
Independent Assurance

Reality checks for IT projects

IT projects are high risk / high reward

- Fewer than 20% achieve their objectives¹
- We only do them because when they do succeed, they can deliver very significant returns

¹Standish Group Chaos Report, 2005

Project failures stem from one root cause

■ People lose sight of reality

- Developers misunderstand the real objectives of the system
- Users can't find out how best to exploit technology to achieve their goals
- Project managers have trouble separating actual progress from wishful thinking

Independent Assurance helps you keep in touch
with reality

Independent Assurance increases the likelihood of project success by providing...

■ Independent checks on project objectives and status

- Are plans and objectives feasible?
- Are all stakeholders aligned in their understanding of objectives?
- Does everyone have a realistic understanding of status?

■ Independent facilitation of key project review meetings

- Experienced facilitator helps bring issues into the open in a productive way
- Experienced technologist and project manager helps identify issues that people who are “too close to the project” may miss

■ Access to a database of past experience

- Ensure that best practice is being followed
- Avoid making common mistakes

■ Access to external “insurance”

- Escalation and intervention paths
- ISO9001:2000 quality assurance

A tailored offering, aligned to customer needs and project scale

■ Alignment check

- Helps ensure developer and client are aligned on objectives, plans and velocity
- Reduces misunderstandings, hidden conflicts, over-optimism, etc.
- 0.5-1% of implementation budget

■ Ongoing review

- Alignment check plus independent review at regular milestones
- Provides ongoing assurance of alignment and status
- Provides facilitated forum to discuss progress and issues
- 1-2% of implementation budget

■ Health check

- Ongoing review plus a deeper health check at key milestones
- Drills into project status to provide deeper assurance
- Suitable for larger or mission-critical projects
- Typically 2-5% of implementation budget. (Can scale for greater assurance.)

Included in this fixed price offering:

- Develop a tailored assurance plan
- Review at project initiation and early “velocity check” milestone
- Additional milestone reviews (for higher levels of assurance)
- Issue management process
- Phone / email support
- Discount on ad hoc audits, health checks and mediation
- Access to database of past experience
- Access to experienced project manager / technologist

Example – €80k project

(can be tailored further)

Alignment Check (€800)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for conf calls
- Initiation conference call (2hr)
- Velocity check conf call (2hr)

Ongoing Review (€1600)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for conf calls
- Initiation conference call (2hr)
- Velocity check conf call (2hr)
- Status check conf call (2hr)
- Pre-implementation conf call (2hr)

Health Check (€4000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (1 day, onsite)
- Velocity check conf call (2hr)
- Status check (1 day, onsite)
- Pre-implementation conf call (2hr)

Assumptions

- 80k = approx 2 people x 3 months
- Work in 4 week “agile” cycles
- Milestones are
 - Initiation
 - Velocity check after first cycle
 - Status check after second cycle
 - Pre-implementation review after third cycle

Example – €200k project

(can be tailored further)

Alignment Check (€2000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (1 day, onsite)
- Velocity check conf call (2hr)
- Pre-implementation conf call (2hr)

Ongoing Review (€4000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (1 day, onsite)
- Velocity check conf call (2hr)
- Status check review (1 day, onsite)
- Pre-implementation conf call (2hr)

Health Check (€10,000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (2 days, onsite)
- Velocity check review (1 day, onsite)
- Status check deep review (2 days, onsite)
- Pre-implementation review (1 day, onsite)
- 4 x 1hr conf calls between milestones

Assumptions

- 200k = approx 6 people x 3 months
- Work in 4 week “agile” cycles
- Milestones are
 - Initiation
 - Velocity check after first cycle
 - Status check after second cycle
 - Pre-implementation review after third cycle

Example – €1m project

(can be tailored further)

Alignment Check (€5,000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (2 days, onsite)
- Velocity check review (1 day, onsite)
- Pre-implementation conf call (2hr)

Ongoing Review (€10,000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (2 days, onsite)
- Velocity check review (1 day, onsite)
- 3 Status check conf call (2hr)
- 1 Status check reviews (1 day, onsite)
- Pre-implementation review (1 day, onsite)

