

# Post13 – Vendor Best Practice

*This is a 5-minute read that makes the case for a disciplined approach to selling and delivering a contracted project. This is a vendor responsibility, and a stepping-stone to the long-term goal of client/vendor collaboration that Robin believes is the key to real gains in productivity and project success rates.*

Previous posts (specifically numbers 1, 2, 5, 7, 8) discussed how to make a sound bid decision, the perils of contract life, how to buy and sell professional services, and most recently presented a top-down view of the contract environment derived from [Commercial Project Management](#) (CPM).

In this post I am pulling on a common thread that emerges, which is the need for the vendor to adopt a formal approach to guide the business through the issues arising. Namely, a comprehensive roadmap through all phases of the sales and delivery lifecycle with clarity on what should be done and by whom. This practice is . . . methodology! There, I've said it. But please don't go away just yet. In this post I hope to persuade you that the pros outweigh the cons, outline some of the key components, and introduce a valuable e-solution now available on Google Books.

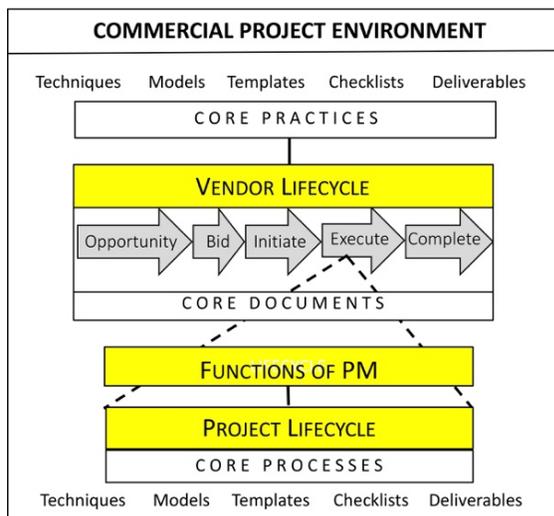
## The Advantages of Methodology

Almost all projects of any complexity profess adherence to one of many waterfall, iterative, or agile methodologies each with their own project lifecycle. And most PMs would claim to follow the guidance of PMBOK® or PRINCE2® methods of management. Then why do business managers ignore the need for frameworks to guide sales and delivery processes? The well-known benefits of repeatability, quality of work, predictability (for planning), would be supplemented by a new ability of vendor management to understand the risks they are entertaining, and control the degree of commitment they are accepting.

But methodologies do have a reputation for inflexibility and paper-work that threatens to erode productivity benefits. The more creative members of our profession also believe they are stifled by road maps and would rather roam free. In the business world, objections are sometimes voiced by sales executives who claim that the time required to engage in formal methods takes away from vital sales effort. I concede that the best practices dealt with in CPM do not require methodology, but I do believe that the added context and procedural detail make it worthwhile.

## Start with a Big Picture

So, if we believe that vendor business management benefits from methodology, a good starting point is to analyse the framework, or *architecture*, that describes the commercial environment. Vendor projects exist in this environment, and if we want to get serious about controlling it (and making a profit), then



we need an architecture that integrates the three views of the project – the project lifecycle generally seen by the client and team members, the project management view, and the vendor's business view. In my experience, working with existing standards on a contracted project is an exercise in frustration, because there is no recognition of the need to integrate these three views, nor any discernible support for the vendor.

