Perfection or Completion: Managing Greenfield R12 Implementation

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Introduction

Implementation of Oracle e-Business is a huge complex task and project managers often have a dilemma of perfection or completion? As per Gartner about one third of the projects are never complete and more than half exceed the budget. In a computer world survey, 'Project Management' has been cited as the biggest management challenge.

In today's global project environment, stakeholders (Executive, Program/Project Manager, Team member, staffing/resource manager) are constantly asking questions like:
- Can we meet all the business requirements?
- Is the application design 'flexible' enough to meet any future requirements?
- Why do I need to sign off when requirements could change?
- Can we 'perfect' Oracle for full automation?
- Are we on-time and on budget and meeting project goals?
- Why do we need more resources?
- Why do we need more training?
- What is the overall health of my projects?
- Why do I need to plan for support? I have already bought support from Oracle.

This session analyses the various project management challenges of an Oracle R12 Greenfield implementation and coaches how to balance between perfection and completion and things to consider before the project starts to achieve on-time and on-budget with real life examples from large and global Greenfield Oracle implementations.

What is a Greenfield Project?

A Greenfield Project is a one which lacks any constraints imposed by prior work. A customer implementing Oracle R12 EBusiness suite of applications first time and has no prior history of Oracle can be termed as 'Greenfield implementation project'. Such projects are rare today as customers do have some sort of history of ERP implementations in some shape and form. Most of the projects are 'Brownfield' today – Upgrade or re-implementation of R12. Few Greenfield projects can be seen being implemented in new and growing Organizations and/or new Geographies.

Before we harp on the challenges, key advantages of Greenfield implementations are:
- Business processes can be standardized as per Oracle EBS offerings and industry practices
- Customizations can be minimized
- EBS configurations, e.g. Chart of Accounts, can be designed to best suit the current and future needs
- Data conversions may not be there or could be minimal. If minimal, data quality/cleanup can be achieved during the implementation process
- System adoptability will be higher as users, often new hires, will be of open mind. Hence Change Management will be easier

However the challenges of a Greenfield implementation are far too many and outweigh the advantages:
- Projects have a high risk as 'Plan B' of using existing system & processes may not be an option
- Process design may focus on 'Perfection' instead of 'Completion'
- System design may have a common theme – 'Flexibility' for future modifications
- Analysis and Process design may take longer than expected

- Multiple and Unplanned Conference Room Pilots may be required
- Signoff on and Locking design may not be possible
- Technical work, if any, may have a delayed start and may constantly be in flux
- Project and/or User roles not fully defined until late in the project
- Extensive communication planning required
- Multiple and Iterative training is required at different levels of users
- Often go-live dates are firm & not negotiable and hinges on numerous other factors – e.g. Launch of a new product in a new geography; Opening a new manufacturing plant
- Post implementation support can be painful and longer because of 'teething' problems

Project Management Lifecycle

Today's projects are global in nature, have multiple stakeholders/ vendors/customers/partners from the globe, span multiple time-zones, languages, software, tools etc. Add to it the challenges of a Greenfield project and you get a challenge closer to climbing Mount Everest. To be on time and on budget, organizations and their project managers need to be agile with time sensitive plans. They need to review and revise strategic plans more frequently and yet adaptive and flexible for ever changing IT environment. The picture below depicts the life cycle of project management from inception to completion.
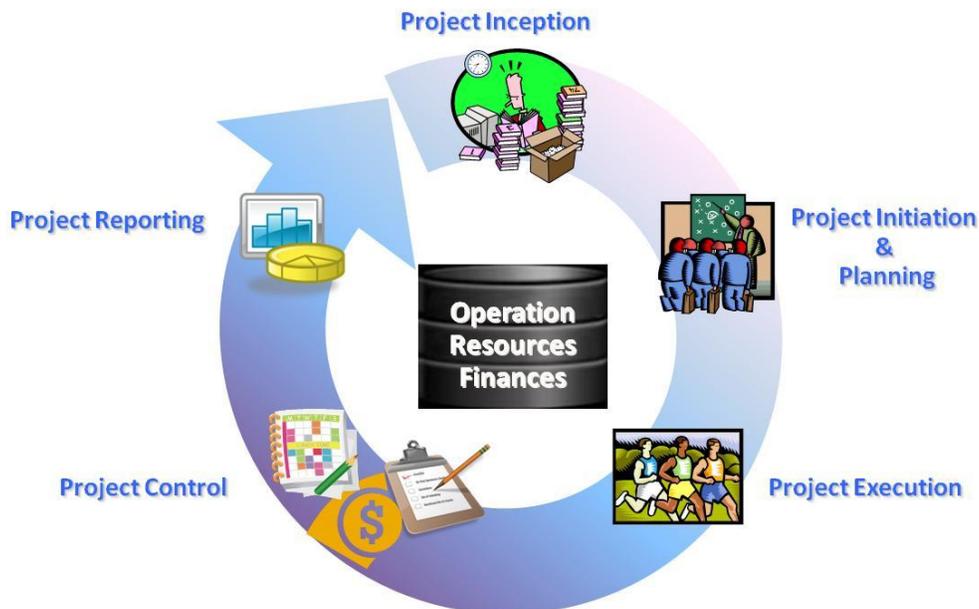

