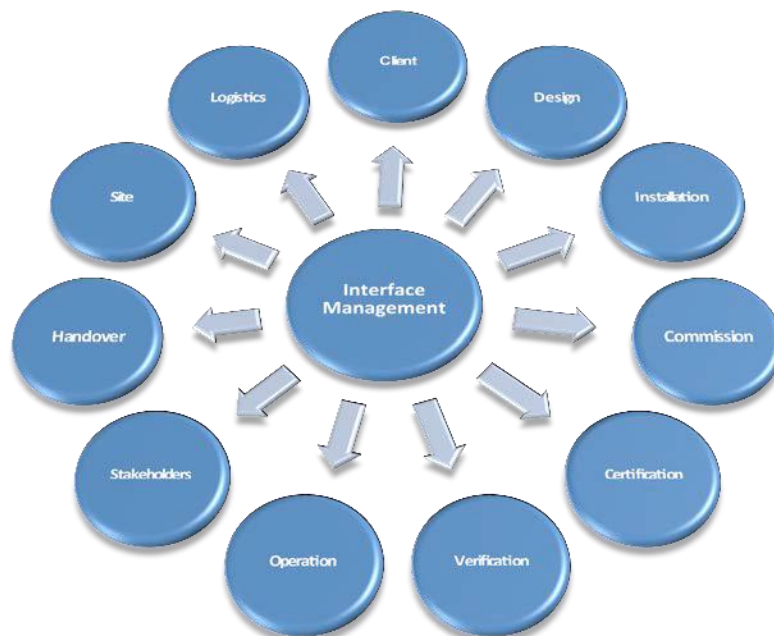# Project Interface Management
(PIMs – not just a summer drink!)

A proven process available for all but used by few

Interface Management is a proven process available to a Project Team and is often under used as a specific tool. Some Project Managers believe it is something they can manage without, but Interface Management when incorporated into the work processes of the project will often help highlight underlying critical issues much earlier in the project than would otherwise be revealed. This would then impact upon project cost and schedule.

We all know that good communication is vital to project success and using an Interface Management process formalizes and enhances collaboration between organisations, and all parties of a project. This has a positive impact for all concerned and in the final outcome of the project itself.

At GPO we advocate the practice of Interface Management, its benefits far outweigh the informal collection of e mails and meeting notes. It provides a concise record of the transfer of key project information that is auditable, can be monitored and enhances communication within the project team.

The objective of the Interface Management process is to facilitate agreements with other stakeholders. This includes roles & responsibilities, the timing for providing interface information and the identification of critical interfaces early in the project through a structured process. This highlights the early identification of issues and risks with potential for impact to cost and schedule, thereby allowing the project time to control, mitigate or eliminate project risks. Interface Management also enhances relationships between the different organisations, giving an open communication system of issues and cooperation, where problems can be resolved more effectively. It also goes hand in hand with Risk Management – management tools for Project Success.

The interface management process is designed to provide a simple but effective method to formally document and track the exchange of information, between project participants and to monitor the performance of all participants in making available the required information.

The process involves:

• Identification and recording an interface
• Creating an interface agreement
• Agreeing / resolving conflict
• Monitoring the status
• Reporting the status
• Closing the interface agreement

Requirements

Large engineering and renewable energy projects will involve multiple participants and most likely in different geographical locations. This results in cultural and language differences and the necessity to collaborate and work together over multiple time zones. In situations such as this it is essential for the Project Interface Manager to have the ability to interface and coordinate information. This requires establishing a simple process that all participants can understand and follow to coordinate activities directly with each other. This ensures an effective exchange of critical information for project success and minimises project risks as well as enabling an easier cross cultural working relationship.

The requirement to provide specific, detailed requests means that the party making the request must give careful thought to the detail of the information requested and to the

timing of the delivery of the information. Therefore Interface agreement forms are essential, and give lots of additional information such as the priority of the request, the date it was raised, the status of the agreement, whether it is open or closed and much more. The requirement for both parties to sign the Interface Agreement Form also brings a formality to the process similar to the sign off of engineering documents, requiring some means that a dialogue regarding the information and its delivery must take place between the parties in order that agreement can be reached.

The Interface Management process must be formal, robust, and transparent to all participants and more importantly, must be managed by someone from within each organization known as the Project Interface Engineer, who is aware of the criticality of the process for project success.

In addition to the Project Interface Engineer(s) there will also be a single Project Interface Manager nominated. The Project Interface Manager (usually within the client organisation and supplied by GPO) has overall responsibility for implementation and maintenance of the whole interface management process throughout the project life cycle. This person will follow the Interface Management work process, recording and logging the interface agreements, monitoring and chasing progress, ensuring that schedule requirements are maintained and highlighting any area of concerns to the Project Manager.

Advantages

As we have already mentioned: the main advantage of implementing an Interface Management process is that it encourages meaningful communication between the various project stakeholders, and assisting in breaking down barriers between organisations.