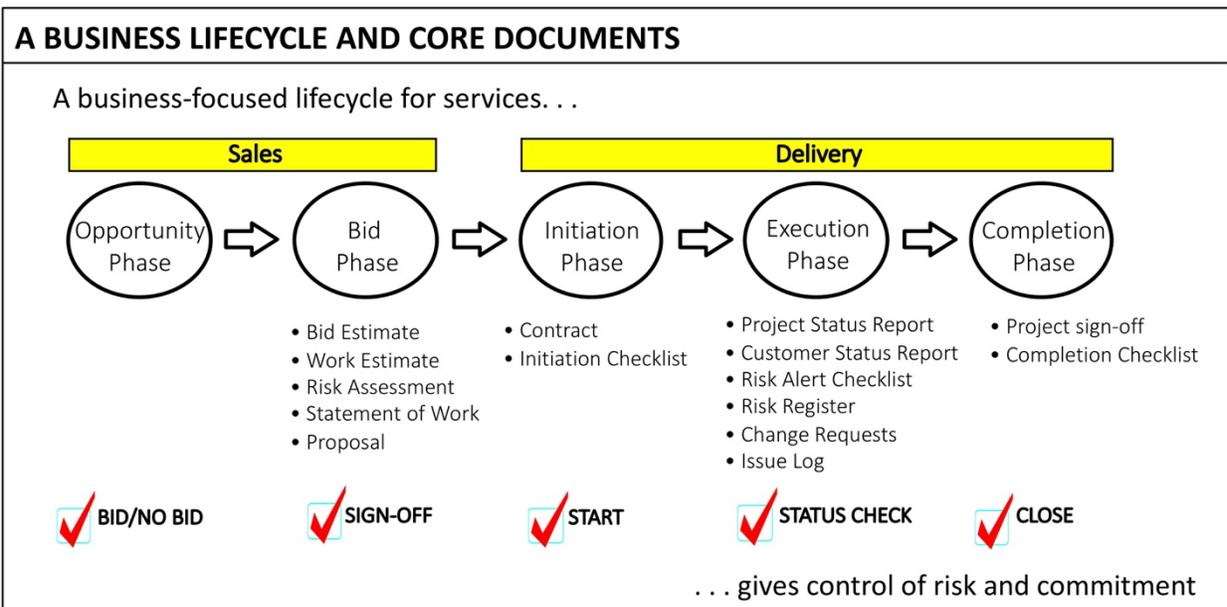
I used this architecture as a roadmap for CPM, which focused primarily on the six CORE PRACTICES, but also spent some time describing the four FUNCTIONS OF PM and integrating them into the PROJECT LIFECYCLE supported by eight CORE PROCESSES. The VENDOR LIFECYCLE was introduced, but the possibility of

## Post13 – Vendor Best Practice

fledging a full methodology was left unchallenged. That is now my goal, using the architecture to ensure proper integration. It is not a means to manage the project, nor to sequence the phases of project work, but to ensure sales are accomplished consistent with the probability of delivery success, and that delivery is managed with the intention of making a profit.

### Managing the Business of Projects

What I am really proposing is a means of managing the business of a project vendor. The framework for this effort is the five-phase business lifecycle, or vendor lifecycle (they are synonymous). Unlike other elements of the architecture, this need not especially concern the client as it is operated by the vendor's delivery manager and deals with risk, commitment, and vendor business decisions. It's a very good model for examining the business of moving from bid/no bid to contract award to project sign-off; the three most significant events for the vendor. It also provides a platform for the collection of valuable project data that can be used by executive to profitably manage the vendor's portfolio of projects.



With the lifecycle now defined, each phase can be developed in terms of goal, objectives, exit criteria, deployment flowchart, practices and processes, documents and deliverables. An array of techniques, checklists, models, and templates can be specified for each phase to be employed as needed.

### The Takeaway

Every successful technical development uses methodology. The project vendor can benefit from this established fact by adopting methodology for their own complex task of selling and delivering a technical project. Of course, this is only a prerequisite for success, not a guarantee. Success in professional services, outlined in CPM, depends on many other factors, including some elements closely related to methodology such as policy, roles and responsibilities, and delegation of authority.

If you are interested in examining and (I hope) implementing an example of such a methodology, I recommend you download [Commercial Delivery Methodology](#) from Google Books. And I would especially welcome feedback on this topic from readers in the professional services business.

Robin Hornby

November 2019

## Post13 – Vendor Best Practice

---

---

*Robin's previous book [Commercial Project Management – A Guide for Selling and Delivering Professional Services](#) published by Routledge is a complete exposé for the commercial environment. The complementary 2-day seminar, delivered in Robin's enthusiastic style, is packed with insider tips, techniques, and (mainly) true cautionary tales. Contact Robin at [tmi@telus.net](mailto:tmi@telus.net). A pdf download of this article can be found at [www.tmipm.com](http://www.tmipm.com)*

---

<https://www.routledge.com/Commercial-Project-Management-A-Guide-for-Selling-and-Delivering-Professional/Hornby/p/book/9781138237681>

[https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Robin\\_Hornby\\_Commercial\\_Delivery\\_Methodology?id=Rbu9DwAAQBAJ](https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Robin_Hornby_Commercial_Delivery_Methodology?id=Rbu9DwAAQBAJ)