Figure 1: Project Management life cycle

In managing a Greenfield project, every stage of the project is crucial but I have found pre-planning is the most crucial of all. Get this stage right; rest will be easier and manageable. Focus of this paper will only be on initiation and planning stage of the project.

Inception

Often Greenfield projects are conceptualized on various external factors and may not have a full vision of the project and its challenges. Example – We are launching our products in South America and Asia and need to have full suite of Oracle EBS apps up and running by June end before the product launch; we have just started this insurance business and starting operations in four months; Our previous software company is bankrupt and we have to go-live

on Oracle before the previous software support ends. These may lack detailed project charter, any statement of work and/or project organization. To get this straight following should be a top priority before the project is in full swing:

Figure 2: Project Inception Priorities

Scope

Scope is often the most overlooked area in Greenfield implementations and topmost reason for being behind schedule. Common theme on such projects is 'we may require this in future' or 'system should be flexible enough'. If project manager and stakeholders didn't say a firm 'No', project scope tends to go out of control.

Oracle R12 EBusiness suite has about 300+ applications and adding more every day. Each application has numerous futures with many may not be applicable for your Organization. Typical usage of features is less than 30%, of all available, industry wide. For a Greenfield implementation it becomes much more imperative to have a detailed statement of work with scope detailed out to the lowest level possible. Work statement should not only list out all applications but should have key features spelled out clearly. Are we doing credit card integration in 'Oracle iExpenses' is better than just listing 'Oracle iExenses' in scope in SOW? It is important to clearly mention what is not in scope in context of the overall scope. E.g. Electronic orders will be interfaced in text and/or XML format but EDI is out of scope. It is worth spending time on discovery & assessment and documenting SOW even before the project is initiated. Typically key integrations, 3rd party interfaces, data conversions and key GAPs (if any) are clearly identified in the assessment. Challenge is how to account for any reporting or business intelligence needs. Oracle R12 does offer many out of the box report – averaging around 50+ per application. Although during conference room pilot you can identify various reporting GAPs, it is worthwhile to budget for new reports upfront in the work statement. There is no guideline but minimum 5 new reports per suite of applications should be budgeted for.

Questions to consider:
- Is the scope detailed enough in statement of work? Have we spelled out all R12 applications and key features in scope? Have we mentioned all integrations in scope? Are all data conversions listed? Budget for new reports mentioned clearly?
- Is the acceptance criteria for each scope item clearly mentioned
- Is there any ambiguity in any scope related statements?

- If scope details are unsatisfactory, can we consider commissioning an assessment, with a smaller team, to finalize scope?
- Can we defer implementation of specific applications specially if they require complex constant maintenance and may provide less value now? E.g. Implementation of Oracle Incentive Compensation application may be deferred if in your growing Organization incentive plan isn't structured yet.
- Do we really need third party self service applications, like iReceivables, iSupplier early on?
- Can Oracle solutions fit all products we are selling or about to sell?
- Is the process of handling changes to scope well defined? Should have criteria for prioritizing, documenting impact assessment with appropriate approval.

Plan

Project plan is a vast area in itself and can encompass multitude of other plans besides Work Plan/Gantt chart – Resource Plan, Quality Plan, Risk Plan, Communication Plan, Training plan, Go-live plan, Support plan are some of key subsidiary plans. For a Greenfield R12 implementation, Oracle implementation methodology does come with template set of plans, these have to be tailored, prioritized and detailed or summarized for each Organization need. Once you have an established schedule and plan, any unhappy news can be spotted on the project early on if the plan is in place.

