



The Great Project Management Divide

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Introduction

Marketing and brand managers, operations managers, planning managers and executives at all organizational levels are increasingly involved in projects – defining objectives, deliverables and measures of success; making plans with timelines and milestones; implementing and tracking their progress; and communicating that progress to others.

To help these “business managers” on their projects, a growing array of software tools is available, both at the desktop and “from the cloud.”

To understand better how business managers use these software tools, and how their usage contrasts with that of more specialized project managers, Torridon Solutions undertook two market studies. These studies looked at the software tools used for project management by three types of professional managers:

1. self-identified project managers
2. management consultants, and
3. business managers.

Conducted a few months apart, both studies were small and limited to customers using Swiftlight Project Management Software from Torridon, or to prospective customers.

The results expose an interesting divide between the more specialized world of project managers and consultants, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the typical business manager.

The results also show that the needs of both these groups are not yet fully served, and that both groups of users, despite their many differences, value tools that help with high level planning and progress reporting, and tools that save them time in the process of project management.

Business managers report that Microsoft Project is too complex, and using Excel and PowerPoint for project management tasks can be very time consuming. They need a simple and practical project management tool with an easy learning curve.

More specialized project managers and consultants report they typically use MS Project for planning, and that they already use a variety of other tools in project management. However, they are still open to using additional tools that can help them become more efficient and effective.



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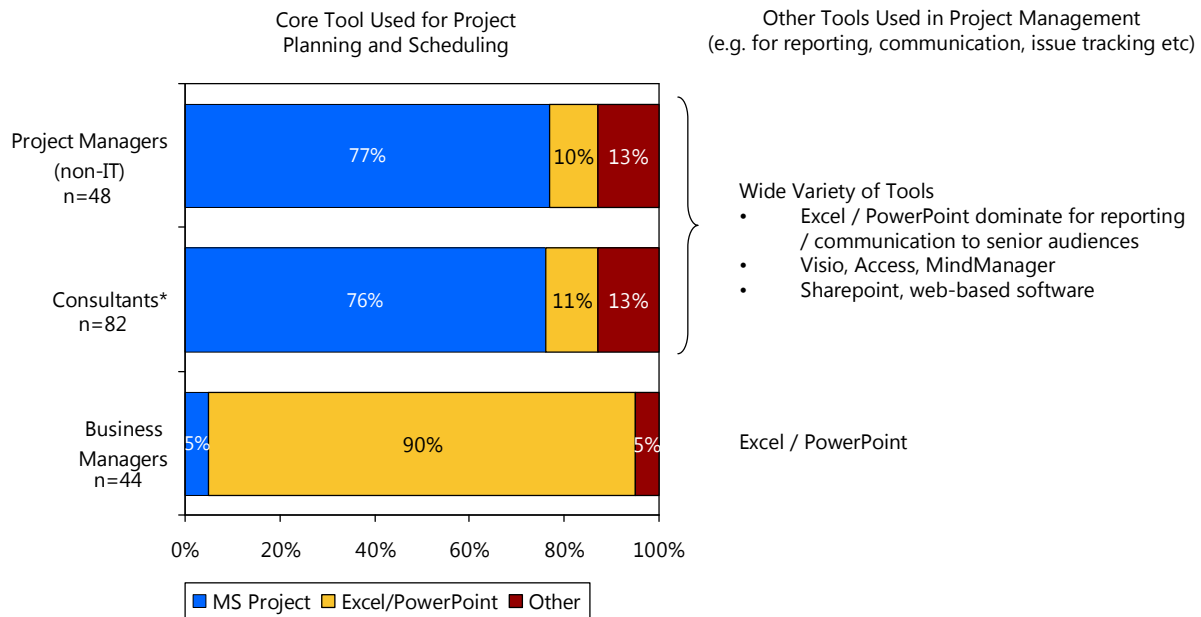
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Findings

Study One

Conducted in March 2010, the first study looked at the tools used by 174 Swiftlight users and prospective customers for planning and scheduling, and for other project management activities such as reporting, communication with executive management, issue tracking, etc.

