



Project or process - why is it so hard to use both?

In each training I give, in each project I'm involved in, in many discussions in LinkedIn groups, I run into the deep-rooted misunderstanding of projects and processes. Just a few minutes ago a question in this context was posted in a LinkedIn group that I'm subscribed to. The poster was not just an ignorant newbie, on the contrary, so I guess he had his reasons to post this question, but nevertheless it triggered me. The question was about the assumed analogy between the Design and Transition stages of ITIL and the PRINCE2 methodology: should the ITIL authors have formatted the life cycle stages in terms of project deliverables? In my opinion, this should be answered with a firm no. They would have made a fundamental mistake if they had done that :-)

Projects are - by definition - independent from processes.

Projects are temporary organization structures with a goal, and once that goal is realized they are dissolved. Processes never disappear and they are repeated endlessly. Projects are a mix of people, process and product. Process is indeed, *just process*. So they can never be the same. But the can use each other.

You can use a project to realize any specific goal of a process. Examples:

- a change can be organized as a process
- a build step of a change can be ...
- a test in a change can be ...
- an implementation of a change can ...
- an incident recovery
- a problem analysis ...
- a refresh of 10 SLAs can....
- a CMDB audit and update....
- a risk determination can..
- developing a capacity plan can...
- etc etc

These all can be done as a project. Common criteria can be:

- the goal is complex
- the goal is expensive
- the project is high risk
- many people involved
- etc.

Projects and processes are independent.

The ITIL Life Cycle is not a life cycle but more of a PDCA, so therefore people are often lead the wrong way. The two steps of the PDCA are often executed as a project because of one or more of the reasons I listed above.

There are good reasons to develop a project management method next to a service management methodology (although ITIL unfortunately is not a method - you'll need ISM Method for that position).

Just think of it.... would we want every change, build step, test program, implementation ("move a PC from room 1 to room 5") to be handled as project? Brrrr....