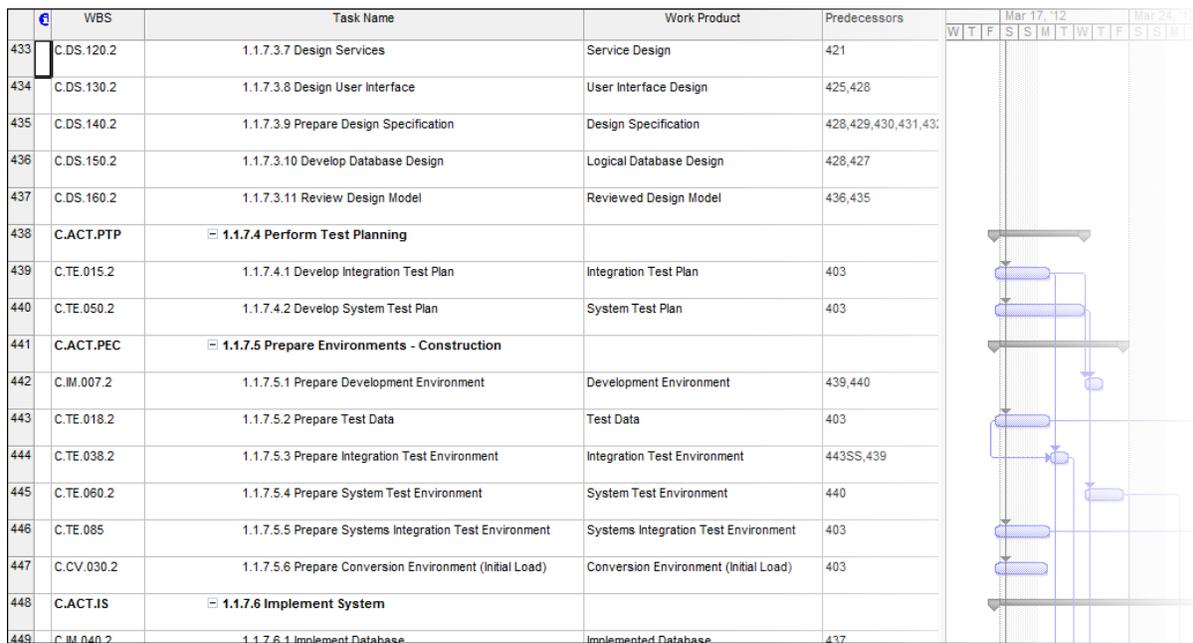|	WBS	Task Name	Work Product	Predecessors	Mar 17, '12	Mar 24, '12
433	C.DS.120.2	1.1.7.3.7 Design Services	Service Design	421		
434	C.DS.130.2	1.1.7.3.8 Design User Interface	User Interface Design	425,428		
435	C.DS.140.2	1.1.7.3.9 Prepare Design Specification	Design Specification	428,429,430,431,43:		
436	C.DS.150.2	1.1.7.3.10 Develop Database Design	Logical Database Design	428,427		
437	C.DS.160.2	1.1.7.3.11 Review Design Model	Reviewed Design Model	436,435		
438	C.ACT.PTP	1.1.7.4 Perform Test Planning				
439	C.TE.015.2	1.1.7.4.1 Develop Integration Test Plan	Integration Test Plan	403		
440	C.TE.050.2	1.1.7.4.2 Develop System Test Plan	System Test Plan	403		
441	C.ACT.PEC	1.1.7.5 Prepare Environments - Construction				
442	C.IM.007.2	1.1.7.5.1 Prepare Development Environment	Development Environment	439,440		
443	C.TE.018.2	1.1.7.5.2 Prepare Test Data	Test Data	403		
444	C.TE.038.2	1.1.7.5.3 Prepare Integration Test Environment	Integration Test Environment	443SS,439		
445	C.TE.060.2	1.1.7.5.4 Prepare System Test Environment	System Test Environment	440		
446	C.TE.085	1.1.7.5.5 Prepare Systems Integration Test Environment	Systems Integration Test Environment	403		
447	C.CV.030.2	1.1.7.5.6 Prepare Conversion Environment (Initial Load)	Conversion Environment (Initial Load)	403		
448	C.ACT.IS	1.1.7.6 Implement System				
449	C.IM.040.2	1.1.7.6.1 Implement Database	Implemented Database	437		

Figure 3: Sample Project Plan template from Oracle Unified Methodology (OUM)

For Greenfield implementations key considerations are:
- Are the milestones clearly defined in the plan and agreed upon?
- Is the budgeted time for requirement analysis and mapping & gapping exercises sufficient enough based on the scope? Focus on business processes and requirements first.
- Are we doing right number of conference room pilots?
- Have we planned finishing certain key decisions early on the project? E.g., Multi-Organization structure, Key flexfields like Chart of Accounts, Item Master, Territories etc.
- Is the resource loading aligned correctly? Shouldn't technical resources come later part of the project?
- Is the project phasing and/or pilot go-live considered before the project start?
- Have the key risks identified early on? Mitigation plan?
- Has the training started before the project starts? Have the key super users completed R12 boot camp yet?
- Is the communication plan in place?