The data shows that the project managers and consultants are fairly similar in their use of software tools. However, there is a sharp divide between these more specialist project managers and the typical “business manager,” as illustrated in the chart below:



* Sample may not be representative of all consultants as it is of management consultants who expressed an interest in project management software.

Source: Torridon research and external data sources. n=174

The project managers worked in a diverse set of industries -- health care, financial services, consumer goods, advertising, construction and engineering. Similarly, the projects they were involved with also ranged widely -- for example: from product development to marketing initiatives to civil engineering.

The management consultants also worked in comparably diverse industry sectors. Like the project managers, the consultants reported that their business life heavily revolves around projects.

These two groups report using an array of software tools to get things done:

- For planning and scheduling, Microsoft Project is the dominant tool, used by 76 percent (rounded) of the group. In contrast, 10 percent report they use Excel and PowerPoint, and another 13 percent use a variety of different tools (e.g. Primavera solutions, Fasttrack Schedule, etc.).



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- However, these groups pick up other tools to help with different aspects of managing their projects:
 - Users commonly reported that MS Project is not great for communicating to management. Instead, Excel and PowerPoint are heavily used;
 - Users also listed other tools such as Visio, Access and MindManager – apparently using these products to meet specific needs or their style of work.

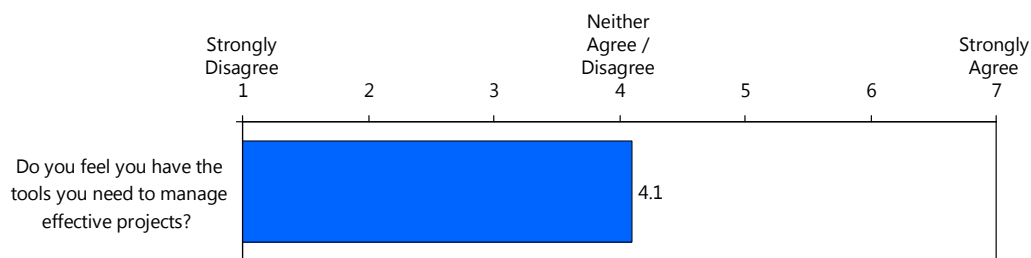
Overall, these two groups are fairly promiscuous in the number of tools they use. We believe their day-to-day focus on projects encourages this, as they have a strong incentive to seek out and use tools that can help them be more efficient and effective in activities that are critical to their success.

Dramatically, the study numbers reverse for “business managers” in marketing, operations, HR, finance and other business areas. These business managers are typically involved in a number of projects, which are often of significant business value and importance to the organization:

- The business managers were typically involved with, or running, 5-10 different projects at any one time.
- The projects varied in size and scope, but, collectively they were significant in terms of their strategic or expected value. For example, typical projects included:
 - Product launch, product development or marketing initiatives;
 - Strategy initiatives targeting revenue growth or cost reductions;
 - Organizational change programs.

In this group, 90 percent report they rely almost exclusively on Excel and PowerPoint for both planning and scheduling, and for reporting and communication (see chart on previous page). Few reported the use of any tools other than Excel and PowerPoint; MS Project barely hit the radar screen.

Despite this intense reliance on two software applications, business managers were not adamant when asked if Excel and PowerPoint are the right software tools to help them get the job done:



Source: Swiftlight user trials



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"It's not as if they are actively dissatisfied with using Excel and PowerPoint today," observes Pete McWhinnie, chief executive officer of Torridon Solutions. "But they are not wildly happy either. They also told us that MS Project is not the answer -- "more than I need," "too complicated" and "hard to use" are comments we hear all the time. They don't need the detail offered by MS Project and many other tools - they need something that's simple, practical and good for high level, rather than detailed, planning and reporting. And if these business managers, or their IT departments, were to look beyond Excel, PowerPoint and Project, they would discover a range of tools that would help these users become more efficient and effective."

