

Government IT Modernization

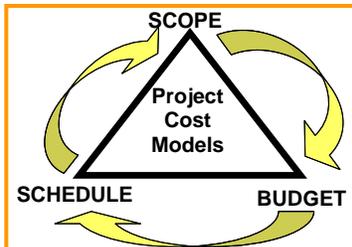
IT Modernization Program Managers are faced with every day challenges such as:

- making the right decisions to maximize the investment of taxpayer dollars
- modernizing a one-of-a-kind system in an environment with significant oversight
- assuring success when there are so many factors that can cause failure

Resolving these challenges certainly isn't easy. However, one civilian government agency found a way to boost their success rate, satisfy the oversight organizations, and surpass their internal goals.

The Challenge

This agency, within the US Government, has undertaken a massive IT modernization program. While any program of this nature has its challenges, this one is significant in that it provides services to both citizens and the government. There are multiple customers at multiple locations with required, desired, and mandated requirements. Thus program and project managers were constantly balancing time, schedule, and resources.



Project cost modeling is the discipline of predicatively calculating project costs and time from scope, thus linking all points of the triangle.

This specific agency had been recognized by several national-level awards for their innovative thinking and approaches to this huge modernization task. However, it wasn't enough.

They wanted to be more effective with their resources. How did they know for sure their contractors were not becoming complacent? How could they be certain they were getting the most for the taxpayers' dollars? Additionally, oversight organizations were pressuring them to develop repeatable methodologies to capture knowledge for reuse throughout the modernization effort.

The Solution

The agency decided on a course of action that included three distinct elements:

1. Create an independent assessment team.
2. Establish a consistent methodology for independent assessments.
3. Train and educate the program and project managers on the value of the independent assessment approach.

The agency believed that by having an independent assessment team, it would:

- help the program managers negotiate requirements,
- provide a basis for program managers and contracts officers to negotiate with their contractors, and
- build the oversight organization's confidence in the agency's ability to effectively manage.

The goal was to make all these things work together thus building a more effective modernization program while continuing to instill an environment of creativity and innovation.

The Step-by-Step Approach

The Independent Assessment Team (IAT) carefully selected projects that had the highest potential for success. These were projects that were showing signs of trouble already and were in the targets of the oversight organization.

The Agency brought in a team of experts, a toolkit of world-class tools including a project cost modeling system, and built an IAT with a capability and confidence. The tools had to be reusable and include a knowledge base that would allow them to build upon.

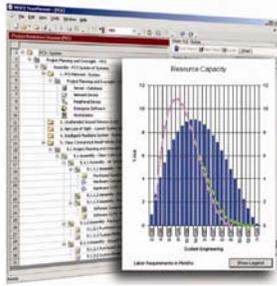
For the initial project, the IAT was given very little information and asked to develop an independent cost estimate. If the project cost modeling system was going to be

valuable, then this was the type of question the team had to be able to answer. What the IAT didn't know is that this project was one that had already been delivered and the government had all the actual costs.

The IAT's results were on target and within a few percentage points of the actual results. This trial case gave the team confidence in the approach as well as confidence in the tools.

One by one, the IAT supported various projects that are part of the overall modernization program. They provided an independent assessment of cost, schedule, and risk. Since the government is funded on an annual basis, keeping those three elements balanced is critical to any program manager's success.

One key to success was the program manager's confidence that an independent team could provide quality assessments when they were not an embedded team member. By the second IAT assessment, this confidence was established. The IAT was able to provide insight into the project, the contractor's bid, and risk areas giving the program manager choices that were clearly documented and auditable – something the oversight organizations appreciate.



The Results

Among the many returns of establishing this discipline is that the agency now has confidence in their estimates and the credibility that comes with it. They are more effective with their resources. They know that their contractors are vigilant and not complacent. They know that they are getting the most for the taxpayers' dollars. Additionally, oversight organizations that were pressuring them to develop repeatable methodologies to capture knowledge for reuse throughout the modernization effort are now satisfied.

PRICE Systems World Headquarters

17000 Commerce Parkway, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

voice 1.856.608.7200 / fax 1.856.608.7247 / www.pricesystems.com

Please contact us at www.pricesystems.com/contact/contact.asp for more information.

PRICE Systems - Washington, D.C.

1700 N. Moore Street, Suite 1100, Arlington, VA 22209

voice: 1.703.740.0087 / fax 1.703.740.0088

The IAT is now a standard part of the agency's program management process. Each program uses the IAT regardless of the difficulty or size of the program. The IAT is building a history of projects and programs that will be reusable. As this historic knowledgebase grows, each program manager will have a stronger basis for running their programs and projects

Another gratifying moment came when the oversight organization audited the IAT processes and determined them to be of high standards. The oversight organization recognized the agency for the creation and implementation of the IAT. Clearly, the agency had met the challenges and had succeeded.

PRICE Systems' Role

As part of the IAT development, the agency chose PRICE Systems to provide:

1. A team of experts in independent cost, schedule, and risk assessment.
2. TruePlanning® Information Technology Life Cycle Estimating Suite as the project cost modeling system.

The PRICE Systems consultants worked with the agency experts to develop a model of each program that highlighted and independently assessed cost, schedule, and risk elements. Each project is modeled in such a way that it is presented to the program office with uncertainty factors for their consideration and action. The results are housed in a database available to all the program offices.

As the agency experience develops, they are able to take on more of the projects themselves without the PRICE Systems consultants. The TruePlanning® Suite gives them a repeatable process that, once learned, can be mastered quickly.

Oversight organizations and agency executives have access to the program information using the PRICE Systems TruePlanning® Executive Portal.

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