Governance

The project management governance provides oversight and control during program execution. They help managers assess the project's current state with reference to the plan, take necessary actions and involve necessary stakeholders for any decisions. Effective project governance underpins project success and results in efficient and timely project decision making.

Stakeholders

'Stakeholders should be committed' – usually the term refers to the project sponsors. However stakeholders on the project may not only encompass sponsors or executives but also project management and team members. Achievement of project goals hinges on if goals of stakeholders are aligned with that of project. Yes regular steering committee is important, meetings with all stakeholders are as important if not more. Key questions to consider:
- Are the project sponsors designated and have agreed regular participation?
- Are the project value communicated to the sponsors regularly? Especially when key decisions are made.
- Are the project issues and decision escalation procedure defined?
- Are stakeholders committed on 'Completion'?

Delivery Team

Team comes first above everything else. And 'first things first'. I have always believed in this and found most effective in managing projects. I have always been inspired by Wegman's, a prime grocery store in North-east, motto 'Employees First'. And yes rest is easy. Delivery team should be inspired, motivated and should have compensation aligned with project completion and goals achievement.

Subject Area/Expertise	Time Commitment	Comments
Primary area of expertise	Approximate time commitment required from the SME during the duration of the project. Note that this requirement could increase or decrease during various stages of the project	Any clarifying comments
Opportunity to Cash Process Expert	75-80%	SME with understanding of product offerings and processes. Ability to map to-be processes. Responsible for coordinating with other SMEs and providing unified requirements. Also responsible for determining data migration business rules and strategy.
Incentive Compensation specialist	25%	
Billing Specialist	50-60%	Expertise in billing, invoicing and revenue recognition processes
Sales Specialist	50-60%	Expertise in Opportunity Management, Lead management, Quoting, Sales Hierarchy and reporting
Product Specialist	30-40%	Knowledge of product offerings and pricing
Customer Service Specialist	30-40%	Knowledge of customer service issues and processes
Production Specialist	30-40%	Knowledge of production and fulfillment processes

Figure 4: Sample Project Organization with time commitment

Key questions to consider:
- Are the key roles for the project fully identified?
- Are the key resources (both customer and integrator) identified? If not 100% available, is the percentage of requirement at various stages of the project spelled out?
- Has the training needs for resources identified? Has the training plan implemented?
- Are the resources briefed on implementation methodology if not aware of?
- Have the key resources read the project charter, goals, SOW?
- Has the process for monitoring team performance finalized?
- Are the resources for post-implementation support identified?

Toolkit and Methodologies

Using correct tools and methodology is as critical as other factors in the implementation projects. Oracle itself offers full fledged project management tools as well as implementation methodology.

Although Organizations have standardized set of project management tools like Primavera, Sharepoint, Microsoft office tools including Project; if you have licenses you can consider using Oracle R12 for the same too which offers complete suite of project portfolio analysis, project and resource management applications. Since you are chartering on Oracle first time, wouldn't recommend using Oracle applications for PMO.

Small and mid-size growing organizations requiring rapid implementation can leverage Oracle Business Accelerators which comes with its own toolkit and methodologies. It comes with industry standard business flows to reduce the time and costs of implementing enterprise-wide solutions. It can reduce implementation discovery, setup, and testing project phases but has its own constraints and challenges. In my experiences with many Greenfield implementations, Business Flows can give you a jump start on the implementation but rest of the toolkit should be re-considered.

Oracle traditional Application Implementation Methodology (AIM) for EBusiness suite of applications has been now morphed into Oracle Unified Method (OUM) which supports Application Implementation projects, Software Upgrade projects, and the complete range of technology projects including initial support for Business Intelligence and Enterprise Performance Management and deep support for Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA), Enterprise Integration, and Custom Software. It has ready-made templates, guidelines, and scalable work breakdown structure. It scores over the traditional AIM methodology because of the enriched repository assets, the well defined templates, as well as well defined risk management techniques.

