MONASH University

ITS PROJECT OFFICE

Issue Management @ Monash

A guide to Issue Management
of IT projects at Monash

Revision History

Version No	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment
1.0	19 January 2006	Original Version

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1. Introduction

This guide accompanies the file, “issue-log-template.xls”, and describes the use of this template. An issue management process should be put in place for all information technology (IT) projects.

2. Benefits of Issue Management

Every project will have a number of issues arise during the project’s lifecycle. A defined and methodical process to manage issues is an essential tool to ensure issues are raised, investigated, escalated and resolved in an efficient manner.

The proper use of an issues log provides:

- A method for team members to openly raise issues.
- A means of re-assigning and tracking issues.
- A means of analysing and prioritising issues.
- A means of reporting on issues.
- An indicator of the project ‘health’, and production readiness.
- A record of resolutions, as reference for future similar or same issues.

3. Principles of Issue Management

Some principles relating to Issue Management:

- Issues, risks and changes are different concepts. Risks are any factor that may adversely affect the successful completion of the project. Risks are analysed in advance, mitigated and tracked (and they may never occur). Issues are generally problems that arise as a surprise, and need to be resolved. Changes are out of scope work components that might be approved as in-scope to resolve an issue, or mitigate a risk.
- Issues may be described as problems, hurdles, gaps, inconsistencies, and conflicts on the project.
- Issues have a cycle which may be described as: Raising – Investigating – Escalating - Implementing Fix - Resolved. ‘Escalating’ may mean direction is sought from the project sponsor or steering committee, but may not necessarily be required to resolve the issue.
- Ultimately the project manager is responsible to monitor issues; however issues should be raised and resolved amongst the team where appropriate. An issue should be assigned to a project team member until it is resolved. For some issues, it may be warranted to assign a responsible coordinator, to oversee the issue through its cycle until it is resolved.
- The existence of an unresolved issue or the resolution of an issue may have an impact on time, cost or quality.

4. Setting up the Issue Log

A number of aspects should be addressed in the early stage of a project to successfully operate an issue management process:

- The responsibility of each team member in the process.
- The location of the issue log.
- The accessibility of the issue log.
- Read/write privileges.
- The monitoring and reporting cycle.

Before using "issue-log-template.xls", the template needs to be set up. The following should be performed:

- Open the log and go to the 'Field Values' tab.
- Enter the project team list of names and initials (clear the sample list of names provided).
- Read the values and value descriptions for the other fields: Type, Priority, Severity, and Status. These may be modified to suit your project.
- On the "Issue Log" tab, clear the sample issue.

5. Operating the Issue Log

1) Logging an issue

Who: Issues may be raised by anyone on the project team. If some filtering of issues prior to logging them is desired, then project team members may raise issues with their relevant technical team leader or the project manager, who will then in turn log the issues as necessary. This should be decided at the start of the project and communicated to team members.

How:

- Open the issue log.
- Check that the issue has not been logged already.
- Enter the issue on the next available row.
- Enter data into all fields provided (read comments on the field headings for clarification).
- In the "Status / Action Update Diary" field, enter today's date, and notes about the current status and what further action is required.
- Notify (via email) the current assignee of the issue, so they are aware that action is now required of them.

2) Investigating the Issue

Some further investigation may be required to understand the full complexity of the issue. Some of the fields may need to be revised as a result of this. E.g. the severity of the issue may be worse than first thought.

- While investigation is occurring the status of the issue should be set to "Investigating".
- In the "Status / Action Update Diary" field, enter notes about the current status and what further action is required.

3) Escalate the Issue

Some issues may require escalation to the project sponsor or project steering committee, some may not and the project manager should decide this. For example, the resolution to an issue may require additional spending or time delays, therefore it is appropriate to seek guidance and/or approval.

- Once escalated, the status of the issue should be set to "Escalated".
- In the "Status / Action Update Diary" field, enter notes about the current status and what further action is required.

4) Implementing the Fix

Once an issue has been investigated, a solution found, and approved if necessary the fix may be implemented.

- While the fix is being implemented, the status of the issue should be set to “Implementing Fix”.
- In the “Status / Action Update Diary” field, enter notes about the current status and what further action is required.
- In the “Final Resolution / Solution” field, enter notes describing the final resolution or solution.

5) Issue is Resolved

Note that under his process, the issue is not resolved until the issue solution has been both found and implemented.

- Once the resolution / fix to the issue has been implemented, the issue may now be set to “Resolved”.
- In the “Status / Action Update Diary” field, enter notes about the current status.

6) Notifications through the life of an issue:

It is important to ensure appropriate communication is occurring to resolve an issue efficiently:
Each time the “Current Assignee” field changes, the team member who is updating the issue log should notify the new “current assignee” via email.

The “Resolving Parties” field should be maintained so that it is known which are the relevant people to attend meetings and participate in resolution of the issue.

The “Notifiable Parties” field should be maintained so that it is known which are the people to be notified about the status and resolution of an issue. E.g. a 3rd party vendor may have an interest in a particular issue.