

INTEGRATING THE SELECTION APPROACH WITH OTHER PROJECT AND IT METHODS

BY MARTIN TATE AND MARK WOODWARD

***A COMPANION ARTICLE FOR
OFF-THE-SHELF IT SOLUTIONS:
A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO SELECTION AND PROCUREMENT
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**'If I have seen further than others,
it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.'**

Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727)

1.1 WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THIS ARTICLE

- Assuming that your selection is within a large and mature organisation that has adopted formal methods to control projects and IT, your selection project will need to interface with these methods. This article describes how and where this is likely to happen.



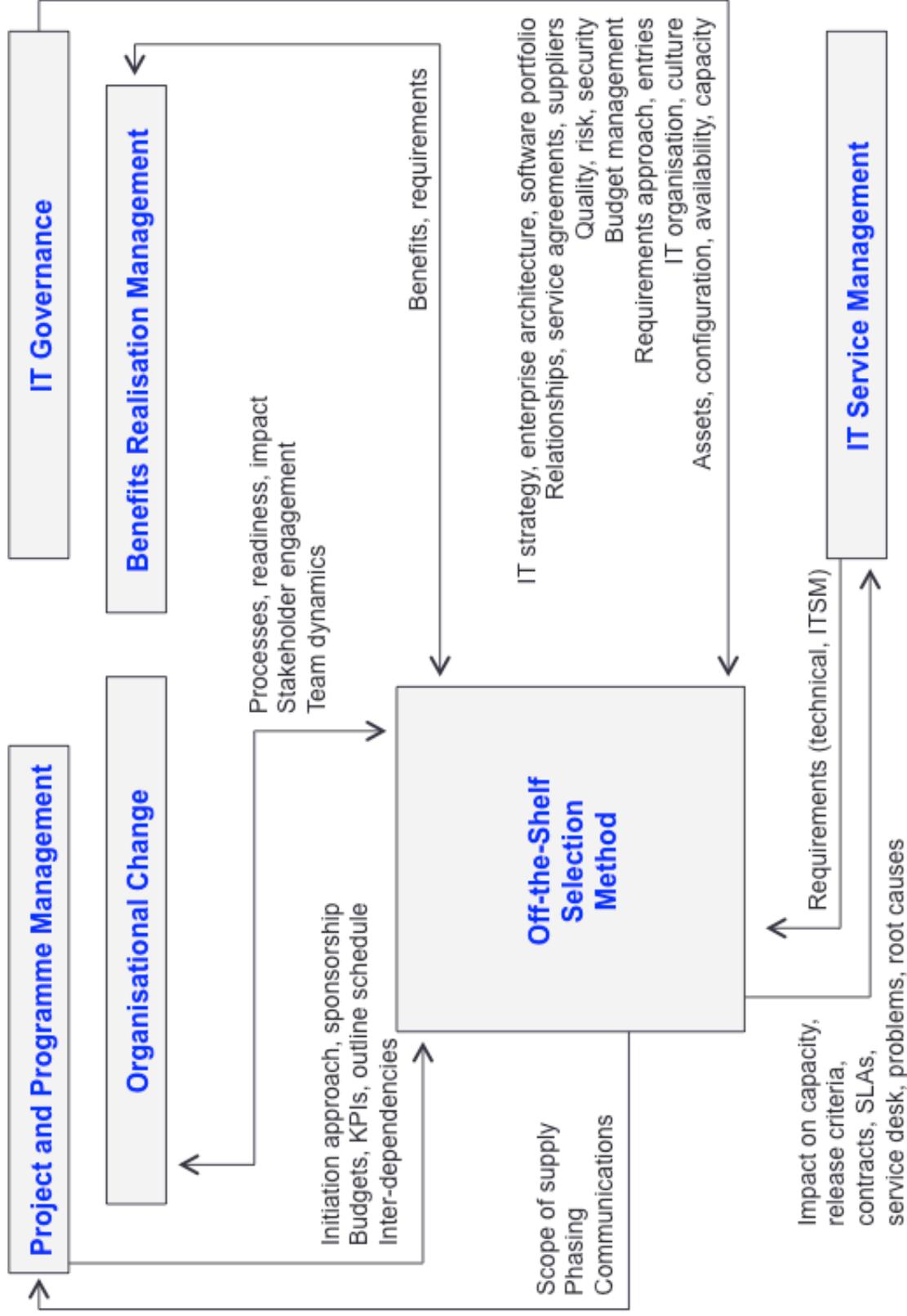
1.2 OVERVIEW

Your selection project does not operate in isolation. While the selection method (Tate, 2015) supported by this article has internal integrity, there will often be other approaches with which you need to dovetail. IT governance and programme management methods – if in place – will shape how you run the selection and how you integrate its outputs within their frameworks. Benefits realisation, change management and IT service management methods will affect information and stakeholders – both providing them to and absorbing them from your selection project. Some time to think through the interplay of your new selection method with your existing frameworks will pay dividends.

Within references to *Section* numbers in the main book, note that the first segment is the chapter number.

See Figure 1 for the flows between the selection method and the other approaches that may be embedded in your organisation. Note this diagram only attempts to show the major flows in or out of your selection project. It does not attempt to show the flows between **all** the different frameworks, which are considerable and outside the scope of this article.

Figure 1 Major touch points when integrating with other frameworks



2. IT GOVERNANCE

For the governance and management of enterprise IT, your organisation might have in place a framework such as COBIT. Such process frameworks will affect your selection, in many ways.

- The process to manage the IT strategy or the overall enterprise architecture may have identified the need for a new or significantly expanded solution to 'fill a hole' in the IT estate. This fact will direct your feasibility study.
- The various discrete but connected processes to manage the software portfolio, the relationships, service agreements, suppliers, quality, risk or security may have revealed incumbent software or its supplier as inadequate, leading you to investigate a replacement.
- The incumbent software may also have been 'condemned' because the process to manage budgets has revealed a prohibitive level of costs – whether administrative labour costs because of insufficient work automation, support costs because of 'creaking' legacy applications or external spend because of continual modifications.
- The process to manage requirements definition will impact **how** you collect the requirements on your selection project. It may also feed in specific, critical **entries** to your requirements document, such as security requirements (see standard requirements at book Section 4.5.5).
- The IT organisational structure and culture – plus processes for change acceptance and transitioning – may shape how you identify stakeholders. As part of this, identifying the project sponsor, which is covered in a more project-specific context in book Section 3.7, will be shaped by your IT governance processes.
- Certainly, during implementation the process to manage assets, configuration, availability and capacity will shape the way you plan and execute the installation.

Frameworks such as COBIT are often 'processes to manage processes' so necessarily permeate nearly all activities on your selection project. Is not possible to predict your own contact points in a general article such as this. Discussing your specific selection with representatives of the governance framework will pay dividends.

3. BENEFITS REALISATION MANAGEMENT

Benefits realisation management (BRM) should drive everything in your specific selection project. It is the setting that 'wraps around' your procurement and is a 'touchstone' throughout. BRM starts before the project and continues after you have signed the contract to procure. It continues until either the planned benefits have all been realised, or the authorising body decides to stop because it cannot justify the effort required to deliver any more of them.

Although this may be an obvious point, in the time-pressed meetings during the evaluation, selection and implementation, you should remind yourself what benefits are expected. Do not be unconsciously distracted from the original benefit statements and the consequent requirements, especially during the meeting that determines the weights for requirements (see book Section 5.7) and in meetings that have a technical focus.

Benefits realisation will also throw up some non-functional requirements, with clear, measurable targets. One example is improved availability of an application or service. If the solution is to be externally hosted, this would affect not only the requirements, but would also (for example) be input to your preparations for negotiating the contract with service level agreements (see book Section 12.4).

- In the context of 'the human dimensions' such as benefits realisation and change, note there is a separate companion article on the softer side of selecting an off-the-shelf solution (Burden and Tate, 2015).



4. PROJECT AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Your organisation might have in place a standard for project and programme management, based on one of the Bodies of Knowledge from the Association for Project Management (APM) or the Project Management Institute (PMI), or a method such as PRINCE2®.

If your organisation uses a formal project approach, the project structure will be in existence before any formal work begins on the procurement. The business case will be established and validated by the project and will identify the expected benefits, the sponsor or executive will have been appointed, and a great deal of the stakeholder analysis will have already been done.

