KEYEDIN®

Make the Journey from Spreadsheets to Purpose-Built Project Portfolio Management Software

How to easily travel from static, unwieldy data to a holistic, collaborative, centralized solution

KEYEDIN®

CHALLENGES:

1. Underperforming business

2. Disparate systems leading to inefficient communication and management

3. Costly, uncontrolled, scope creep and firefighting

4. Lack of visibility into resource planning

TAKEAWAYS:

1. Enhance control, transparency and collaboration to drive organizational strategy

2. Get your PMO out of spreadsheets and into a robust solution

3. Build PMO maturity with a portfolio management model and focus on value delivery

The Business Imperative:
Transform Your Project Portfolio from Spreadsheets to Purpose-Built Project Portfolio Management (PPM) Software

If you're like other PMO leaders who are using spreadsheets to manage projects, you are becoming painfully aware of the challenges inherent in this practice. We suspect that you could be starting to feel that the pain of staying with spreadsheets is much greater than embarking upon change. Here are some stats that point out why a change is necessary:

- As the Project Management Institute (PMI) survey for 2018 asserts, underperformers waste 29.1% of project dollars vs. "champions" – those who meet timelines and deliverables for sponsors most often.[i] Many underperformers were likely hobbled by the use of spreadsheets and did not have PM automation to empower their organization's performance.

- 94% of spreadsheets deployed in the field contain errors—and "lack of clarity makes it nearly impossible to control scope creep" – 52% of projects experience scope creep. [ii]

Using spreadsheets to manage a portfolio is like trying to manage the flight path of multiple airplanes while you're piloting a single plane with blinders on. This of course, would lead to a lot of chaos. By contrast, with the right PPM solution, a portfolio manager is like an air traffic controller, with a blip for every project and a plan to keep them all out of trouble, with the people inside safe from harm.

As a project manager trapped inside a spreadsheets-based PMO, you can be at risk, especially in a storm of corporate expectations and tight deadlines. The fact that you can't collaborate effectively using real-time data with the people on the other planes (projects) – can be risky! Not to mention that spreadsheet-based reports are often about a week out-of-date, at best. Here are some other signs you might be flying your project planes into each other and not even know it.

---

i - PMI, Success in Disruptive Times, 2018.

ii - Ibid

Signs that Spreadsheets are Damaging Your Business

In many companies we encounter, the way they used spreadsheets started off okay. However, once complexities increased and the data contained in the spreadsheet included more and more business-critical information, the risk intensified. If any of the following factors apply to your portfolio of projects, you might be on a collision course with your enterprise-wide project management:

Poor collaboration

If you can't store files, comments, or related information in a single spot, you can't maintain one version of the truth. Everyone's flying blind. Plus, the project artifacts that you need to make decisions have to be tracked down in emails or via telephone.

Incomplete information

Only so much data can be stored on a spreadsheet without it becoming unwieldy. As data and reporting elements grow, the data can get out of control, unlike commercial systems that are designed to absorb and even benefit from the growth.

Don't reflect non-financial data

Spreadsheets may be great for numbers and calculations but they're inadequate for qualitative data or for reflecting changes over time.

Manual updates required

Spreadsheets aren't meant for planning, the ability to easily incorporate changes to timelines, or redeploying resources, to name just three functions that are crucial for success. Time should be spend analyzing the data – not gathering it.

No uniformity

Across your company, there are probably as many spreadsheet process flows and structures as there are project managers who originate them. That's like using different time zones for a single airline manifest among a group of international travelers. Typically, only the creator of the spreadsheet will easily be able to make updates while everyone else is trying to figure out the method to the madness.

Lack of flexibility

High complexity projects cause scope creep and spreadsheets-based PMOs are unable to pivot, based on "decision-making being too far removed from changing customer demands."

How a PPM Solution Can Get Your Portfolio on the Right Flight Path

Following is a simple comparison of the benefits you realize when the right project portfolio management tool is used to replace your spreadsheets.

Limitations of Spreadsheets	How the PPM solution can help
Poor collaboration	All project notes and data stored in a system
Incomplete and siloed information	Centralized data and permissions for anyone needing access; at any level
Don't reflect non-financial data, time-series	Qualitative, subjective data and comments stored. Easily integrate with financial, CRM and Agile systems as needed.
Manual updates	Input data once and it can be universally used. Mobile accessibility for easy updating and noitifications
No uniformity or control – scope creep	Templates and overarching governance and compliance
Not responsive - from changing customer demands. Updates made to one area won't reflect impact to another.	Easy to use what-if scenarios to assess risk and approve changes
Data security breaches	Cloud-based storage and security. Easily share and revoke access as needed

How to Get on Board in Five Steps

- Whether you are just getting started with formal PMO processes or looking to advance your PMO maturity, you benefit from using a Portfolio Project Management solution and allow it to aide in your path to PMO maturity. PMI's assessment helps you to understand where you are on the maturity scale.[iv] You can gain a competitive advantage by doing this because: "**Fewer than 1 in 10 organizations report having very high maturity with their value delivery**"[v] But if you can improve in any of the following five areas of PM, you will be amazed at the benefits you will realize. When process improvements combine with automation, the efficiencies gained create exponential growth and maturity.

iv - PMI, How to assess the maturity of a PMO, 2012.

v - PMI Pulse of the Profession, 2018

1 Provide Continuous Planning and Assessment to Focus Investments.

As delivery cycles get shorter, organizations must also shorten strategic review cycles. You will find that biweekly portfolio checks keep everything moving at an acceptable cadence, while monthly strategic assessments enable you to identify opportunities and potential risks. In a recent survey of project managers only 59% of respondents mostly or always create a scoping document as part of planning, and only 48% mostly or always baseline their project schedules prior to kickoff.[vi] When your first step is ensuring this continual monitoring of investments, you can rise above your competitors with projects that deliver timely revenue generation opportunities.