Health Check (€20,000 + travel)

- Tailor plan
- Review key project initiation and status docs and hence prepare for reviews
- Initiation review (2 days, onsite)
- Velocity check review (1 day, onsite)
- 3 Status check reviews (1 day, onsite)
- 1 Health Check deep review (2 people x 2 days, onsite)
- Pre-implementation review (2 days, onsite)
- 5 x 1hr conf calls between milestones

Assumptions

- 1m = approx 12 people x 6 months
- Work in 4 week “agile” cycles
- Milestones are
 - Initiation
 - Velocity check after first cycle
 - Status check after cycles 2-5
 - Pre-implementation review after 6th cycle

Additional elements of offering

- Issue Management Process

- Discuss issues at reviews
- Escalate unresolved issues to client sponsor and “Trade Association”
- If issue still not resolved, develop a rescue plan
 - This is no longer independent assurance: once we start a rescue, we lose independence and need a separate plan and contract. However, the understanding we have gained during earlier reviews will accelerate the rescue process.

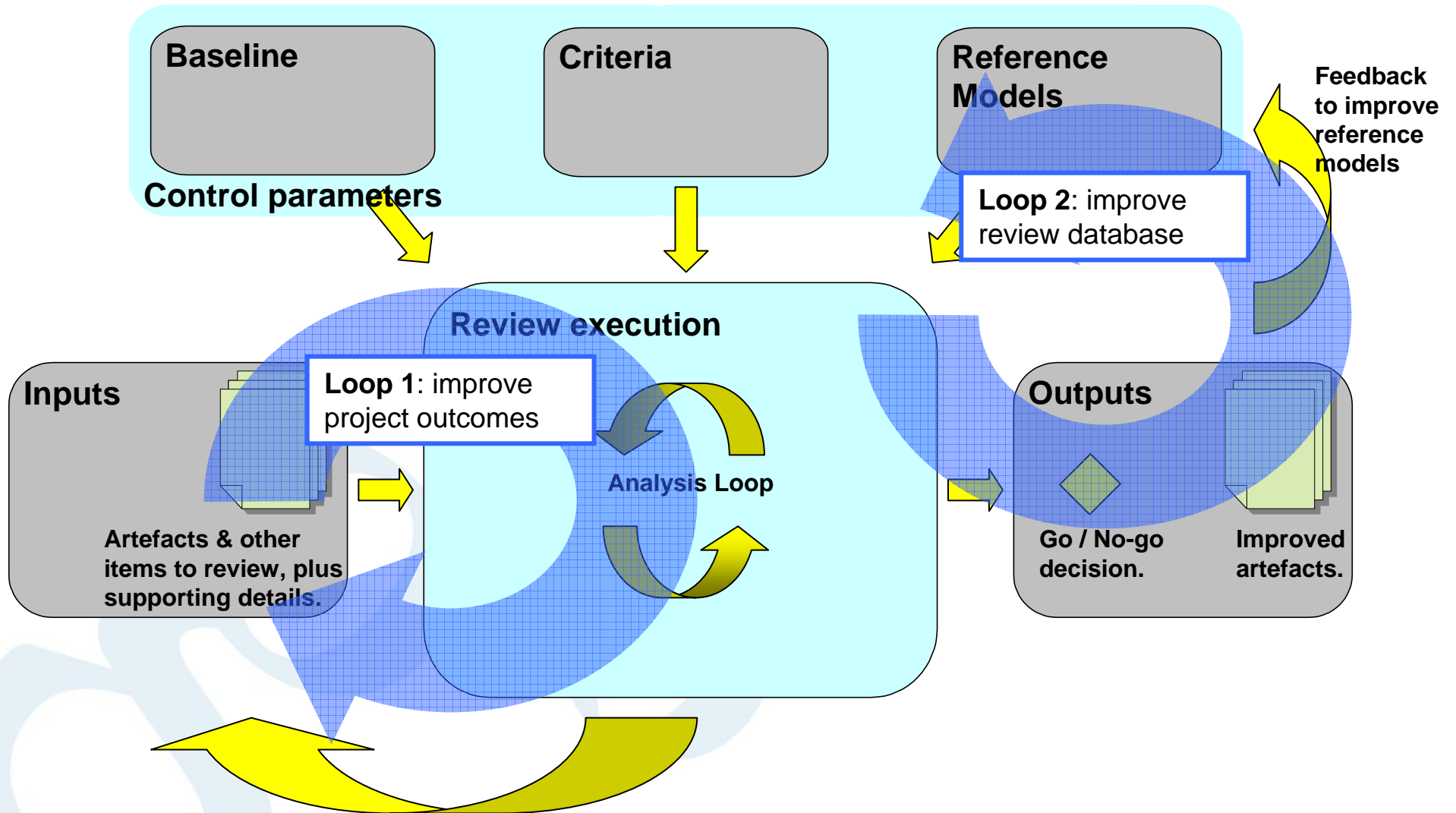
- Phone / email support

- Defined SLAs to respond to general questions during the project

- Discounts on ad hoc audits and other work

- Access to database and expertise – see following slides

Double loop learning improves project outcomes and review effectiveness...



Database includes checklists to cover

- Objectives (Are they clear and agreed?)
- Critical Success Factors (Do we know what needs to be done to achieve success?)
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Plans
- Technical architecture and best practice
- Risks
 - User experience
 - Technical
 - Planning
 - Content development and migration
 - Infrastructure
 - Stakeholders

For projects to succeed

■ Keep in touch with reality

- Assure that objectives are clearly understood at the outset
- Check regularly that you are where you think you are
- Get independent confirmation, to avoid groupthink and wishful thinking

■ Invest 1-5% of project budget now, to avoid large overruns later

Testimonials

- *"Graham Oakes, a facilitator and business and technology consultant [...acted] as a mentor and assisted in knowledge transfer through the provision of carefully designed workshops. These helped customer organisations frame the discussions between business and IT and encouraged them to understand that systems need to be addressed from a holistic perspective."*

British Computer Society IT Consultant of the Year awards, 2003

