Project Closure

- Conditions for project closure.
  - Normal
  - Premature: early completion due to some parts of the project being eliminated.
  - Perpetual: never-ending
  - Failed
  - Changed priority: often results in termination. “termination by murder”.
    • Not easy to terminate a project due to reduced priority.
    • Reasons for change of priority?

- Not easy to terminate a project due to reduced priority.

- Reasons for change of priority?

- As the completion time of the project nears people and equipment are directed to other activities or projects.

- Wrap-up activities (e.g. accounting, writing final reports, etc.) are perceived as boring.

- Some other reasons for lack of enthusiasm
  - next assignment (project) is not known; looking for new projects
  - cannot focus on closing activities.
  - Delay the completion until a new assignment is found

Project Closure

- Closure has the following six major activities:
  - Getting delivery acceptance from the customer.
  - Shutting down resources and releasing for new uses.
  - Reassigning project team members.
  - Closing accounts and paying all bills.
  - Evaluating the project team, team members and project manager (postmortem and possibly an audit).

- It is customary to arrange a party to celebrate the completion of a project.

Postmortem Analysis

- A postmortem is both a process and a document.

- Primary purpose:
  - Identify what aspects of the project went well, what went poorly and what needs improvement, so that future projects are run better.

- Typical duration: Less than 4 hours

- Who should attend: anyone involved in the project.

- Facilitator: A neutral person, someone not involved in the project.

- For a postmortem to be effective a visual recording of the discussion must be kept.
  - One person should be the recorder.
  - A flipchart or a whiteboard should be used so that everyone can focus on the recorded information.
  - Can use colors to represent type of comment
    • Black: bad
    • Green: good
    • Red: warning flag
    • Purple: idea
    • Brown: neutral observation
  - Can use symbols to reflect tone
    • !!!: feels strongly about this
    • *: everyone agreed with this
    • ?: not everyone agreed
    • III: 3 people mentioned this
Guidelines for Participants

- **Be self-critical**: Check your ego at the door.
- **Be professional**: Discussions should cover a broad range of team issues and dynamics, from process to product issues. However, it should not become personal.
- **Be factual**: Documentation and data should be included in both the discussions and the final report.
- **Be brief**: Suggestions and commentary in the final report should be brief and agreed to by broad consensus.

Although dozens of issues will surface in the postmortem process, the next project will benefit more from a small number of very specific suggestions.

Running a Postmortem Meeting

- **Topic 1 - Timeline and resources**:
  - who was involved and how long.
- **Topic 2 - What went poorly/should be done differently?**
  - Identify a list of everything that went wrong.
  - After the list is complete, prioritization can be done by everyone voting for top 3 issues.

Running a Postmortem Meeting

- Three techniques for creating the list:
  - Brainstorm
  - Nominal technique: participants list individually then facilitator asks each person to say one time from their list until everyone’s lists are recorded.
  - Storyboarding: participants write their lists on index card (one item per card) which are then combined and sorted by topic.

- For the prioritized issues discussion should cover:
  - Why was this a problem? What went wrong?
  - What were the signs that should have warned us?
  - What should we have done differently?

Running a Postmortem Meeting

- **Topic 3 – What went well?**
- **Topic 4 – Recommendations.**
  - Summarize what the group would recommend for future projects (write-up can be done after the meeting).

Postmortem Summary Document

- Documenting postmortem is critical for creating a “learning organization”.
- To maintain accuracy very little should be deleted from the information recorded during the meeting.
- In addition to the information from the meeting, a summary of project metrics and analysis of project tracking data should be included.
- Before the document is published, everyone involved should have a chance to review and propose changes as appropriate.

Project Audit

- As in postmortem, the objective is to learn and not to repeat same mistakes in future projects.
- Project audit is typically carried out by independent audit groups.
- Project audits should be part of the normal process.
  - Don’t want the perception of witch hunt.
    - Either an automatic audit of all projects.
    - Or well-defined criteria used to select projects to be audited.
- Audit team leaders should have
  - No direct involvement or direct interest in the project.
  - Independence and authority to report results.
Postmortem vs. Audit

• Since the result of an audit might tarnish a career or lead to a career enhancement (depending on the outcome), they can be affected by internal politics.
  – Hence, many firms use outside consulting firms for audit.
  – Usually, post-project audits teams do have some people from the project team.