One of the early activities will have been to evaluate alternative approaches to achieving the objectives. If an off-the-shelf selection is the chosen approach, the alternatives may have included evaluating existing software products, or bespoke development. Other decisions may have followed a comparison of internal to external hosting, or a subscription to Software as a Service (SaaS). Understanding such decisions usually provides useful insights. This means that much of the work described in Section 3.5 of the book will have already been done, but this section will allow you to review that before proceeding.

With larger projects and with formal programmes (in the sense of a set of linked projects), there may be **multiple** procurements. The inter-dependencies between these procurements will need to be managed within your project management framework. These include:

- the timing of the procurements and their consequent implementations;
- the dependencies reflected in the overall solution architecture, for example between data that reside in different solutions.

A formal project management approach will impact strongly (and hopefully positively) on the activities described in *Initiation* (Chapter 3). Some of the work should already be done. The impact of an established project management method on your software product selection includes the following aspects.

- Although you may regard your selection project as large, it would probably be treated as a **sub-project** (a work package in PRINCE2® terms) within a wider organisational transformation.
- A formal project structure will shape the process you go through and the formats you use to properly justify and initiate your selection project. The project management approach will help you understand the 'products' (outputs) you need to create throughout the project, such as status reports or user acceptance tests.

- Using a systematic selection method will help ensure the overall project schedule makes sense, with time for reviews. The method ensures most work occurs at predictable periods. For instance, when circulating the requirements document, you will recognise the lead time for comment. Likewise, you must allow adequate time for supplier responses to your requirements, since you need the expertise of people at an outside organisation – a highly-skilled response team will enhance your understanding of product capability (see Sections 7.10 and 8.3.3). A common error in planning is to underestimate or miss out review cycles. When integrating your plan with the overall project plan, ensure this is properly addressed.
- Project sponsorship is also explicitly addressed in the book, with some typical contributions by the executive sponsor covered in Sections 3.7, 3.8, 5.7.3, 12.6.1 and 14.3. In a formal project structure, you will already know who is your sponsor, so their task is to identify their precise role during the selection. The book breaks the daunting task of sponsoring a high-risk project down into manageable chunks, so it is more palatable to a busy senior manager.

The initiation steps covered in Chapter 3 will help you to review what has already been done under your organisation's over-arching project management framework. Some things will have already been addressed, such as cost justification. Other areas may still need to be tackled. Examples include:

- reviewing the scope of supply – some of the work could be undertaken in-house or by the supplier and this level of detail has probably not yet been addressed (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4);
- deciding the phasing for the selection itself remains important (see Section 3.6); although the high-level initiation will probably have made some assumptions about phasing, it is still down to you to decide what is appropriate;
- reviewing the stakeholders, based on the scope and phasing, adding to the list if necessary and identifying those that need to be engaged for the selection;
- the project or programme should have its own communication plan, but you will need to identify any additions or changes needed to support the selection process (see Section 3.9).

The outcomes of this reviewing and detailing will need to be fed back to the overall project.

5. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

If your organisation has a formal approach to introducing organisational change, this will heavily affect your evaluation project. For instance, there may be a business process improvement group that is tasked with redesigning business processes before any new solution can aim to automate them.

Business cases and feasibility studies should consider the organisational dimensions, including organisational readiness – whether the organisation is ready to 'digest' a major new software product (see book Section 3.5).

Stakeholder engagement is a theme throughout the book – for instance, in the Foreword, Introduction (1.3.1) and at Sections 1.6.2, 6.6.1, 8.3.1, 10.3.1 and 12.12.4. The list of requirements interviewees will be shaped by the need to manage the organisational dynamic. Specifically, **some** interviews will not be about capturing 'technical' content such as business process descriptions or IT requirements statements. They will be consultations specifically to engage a stakeholder, to ensure alignment and buy-in.

Always remember (or discover) who are the users. Using the method described in the book helps their motivation by enlisting them during the requirements, evaluation, demonstration, references or negotiation stages. See some specific illustrations of user consultation at book Sections 4.5, 5.6 and 9.14, plus Chapter 10.

The selection approach means you consider **how** you would implement the solution well before contracts are signed. This means you make an early start on some of the change issues, because your colleagues see a preview of the new working methods.

- Many of the candidate supplier responses during the evaluation meetings (see Chapter 8) necessarily entail their staff explaining how their product would be configured for your needs.
- Recording requirements for IT interfaces, for instance with the incumbent Finance solution, reassures people and starts them thinking about the shape of the new world.
- The impact analysis considers capital and labour costs after implementation. These are shaped by how well the solution fits your organisational requirements.

