if you are trying to build something that just doesn’t seem to want to be built... it may be time to just bag it and cut your losses. Remember: If you want people to work with you again on another project or if you want your boss or customer to trust your ability to handle another project in the future, you need to have the courage (supported by a well-documented set of reasons) to walk away when it’s time.

- Ignore external-to-the-project “professionals” who would have you puff up the project or its work processes.

There are at least six major, well-known PM certification bodies and many, many less obscure PM groups who would like you to do things their way. And there are countless organizations representing other professionals who may represent particular specialists on your project team. This is almost certain: If you perform all the professional “best practices” of most of these organizations, your project is likely to get more complicated and maybe even become severely bloated.

You don’t need a degree in medicine to practice CPR. And you don’t need professional certification to decide for yourself what constitutes a set of “best practices” for your project team. So take charge: You and the experts on your team decide what you mean by “just enough” deliverables and “just enough” work processes. Then ignore all those external-to-the-project “professionals” and tell them to mind their own business!

- Enjoy creating; don’t put up with simply slogging through.

Projects are the most goal-oriented of human endeavors. And if you spend most of your life working on projects, as so many of our project team members do, you can develop an uneasy, ever-present sense that you are never really finished. There’s a continual nagging feeling that you’ve not completed your work because the next goal is endlessly popping up in front of you, demanding your attention.

So where’s the joy in the work itself? What about the intrinsic value of your chosen profession? The beauty and fascination of the field itself? **If you want people to be able to keep their edge, maintain their creativity, and continue to choose to be part of your organization’s work force, you’ll make sure they get some enjoyment out of their projects.**

How? That’s up to you. After all, it’s your organization. You need to take responsibility for shaping its work practices and culture. **But you can start by making sure you’re doing “just enough” PM to enhance the work – and not so much that you smother the life out of it.**

Learn More

- ☑ **10 Steps to Project Success (from The Project Management Minimalist)**
(free 1-page PDF download) <http://michaelgreer.biz/10steps.pdf>
- ☑ **The Project Management Minimalist: Just Enough PM to Rock Your Projects!** [The e-book] http://michaelgreer.biz/?page_id=636
- ☑ **Free Video Series: Become a Project Management Minimalist**
<http://michaelgreer.biz/?p=930>
- ☑ **Become a Project Management Minimalist** (free 37-minute podcast & blog post w/team Challenges) <http://www.inspiredprojectteams.com/?p=1272>
- ☑ **PM Minimalist Selected by Laureate Education for use in Walden University**
<http://michaelgreer.biz/?p=1078>
- ☑ **Do-It-Yourself PM Certification: How to Document Your Skills & Get the Credibility You've Earned without Jumping Through Someone Else's Hoops --** <http://michaelgreer.biz/Do-It-Yourself-PM-Certification.pdf>
- ☑ **Michael Greer's Customized, On-Site PM Workshops --**
http://michaelgreer.biz/?page_id=55

Want to adopt **PM Minimalism** throughout your organization? Then check out this tool:

- ☑ **The PM Minimalist Integration Guide: Adopting Project Management Minimalism in Your Organization**
<http://michaelgreer.biz/PM-Minimalist-Integration-Guide-Ver-1.pdf>

Provides tools to help your organization gradually integrate Project Management Minimalist practices, including these three sets of guidelines:

- ✓ Integration Stage 1: Proof of Concept
- ✓ Integration Stage 2: Limited Practice
- ✓ Integration Stage 3: Extended Practice