OUM offers about 200+ deliverable templates. Note some of these can also multiply by each application implemented. And definitely not all are required in any given project. I have found below, but not limited to, useful in many Greenfield implementation projects:

Doc ID	Description	OUM Focus Area
RD030	Develop Current Process Model	Business Requirements (RD)
RD011	Develop Future Process Model	Business Requirements (RD)
RD045	Prioritize Requirements (MoSCoW)	Business Requirements (RD)
TE010	Testing Strategy	Testing (TE)
TA020	Technical Architecture Requirement and Strategy	Technical Architecture (TA)
CV020	Data Acquisition, Conversion and Data quality strategy	Data Acquisition and Conversion (CV)
TR010	Training Strategy	Training (TR)
CV040	Conversion Component Design	Data Acquisition and Conversion (CV)
AN100	Analysis Specification	Analysis (AN)

DS140	Design Specification	Design (DS)
TE010	Testing Strategy	Testing (TE)
TE020	Unit test scripts	Testing (TE)
TE035	Integration test scripts	Testing (TE)
TE040	Integration test	Testing (TE)
TE120	User Acceptance test	Testing (TE)
DS030	System Configuration	Design (DS)
DO070	Publish User Guide	Documentation (DO)
TS020	Cutover Strategy	Transition (TS)

Figure 5: Key deliverables required for Greenfield R12 Implementation project

Center Of Excellence

Ed Viesturs, famous mountain climber who has climbed all 8000 meters and mountain peaks and has climbed mount Everest 7 times, once said 'Getting to the summit is optional, getting down is mandatory'. Very true with many Greenfield implementations. Once projects are implemented, Organization is committed to the processes and software implemented (at least for a considerable time) with no looking back. Best is to think ahead and plan not for just 'completion' but beyond.

Most Greenfield implementation projects require much more time in stabilization. Which can vary from a month to maybe multiple quarters? It is always beneficial to formulate an in-house 'Center of Excellence' say for Oracle R12 EBusiness suite of applications. Delivery team can come, complete the implementation and may go but support team has to be there for long.

Key considerations should be:
* Has the support strategy formulated even before the project is complete?
* Are the service level agreement identified?
* Has the support team identified?
* Have the post-implementation performance measurement metrics been defined?
* Has the support and escalation process communicated to the user base before go-live?

Conclusion

Managing Greenfield R12 implementation is a mix of art and science and unfortunately there is no silver bullet for success. Focus should definitely be on completion rather than perfection. Upfront planning and strategizing will definitely help on meeting the goal of 'on time and on budget. Challenges of a R12 Greenfield implementation, outlined earlier, may be dealt with now:
* Projects have a high risk as 'Plan B' of using existing system & processes may not be an option. A: Proper risk planning should be documented early enough with mitigation plan.
* Process design may focus on 'Perfection' instead of 'Completion'. When doing the requirement analysis capture requirement metrics (Volume, $ value, timeline if future) and prioritize requirements by preparing RD045 MoSCoW List.
* System design may have a common theme – 'Flexibility' for future modifications. A. Fortunately R12, unlike it's predecessor 11i, is much more flexible. Even Key Flexfields like Chart of Accounts can be updated on live environment now. R12 comes with features of personalizations. Capture during requirement analysis where flexibility is more critical
* Analysis and Process design may take longer than expected. A: Work plan should budget accordingly
* Multiple and Iterative Conference Room Pilots are a must. A: Work plan should budget accordingly
* Signoff on and Locking design may not be possible. A: Statement of Work should mention acceptance criteria
* Technical work, if any, may have a delayed start and may constantly be in flux. A: Work plan in conjunction with Resource plan should be planned accordingly. Acceptance criteria on design documents should be followed.

- Extensive communication planning required. A: Communication plan should be formulated before project begins. Regular Stakeholders/Team meetings a must
- Multiple and Iterative training is required at different levels of users. A: Recommend R12 boot camp for key super users if not already trained. Training plan should address SME, super user and end user training
- Often go-live dates are firm & not negotiable and hinges on numerous other factors – e.g. Launch of a new product in a new geography; Opening a new manufacturing plant. A: Detailed cutover plan. Consider pilot go-live early on if feasible.
- Post implementation support can be painful and longer because of 'teething' problems. A: Create a support plan and in-house Center of Excellence early on.

About the Author

Mr. Kapoor is a partner at Prisio Technologies where he manages Oracle Practice and oversees deliveries of financial, projects and procurement implementation and upgrade projects. He has over 20 years of sales, implementation strategy and delivery experience in Oracle Applications for numerous fortune 500 customers in various industries. He can be reached at ShyamK@prisiotechnologies.com.