One surprising finding from this first study, discussed in more detail below, is that despite the hype over cloud computing, very few of the users surveyed reported that they use web-based software for project management. Instead, when it came up at all, web-based software was used primarily for collaboration, and not as a core tool for planning and scheduling, or reporting and communication.

Study Two

Torridon followed with a second in-depth study in April and May 2010. This small study focused on Swiftlight customers and trial users in companies that ranged in size from 1 to 1,000 employees. Of the 40 respondents, 27 percent were project managers, 54.1 percent were consultants, 13.5 percent were business managers, and 5.4 percent reported "other."

For project planning, the migration to Swiftlight begins slowly but measurably among trial users. The migration to Swiftlight accelerates quickly with customers.

Among trial users, Excel (64%) was the leading main tool used for planning, with 36% using MS Project and 11% already using Swiftlight as a their main planning tool. Another 36% reported using Swiftlight as a secondary planning tool. Users also reported using MS PowerPoint and Word for planning. Confirming the first study, web-based tools continued to languish:

Tools Used for Planning - Swiftlight Trial Users

	Main tools	Secondary tools	Not Used
Swiftlight	10.7%	35.7%	53.6%
MS Project	35.7%	21.4%	42.9%
Excel	64.3%	32.1%	3.6%
PowerPoint	35.7%	50.0%	14.3%
MS Word	35.7%	39.3%	26.0%
Web-based software	7.1%	14.3%	78.6%



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Among customers of Swiftlight, there was a distinct conversion to Swiftlight for project planning, with 75% using it as a main tool and the other 25% using it as a secondary tool. Use of MS Project was similar to the trial user group at 37%, but use of Excel as a main tool was much lower at 25%. MS PowerPoint and Word are used by this group, but, again, web-based software failed to register at all:

Tools Used for Planning – Swiftlight Customers

	Main tools	Secondary tools	Not Used
Swiftlight	75.0%	25.0%	00.0%
MS Project	37.5%	00.0%	62.5%
Excel	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
PowerPoint	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%
MS Word	25.0%	50.0%	26.0%
Web-based software	0.00%	0.00%	100%

For progress reporting, there was a similar migration pattern.

Among trial users of Swiftlight, MS PowerPoint (64%) was the leading main tool for progress reporting, followed by Excel, Word and MS Project. 18% of trial users were already using Swiftlight for progress reporting, and a further 21% were using it as a secondary tool:

Tools Used for Progress Reporting - Swiftlight Trial Users

	Main tools	Secondary tools	Not used
Swiftlight	17.9%	21.4%	60.7%
MS Project	28.6%	17.9%	53.6%
Excel	42.9%	50.0%	7.1%
PowerPoint	64.3%	21.4%	14.3%
MS Word	42.9%	35.7%	21.4%
Web-based software	7.1%	14.3%	78.6%

Among Swiftlight customers, Swiftlight had become the main tool for progress reporting for 62.5% -- and the use of MS Project drops to zero. Swiftlight customers also use Excel and Word less than trial users for progress reporting. However, customers and trial users both continue to rely on MS PowerPoint as a main tool for progress reporting – 64.3% for trial users and 62.5% for customers.

Tools Used for Progress Reporting - Swiftlight Customers

	Main tools	Secondary tools	Not used
Swiftlight	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%
MS Project	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
Excel	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%
PowerPoint	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%
MS Word	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%
Web-based software	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%



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“The overall pattern with customers appears to be that Swiftlight is replacing Excel for planning and is emerging as a core tool for both planning and progress reporting,” observes McWhinnie. “As we would expect, some customers continue to use MS Project for planning, but, dramatically, they’ve shifted away from using it for progress reporting. These are exactly the shifts we were hoping to see as Swiftlight is excellent for smaller, simpler projects and for progress reporting to executive management.”

