

Phase Gate—Activity Definition

Purpose: The objective of this activity is to ensure that management approves the transition of a project across its various phases. This will ensure that projects that are not likely to succeed are ‘killed’ early.

Participants: The Project Manager, relevant stakeholders

Inputs: Project Status Report [1], important customer communication [1], Phase gate form of earlier phases (if applicable)[3]

Process:

1. At the end of every phase, the Project Manager prepares a project status report and submits it to senior management to get approval to move on to the next phase of the project.
2. The Project Manager also submits any important customer communication, which shows satisfaction or unhappiness with the project progress.
3. The relevant stakeholders analyze the status report and the communication, and in conjunction with the Project Manager make a decision on whether the project should move to the next phase.
4. The relevant stakeholders sign off the phase gate form.

Outputs: Approved or denied Phase gate form

Phase Gate—Guidelines

1. In a lot of projects, this might seem a mere formality but this process proves to be very useful in ventures where there is no clarity of objective, and effort is being wasted.
2. Where it seems that a few recommendations might put the project back on track, the established governance should document and communicate these recommendations to the Project Manager. It is the responsibility of the Project Manager to implement the suggestions or provide an explanation why the recommendation cannot be implemented.
3. In some cases, senior management may approve at the phase gate while in other cases, the approval may be sought from an external body e.g. the customer may decide whether the project should move to the next phase.
4. Questions to be asked are:
 - a. Is the project on time? Were all milestones met?
 - b. Is the project on budget?
 - c. Is the project according to specification?
 - d. Is the customer satisfied with results up to this point?
 - e. What are the barriers standing in the way of the success of the project?
 - f. What are the problems that the project faces?
 - g. Were recommendations given in the past implemented?
5. The documents that accompany the phase gate form will be different for each phase of the project.
6. At the end of the definition phase, check if any comments have been listed by the governance in the Project Request Form. Also read through the assumptions, risks, and obstacles section in the Project Overview Statement and see if any assumption is untrue now, or if any risk is critical.
7. At the end of the planning phase, check if all the planning activities that were needed for the project have been performed. Ensure that the Quality Strategy activities are carried out. Ensure that the Work Plan is realistic. Ensure that the communication matrix has identified all relevant stakeholders for the various communications.
8. At the end of the launch phase, ensure that the Risk Matrix has identified all risks relevant to the project.
9. At the end of the management phase, ensure that all change requests are taken into account during transition to production during project closure.