

Times Union

Prometheus Program Charter & Scope Statement

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Document authored and endorsed by: Prometheus Stakeholders:
Mary Fran Gleason, Project manager

Mark Aldam
Monica Bartoszek
Patti Hart
Bob Port
Mike Spain
Rex Smith
Jeff Wilson

Inside

Version History.....	3
About this charter.....	3
Project Name	3
Project Mission	3
Project Benefits	3
Background	4
Goals and Objectives	4
Scope	6
Delivery Concept Definition.....	6
Areas of Impact.....	6
Risks.....	7
Assumptions	8
Constraints	8
Implementation Approach.....	8
Functional Requirements	9
Key Endorsements.....	10

Version history

Date	Version Number	Author	Details
3/30/07	1	JW	First draft for newsroom management review.
4/10/07	2	JW, MS, MFG	Second draft
4/20/07	3	JW, MS, MFG	Third draft
5/1/07	4	JW, MS, MFG	Fourth draft
5/18/07	5	RS, MFG	Final draft
5/30/07	6	MFG	Additions to final draft
6/21/07	7	MFG	Edits to final draft

About this charter

This document serves as a covenant of intent between the program team and senior management. By signing this charter, stakeholders validate the program’s concept, scope and requirements necessary for implementation. The charter is intended only for high-level internal distribution.

Project name

Prometheus — (Ancient Greek, Προμηθεύς, "forethought") named for the Titan who was intent upon making the world wiser and better. He gave fire to mortals so they could live happy and productive lives. Prometheus is depicted as intelligent and always thinking about ways to make the future better. To this day, the term “promethean” refers to events or people of great creativity, intellect and boldness. (Wikipedia; Old Greek Stories by James Baldwin)

Project mission

To transform the Times Union newsroom into a more nimble, efficient and responsive operation that embraces and employs multi-media newsgathering techniques to meet the demand for customized news and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on multiple platforms.

Project benefits

- Provide easily accessible content (print, photos and multimedia) for multiple online and print applications, including niche products, through a database that captures, catalogs, tags and distributes news and information.
- Provide a more effective means for the community to submit and access information.
- Provide and support additional creative advertising presentation options for print products.
- Fortify the company’s dominance in local news content development.

- Leverage our primary assets – information, images and staff expertise – into new products, services and other responses to market needs.
- Focus and deploy staff on value-added activities and initiatives.
- Significantly improve and enliven all pages of print products.

Background

The need for an Editorial Content Management System (ECMS) and the historic shift in the media industry forced newsroom leaders to look at our operation and redefine our processes as we move rapidly into the multi-media information age.

We enlisted media consultant Patti Myers to map our existing processes and help us revise them for better efficiency to meet readers' expectations. We quickly realized that the process of identifying a new ECMS demanded a serious reexamination of every aspect of what we do in the newsroom — how we gather, process and disseminate information.

In short, we must revolutionize our culture. While technology advancement is an undeniably critical component of our success we must establish a cultural environment that will effectively utilize improved technology.

We have identified four major categories — technology, staff migration, training and physical environment — that, when tied together, will enable us to establish a 24/7 workflow that is responsive to current print and online operations as well as future information channels.

Project leaders will be identified to spearhead and track the various work packages that make up Prometheus.

Goals and objectives

Establish a 24/7, multi-platformed, news-gathering organization through:

Implementation of process maps:

Some process revision is possible using our current technology. Planning and implementation of these process revisions will begin immediately.

Some process revision is NOT possible without new enabling technologies. This will be planned and readied for implementation pending technology updates.

Staff migration: Personnel issues must be taken into account. There will likely be redefinition of positions and reassignment of duties within the organization.

Training: Essential for staff development, new job responsibilities, cultural leadership and new technologies.

Physical environment improvements: The workplace must be able to support these ambitious plans. The current environment is not conducive to effective teamwork and does not support the flexibility needed to rapidly define workflows and redeploy staff.

- Office and floor plan layout
- Work stations and desks

Technology upgrades: Technology is almost a program within a program. The ECMS migration is a self-contained project as is the definition and creation of the Information Database of Events, Assignments and Stories (IDEAS). Acquiring enabling technologies, and associated training, is necessary to achieve cross-media platform readiness.

Editorial Content Management System (ECMS): Integrated computer hardware and software system that supports the generation and management of content for print and digital packaging and distribution. System interfaces with existing and future systems, including image archive, web content and advertising.

Information Database of Events, Assignments and Stories (IDEAS): The content capture component of the ECMS, this database system funnels, tags and directs information from internal and external sources. IDEAS is the foundation for requesting, determining and tracking items scheduled for publication.

Enabling technologies: Including, but not limited to: Laptops, multiple flat-screen monitors, BlackBerrys and video cameras.

Overall program expense and capital budget administration: Each of the work packages, or projects, has independent budgetary needs that should not be dependent on other aspects of the program.

Scope

The following functional core objectives have been identified for program completion:

1. Technologies
 - a. Editorial Content Management System
 - b. IDEAS
 - c. Enabling technologies
2. Process map implementation
 - a. Technology independent
 - b. Technology dependent
3. Physical environment improvements
 - a. Staff work stations
 - b. