Agree on "what is a project" and phases

Ask a team of 10 people to independently write their answers to "what is a project?" chances are you'll get 10 different answers.

How to set it up

Step 1. Ensure you have an appropriate decision maker engaged (async or live) who can help standardize the outcome of this exercise across teams.

Step 2. In a collaborative document (or in a meeting) collect examples of projects across departments.

Step 3. Ask a selection of project owners, contributors and group leaders across departments to fill out a "Mad Libs" style template to create their definition of a project. The template should include number of people, time period and differentiating features of projects (compared to work that is not a project, like a spike (quick burst of work) or service-style engagement)). For example Atlassian defines a project as any body of work that requires 2+ people for 2+ weeks. Yes, it can be that simple.

Step 4. Once you collect everyone's inputs on your collaborative document, as the facilitator, use the inputs of your advisory group to propose one (or a few) project definitions for your advisory group to react to.

Step 5. Collect input to your proposed project definitions, revise and propose to the decision maker for use across the company.

Step 6. Once project definition is agreed on, you have the foundation to define what phases each project will go through. The Project Management Institute defines the 5 phases of a project as Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling and Closing (**source**). Atlassian development teams use Wonder, Explore, Make, Impact.

The Loop: A project communication framework written by Atlassian teams **atlassian.com/loop**

Step 6 cont. We recommend starting with a standard framework and making it your own. Put it in your own language, reflect your company values and ensure it can be used and understood across functions.

Step 7. Design a system to reflect the project phase in each team's updates. Atlassian teams reflect it on their **Project Poster** and in their **Team Central** weekly updates.

Step 8. Communicate to key project drivers the guidelines for project definition and phases and build in a mechanism to receive their feedback as each project leader uses the new guidelines.