Switching over to a new system and process can itself be worrying for staff long comfortable with the old software, irrespective of any wider structural or role changes. Your suppliers will often have much more experience of this than you – they see it all the time. Consider how much value you want to attach to a supplier's ability to put this experience at your disposal – how much they have learned from previous work, and how this is reflected in any consulting or training they offer. The less experienced **your** organisation is at this, the more value it should have.

6. IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Your organisation may have in place IT service management approaches such as ITIL®.

During the feasibility study, requirements capture and detailed evaluation, ensure you have treated the IT service managers as a stakeholder group.

- Consult them about IT constraints, for instance any database technology that is mandated to underpin the new solution. Typically such statements of requirement will be part of the 'IT Technical' section of the requirements document (see book Sections 5.3 and 5.5.1).
- If selecting software to support processes **inside** IT service management, you will also capture functional or user requirements. For instance, if your project is to procure a service desk product, requirements might include compliance with the latest version of ITIL.

Hardware capacity planning – whether executed by an external hosting provider or your internal infrastructure managers – will normally involve a sizing exercise with the successful software supplier. An important feed will be the data volumes that were captured during requirements definition.

The project's requirements, benefits and feasibility study will help to shape the release criteria during the initial and upgrade installations of software (if the solution is run in-house).

IT service management involves activities such as managing the contract relationship with the successful supplier, and creating documents such as external and internal service level agreements (SLAs). These are informed by customer expectations, which in turn have been captured during your selection project in requirements (Chapter 4), weights (Section 5.3), fit scores and definitions (Section 9.5). For instance, system management will be shaped by your recorded requirements for data security, especially if the solution is externally hosted.

The implementation of the new solution may substantially change the load upon IT support. Many dimensions of service management will be helped by the early familiarisation, gained before contract, with the new software product and supplier staff. Your evaluation work will inform the following.

- There may be a radical impact upon the loading of internal infrastructure and you may need to increase capacity. You have the parameters from requirements and early relationships with expert supplier staff.
- The service desk and database support team will probably need additional skills, scripts, headcount and budget. Moreover, documented interfaces to other solutions in your organisation will be affected. The supplier's solution proposals will start this process, and their implementation consultancy will continue it.

- Problem and root cause analyses will be substantially different in the new environment. The support teams understanding of the new software capabilities will have been seeded if they contributed an evaluation team member and attended the demonstrations.
- You will need to allow lead time for training and resourcing. How much time will be defined by impact assessments during the implementation planning.

7. ARTICLE SUMMARY

TAKE-AWAY POINTS



- You cannot 'bolt on' as an afterthought the integration between your selection approach and the other project and IT approaches in your organisation. You should plan the procurement to reflect the other standards, methods and stakeholder groups in your organisation.
- Some of the activities that are described in the book as project-specific tasks will either be replaced by over-arching or 'supervising' processes in your organisation, or your project will feed information into them.
- You will be required to respect the IT frameworks in your organisation. If your selection project is embedded in a mature organisation, these standards will be established and you will normally know where to get the information that you need. If your organisation is less mature and the process of adopting the standards is incomplete, you may need to be more proactive in finding the right people as your liaison.

8. REFERENCES

Burden, P. and Tate, M. (2015) *The softer side of choosing an off-the-shelf solution*. BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT. <http://shop.bcs.org/offtheshelfextras.asp> (3 Mar 2015).

Tate, M. (2015) *Off-The-Shelf IT Solutions: A practitioner's guide to selection and procurement*. BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT: Swindon.

9. FURTHER READING

9.1 BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Jenner, S. (2014) *Managing benefits: optimizing the return from investments* (2nd edition). TSO: Norwich.

Bradley, G. (2010) *Benefit Realisation Management* (2nd edition). Gower: Farnham.

Smith, R., King, D., Sidhu, R. and Skelsey, D. (2014) *The Effective Change Manager's Handbook*. KoganPage: London

9.2 USEFUL WEBSITES

Supporting book Extras page with downloadable articles, templates and checklists:
<http://shop.bcs.org/offtheshelfextras.asp>.

Association for Project Management www.apm.org.uk

COBIT <https://cobitonline.isaca.org/>

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