Is good project management software enough?

What constitutes 'good software'? A blog by 'Dan the Project Management Man' reminded me of an on on-line survey that looked at purchaser's satisfaction with project management and business analysis software tools. Only 1.2% of the 270 respondents felt their software purchase had exceeded expectations and another 9.3% felt the software had met all of their requirements. Allowing for the natural bias in the survey – people complain more readily then they praise there were still useful findings.

According to the respondents, the key ingredient missing from most sales was integrated training (71%) and software specific training (36.6%). But on its own, training is not going to solve the problem. A key finding was *"The survey findings do not indicate project management and business analysis software is deficient, but rather that too often, the maturity of the organization and the skill level of its people are not effectively aligned for the tools to deliver their maximum ROI."*

Project management software at best supports a project management methodology, at worst, just a project management process. But to paraphrase Bill Gates, *'if you have and efficient system, automating the system will magnify the benefits, if the system is deficient, automation will magnify the problems'*.

I would suggest integrated training to align people's skills and knowledge with an effective methodology, supported by effective project management software, is only 10% of the battle. Doing your projects 'right' is important but choosing the 'right projects to do' is far more important and this links to the capability of the organization to exploit the 'output' created by the project to achieve its desired 'outcomes'[1].

The quest for an effective ROI, that delivers business benefits (ie, real value to the organization), lies in other areas including:

- Effective portfolio management to select the right projects to do[2].
- Effective program and business change management to achieve the maximum value from the project deliverables. This is a business management issue, not a project management issue![3]
- Effective organization enablers and 'project delivery capability' (PDC) that supports the efficient execution of project work[4].

These objectives require two key elements:

1. Effective Governance of the overall project delivery process. The 'Governance of Project Management' is an area of emerging importance in the overall governance of an organization[5].
2. A commitment to improving the overall maturity of an organizations Portfolio, Program and Project Management capabilities. To be effective, this commitment has to be lead by the CEO.

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[1] For more on the **value chain** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1023_Benefits_and_Value.pdf

[2] For more on Portfolio Management see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1017_Portfolios.pdf

[3] For more on Organisational Change Management see:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1078_Change_Management.pdf

[4] For more on project delivery capability see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1079_PDC.pdf

[5] For more on governance see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1033_Governance.pdf

Some of the key tools to assist in the quest for enhanced maturity include:

- PMI's Portfolio and Program Management Standards and the *PMBOK® Guide*[6]
- Similar tools from the UK Government's **Best Management Practices** portfolio including P3M3 and PRINCE2[7]

My conclusions is that once an organization has good systems, then it can select good software (with proper support and training) to support its governance procedures – trying to reverse process does not work!

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[6] For more on the PMI Standards, Australian sales and information on free downloads for PMI members see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Books.html

[7] For more on the UK Government sponsored standards see: http://www.best-management-practice.com/