Customers in this second study use Swiftlight to cover a variety of project planning and management areas:

Uses of Swiftlight in Project Planning and Management - Swiftlight Customers

Area / Use	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Timeline	67.9%	28.6%	3.6%
Project Objectives	46.4%	42.9%	10.7%
To Do List Management	35.7%	46.4%	17.9%
Activity summaries	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%
Issue log	21.4%	28.6%	50.0%
Contact list	14.3%	39.3%	46.4%

Responses in this second study provided qualitative insight into the migration and adoption patterns of the Swiftlight trial users and customers.

Why are users not using web-based tools?

The most common user responses focused on security concerns, availability/access and performance. For example:

- “Clients prefer not to have sensitive data cloud-based ... I prefer, and the organization does as well, to keep our project work behind our firewall.”
- “Desktop software is not dependent on an Internet connection.”
- “Since I do a lot of travel I would rather have software installed on my laptop and always available.”
- Desktop tools have “better availability & performance.”

Why are people using Swiftlight?

The most common qualitative responses focused on Swiftlight’s clear graphics for planning and reporting, its ease of use and the time savings it provides. For example:

- Business users’ comments included:
 - “Swiftlight is a visual aid to communicating timelines and progress updates.”
 - “...quick to set up.”
 - “It’s a communication tool for high-level planning.”
- Specialist project managers and consultants:
 - “Swiftlight (helps to) quickly develop visual timelines for management, while also capturing supporting activities.”
 - “Good for presentation. Simple to use for small projects or for a high level view of large programs.”
 - “A real time tool for (client) workshops.”
 - “It is an easy to use tool and (well) designed for consultancies.”
 - “Swiftlight provides clear graphical information and is pretty easy to use, much better than other packages.”



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- “It helps me better organize my project planning, client meetings and reporting.”
- “Using Swiftlight is helping us win business after the Great Recession.”

“It’s clear that when business users find a tool that suits them, like Swiftlight, they are happy to move away from using Excel for both planning and progress reporting. And there’s also a dramatic shift amongst our customers away from using MS Project for progress reporting,” observes McWhinnie. “The project specialists, whose needs are perhaps more demanding, are also open to using new tools that can help with high-level planning or reporting . People are busier than ever, and being able to generate clear, presentation-ready plans and progress reports quickly is something that many people value.”

“Business users are not completely satisfied with what they’ve got, but we think that they, or their IT departments, are not looking actively enough for tools that can make their lives easier. There’s a natural inertia here, but there’s an opportunity to do better, and the shifts away from Excel and MS Project to Swiftlight show that change can happen – both for planning and progress reporting,” said Mike Scott, chief operating officer of Torridon.

Discussion

The world of project management is broad and varied, with projects ranging widely in size, duration and complexity. As a result, the needs of managers running the projects also vary. This study provides only a partial insight into this world, but we believe there are still three key lessons to be drawn:

- 1) There is a “great divide” between the more specialized project manager and the typical business manager, and a corresponding big opportunity for the business manager to be better served with tools that help them become more efficient and effective.**

“The business manager is perhaps more of an “accidental project manager,” observes Scott. “Projects are a big part of their job, but they are likely to think of themselves as, for example, a brand manager or an operations manager rather than a “project manager.” They get things done, their projects “go OK,” but while they have frustrations, they are perhaps less motivated than specialist project managers to seek out tools to help. Instead, it seems these business managers are resigned to their lot and just get on with things using the tools at hand.”

*“We wish the business managers would demand more, and follow the lead of the specialists in looking for tools that can help them,” observes McWhinnie. “The productivity of these managers should be a big deal for any company. There’s a big opportunity to improve. And there **are** tools, such as Swiftlight, which can help them.”*

- 2) Even for specialist project managers, there’s “no one tool fits all needs” solution, and managers will continue to seek out and use a variety of tools to help them get the job done.**

“While MS Project is the dominant planning and scheduling tool, the specialist project manager already uses a number of other tools, and we believe they will continue to



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experiment and try new things,” observes McWhinnie. “Given how central project management is to their lives, if they can find something that saves them time and makes them more effective, that’s a big deal for them and it’s not surprising they will use it.”