- *"Once again this has gone far beyond my expectations. Thanks again for outstanding work all-round."*

Charles Fadel, Global Lead for Education, Cisco Systems

- *"There was a very constructive spirit during the workshop and a clear sense of direction and priorities for the CRM project emerged."*

Fraser Woodburn, University Secretary, The Open University

- *"Once again you come to the rescue! Many thanks for your support which is immensely valuable to us."*

Cowan Coventry, CEO, Intermediate Technology Development Group

- *"Graham is a passionate and unconventional thinker. His passion for quality and customer focus is complemented by his open nature and inclusive style of working."*

Darryl Feldman, Head of User Experience and Design, Yahoo Europe

Graham Oakes Ltd



■ Making sense of technology

- We help people work out how to use technology to achieve business goals.
- We deploy highly experienced consultants with a diverse set of technical, management and people-centred skills. Our principal, Dr Graham Oakes, is a highly skilled systems engineer with over 20 years' experience in the industry and a track record of delivering highly innovative solutions.

■ Clients

- **Amnesty International** – Defined enterprise content management strategy to support information sharing between researchers, activists and external partners (e.g. journalists, other NGOs).
- **Cisco Worldwide Education** – Defined financial models, competitive marketplace and potential infrastructure partners to commercialise Cisco's e-learning assets in Europe.
- **The Open University** – Defined enterprise architecture, customer relationship management strategy, and business case for renewing course production systems.
- **Oxfam** – Defined strategy and business case for content management and customer relationship management systems.
- **Intermediate Technology Development Group** – Defined enterprise architecture for knowledge sharing amongst communities of researchers and project teams in first and third world.
- **MessageLabs** – Helped define & implement technology strategy for customer and partner self-service portal.
- **Sapient Ltd** – Helped define & implement risk management strategy for customer billing solution.

■ Services

- Business and technology alignment
- Integrated business, technical and human architecture
- Technology innovation
- Project execution and review

■ ISO9001:2000

- Currently implementing QMS under PCG QS scheme