2 Forecast to Minimize Risk and Lock Down a True Picture of Your Resource Needs.

The project and portfolio managers working right now are clear about one thing: Resource Issues are always a top-ten challenge, and often among the top three.[vii] While reviewing a PPM solution, make sure it can manage all of your resource allocation needs and help you to deploy intelligently to gain strategic portfolio power.

3 Use a Central Repository of Data for Clarity and a "Single Version of Truth."

When reporting changes or issues among a project array impact budget or timelines, many organizations raise issues like help desk managers log user calls. But if you do not have access to all of these threats across all of the projects, you don't have the visibility you need to track performance metrics. Today, "55% of project managers do not have access to real time project KPIs with nearly 50% spending 1 or more days manually collating project reports to gain clarity on the subject.[viii]" That's why number three on our list requires you to put templates, governance and clear metrics in place across the board so that you can measure what's happening against the yardstick of success in your particular portfolio.

---

vi - State of Project Management Survey 2018 Wellingtone

vii - Ibid

vii - Ibid

4 **Capture Budget vs. Actual Data Points.**

Spreadsheet users report that they can't drill down and interrogate the data effectively enough to keep control of budgets. That always limits organizational growth because you can't make effective tactical decisions or identify strategic opportunities. To move from spreadsheet-based data to a PPM solution requires a migration path that captures as much historical data as possible. You should also integrate with CRM systems all the way across to accounting to become a "control tower" and gain an accurate and complete picture of the value of your project delivery. The opportunity cost of those projects you could have finished or even started, will add up, keeping your PMO constantly "in the red."

5 **Track in Real Time.**

Today, "93% of organizations use standardized practices for time and expense reporting" [ix] to reduce risks and lead to better outcomes. Real-time T&E tracking not only controls project costs, but also keeps the highest value resources on board as assets. The last bare-minimum function you will want to implement is to ensure your centralized tool provides the insight to uncover "real project costs" that are trapped in disparate spreadsheets and draining your assets—people and financial—every day.

---

ix - Pulse of the Profession, page 6.

Your Checklist for a Smoother Journey

When you make the transition from spreadsheet-based to a PPM system-based PMO, make sure you do this in a manner that combines ease-of-implementation with a results-focused outcome. Here are tips to keep your journey comfortable and effective.

✅ Understand that formal project management improves success.

✅ Create a simple list of requirements and start researching. You use the above steps to compile your initial needs, and begin researching. Or, to streamline the process, you can use our PMO Buyers Guide for a checklist to get started.

✅ Evaluate the must-haves and nice-to-haves. Understand what you absolutely need to have and what is a 'nice to have' before you start looking at solutions and get distracted from what's important to you.

✅ Start simple, but ensure your system can grow or mature with you. Use a solution that isn't overkill today but also allows for as much future growth as needed.

✅ Try to avoid changes on top of changes- asking too much of user groups for a comfortable and effective implementation.

✅ Find a solution that transitions easily from spreadsheets.

✅ Understand where the biggest struggle is – and where the biggest impact will be—identifying the highest current risks to the portfolio will often yield your biggest impact.

✅ Don't forget the five key elements of PPM success mentioned in the previous section.

Counting the Costs: Staying on the Ground with Spreadsheets

The cost of not acting on this guidance might be higher than your PMO can pay. Consider this, if "9.9% of every dollar is wasted due to poor project performance—that's $99 million for every $1 billion invested" (or, if you prefer, $990,000 per $10 million). When your poor project performance is based on siloed information; poor collaboration; poor governance and creep control; and inaccurate or intermittent communication with executive sponsors - chances are you have a fragmented system based on spreadsheets.

Once you examine the actual ROI of automation (250% ROI in the first year, average) and factor in lost budget; scope creep and deliverable delays - never mind all of those low-strategy projects you shouldn't have started in the first place - you will be able to determine the true value of takeoff on your spreadsheet-to-automation journey. Embark today by calling us for a free trial.

Safely Reaching Your Final Destination: Example of Successful Spreadsheet Change

If you understand which of your struggles with spreadsheets need to be overcome first, you're well on your way to capturing the benefits of change. Start simply but be sure that your new solution can grow with you. In one instance, ISG, a leading global technology research and advisory firm, was able to take disparate spreadsheets that they used to allocate resources and gather all of their resource utilization needs in KeyedIn Projects. Once they did so, the increased visibility led to utilization numbers at around 85% for their entire service delivery workforce, resulting in improved ROI and a measurable jump in customer satisfaction. Says Michael Kemp from ISG's Energy practice, "We used to catch up verbally during weekly meetings to allocate resources and gain limited visibility for future utilization. But now, with KeyedIn, we have all of our utilization numbers available in the system to make better decisions, adding value to our client work and helping to protect our profit margins."

About KeyedIn® Projects

KeyedIn Projects, established in 2011, is comprised of industry professionals with deep experience in project management. With 400-plus customers worldwide, our goal is to enable your PMO to be more strategic, more efficient, and deliver greater business impact by allowing you to easily forecast and allocate resources, create and analyze portfolios, gain visibility to all your projects, and discover new insights through dynamic PPM analytics.

We offer a simple upgrade path for organizations getting started with PPM.

Keep up with us at www.keyedin.com

KEYEDIN®

Corporate Headquarters

8500 Normandale Lake Blvd
Suite 400
Bloomington, MN 55437, USA
p +1 866 662 6820

EMEA Headquarters

Maple House
Woodland Park
West Yorkshire, BD19 6BW, UK
p +44 (0)1274 863300

www.keyedin.com