3) Web-based software has yet to make substantial inroads into these groups.

These studies, which are consistent with earlier research by Torridon aimed at better defining the feature set of Swiftlight and whether to deliver those features at the desktop or from the web, estimate that only around 25 percent of Swiftlight customers and prospective customers use web-based project management software at all. More significant, web-based software was the main project management tool for only 6 percent of users.

“This low penetration may be a function of the samples in the studies, which are biased to big firms and consultants, the needs and work processes of these groups, or other factors. It’s something we will continue to look into,” observes McWhinnie. “But this data and the other feedback we get from the market supports our thesis that people need practical tools that fit into their existing way of working, and that ease, simplicity and quality of interface and functionality are still key. And it is here that desktop software still has an advantage.”



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About Torridon Solutions

Founded in 2005 and privately held, operating from London as Torridon Solutions Ltd. and from New York as Torridon Solutions Inc., the company is the creator of Swiftlight Project Management and Communication Software.

About Swiftlight

Swiftlight is a desktop software application used by “general managers,” such as marketing and brand managers, operations and planning managers, management consultants and business executives, as well as by project management experts, to manage projects and navigate their way ahead.

Swiftlight saves time, creates clarity and gets results for its users, through offering a planning structure, high quality visuals and outstanding ease of use. Swiftlight is particularly well-suited to planning and progress reporting for “smaller scale” or “less complex” projects.

For people who find Microsoft Project too complex, and managing projects in Excel and PowerPoint very time-consuming, Swiftlight can quickly generate clear, presentation-ready plans and progress reports for initiatives such as product launches, strategy reviews, operational improvement initiatives or annual planning.

For specialist project managers with larger IT, engineering or R&D projects, Swiftlight makes it easy to articulate and visualize “the big picture”, with outputs that can capture timelines, objectives, deliverables and measures of success all on one page, and that can help with reporting to senior executives. Swiftlight also provides links to MS Project.

Swiftlight has customers in 17 countries, in organizations that range from Fortune 500 companies, down to small businesses, not-for-profits and independent consultants.

Swiftlight Case Study: Global Consumer Goods Company

Situation 12 managers in a business unit of a global consumer goods company were interviewed both before and after a trial of Swiftlight. The managers came from a variety of departments (e.g. marketing, brand, finance and operations) and on average were involved with three projects that varied widely in scope, ranging from initiatives to optimize on-shelf product availability, to brand communication plans, leadership development programs, new product development and strategy projects. Prior to their trial of Swiftlight, all the managers used Excel as their main tool for project planning, and on average they were spending nearly a day a month on project process updates and reporting.



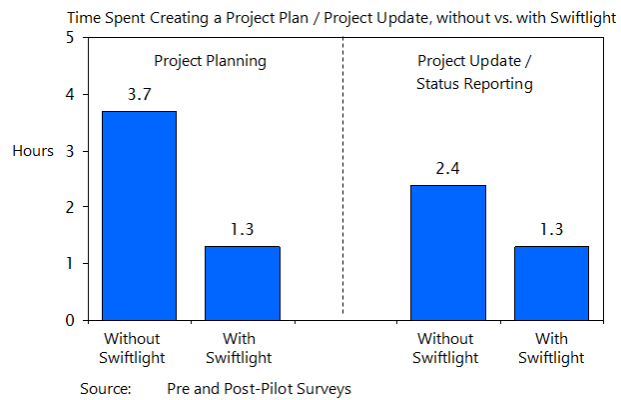
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Impact Following the trial, the respondents reported that Swiftlight helped them:

- Produce clearer plans,
- Improve project communication,

And, Swiftlight **was 2-3 times faster** in project planning and in preparing materials for project updates – saving them hours of precious time.



How to find out more?

For more information, including a detailed product description, overview videos and a free 30 day trial please visit the Swiftlight website at <http://www.swiftlightsoftware.com>.

Contact the Swiftlight team. Email: sales@torridonsolutions.com
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