

When the Project isn't Ready

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson provides an overview of how to approach a project that is not ready to close, specifically focusing on:

1. Outstanding Issues

In some cases, a project manager will reach the stage where scheduled tasks are complete, but the project is not ready to close due to outstanding issues. When this occurs, the project manager must document these issues and develop a plan to move the project to successful completion.

Issues that might require additional work could be any of the following:

- *Quality or performance:* Deliverables may not meet the standards outlined in the project scope or by the organization.
- *Project scope:* Deliverables may not match the requirements documented in the scope.
- *Sign offs withheld:* Project sponsor or key stakeholders may not feel the project is ready. This might only be a communication issue, and in that case, the project manager should address the issue with the necessary meetings or documentation.
- *Contracts not finalized or in dispute:* All contracts must be closed prior to closing.
- *Outstanding risks:* Any risks that have not been mitigated and might continue into the operation phase would need to be addressed.

The project manager cannot close the project until decisions are made about how to handle outstanding issues. If there are too many issues, the closing period of the project might add considerable time to the schedule.

2. Determining Course of Action

The first decision to make is whether the closing process should start. There are several actions a project manager can take based on what is needed

- Close and Deliver As Is
- Extend The Project

- Close and Start a New Project
- Kill The Project

2a. Close and Deliver As Is

If the benefit of having the deliverables, even with known issues, is greater than not having them at all, then the project is closed and the project manager will document limitations and/or risks.

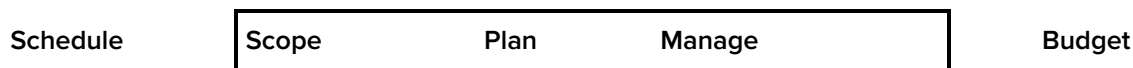
Sometimes though the issues are too large or too numerous to consider immediate closing. If deliverables are not performing to quality or performance standards, or if new deliverables have emerged due to changing business conditions or changing stakeholder expectations, then the project should probably not be closed.

When that occurs, there are three ways to handle a project with such significant outstanding issues.

2b. Extend the Project

The project manager will prepare a schedule and budget for the work needed to address outstanding issues. Approval for the change request will be received.

The project may re-enter at any of the previous phases of the project life cycle. New deliverables will likely require the project to return to the beginning phase and the scoping activity, then proceed through the following phases.



➞ **EXAMPLE** If a project is developing a tablet computer and a direct competitor releases a tablet with the ability to record television, then your project may need to add that feature as well. This would require a return to the scope activity.

Projects are often extended when quality is critical to a product's success, or if it's acceptable to have a time delay if it means the deliverable meets the customer's expectations.

2c. Close and Start a New Project

In this case, the project manager would proceed with the closing process for the existing project with outstanding issues documented. A new project would then be initiated to address the outstanding issues and may or may not be handled by the same team.

This choice might allow the organization to begin using the deliverable from the original project, while work continues to fix the issues with the deliverable. It is often used when the existing deliverable has value to the organization and issues can be fixed incrementally.

➞ **EXAMPLE** This is a good option for software projects when version releases might fix bugs or provide needed improvements.

2d. Kill the Project

This path can be a difficult choice for a project manager to make. However, if they determine that a project is not ready and may never be ready under the current process, a project manager may need to recommend **project termination**.

This might occur when deliverables do not perform as expected:

- In critical life or death products, such as those in the medical industry, a product that does not perform as expected and cannot be fixed should not be released at all.
- Industry or organization changes have made the deliverable or the project unnecessary.
- Placing the deliverable into operation would be too costly for the organization.
- A competing product or new technology has made the project's deliverable obsolete
- There are safety, social, or ethical reasons about the implementation that were not known when the project began so the project must be killed.

If a project is killed, the project manager must still proceed through the closing process since conditions might change in the future that allow the deliverable to be used, or just to document and archive the history of the project.

Should the Project be Closed?	
Yes	No
Close and Deliver As Is: Use when the deliverables need to be implemented without delay to business	Extend Project: Use when the implementation can be delayed to ensure deliverables meet all project requirements and quality standards
	Close and Start New Project: Use when existing deliverables are usable in their current state and then improved upon as part of a new project
	Kill the Project: Use when the project fails to perform as expected and cannot be easily fixed, there are organizational or industry changes, it costs too much, competing products or technology has made the deliverable obsolete, and safety, social, or ethical reasons.



BIG IDEA

When deciding which path to take, the project manager must consult with the project sponsor and the key stakeholders. The decision should be based on factors such as schedule and cost, the availability of funding, and the business needs of the organization. The decision should also be formally approved by the stakeholders and documented by the project manager.



BRAINSTORM

Can you think of a time when you were working on a project that may have fit these requirements, yet proceeded anyway? What happened?



TERM TO KNOW

Project Termination

A decision to not deliver or implement project deliverables.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned a few reasons why there may be **outstanding project issues** identified when evaluating readiness for closing. A few of those issues include delayed sign-off and not meeting the quality or performance outlined within the scope. When a project is not ready to close, a project manager needs to **determine a course of action** such as extending the project or closing it with known risks.

Source: This work adapted from Sophia Author Jeff Carroll.



TERMS TO KNOW

Project Termination

A decision to not deliver or implement project deliverables.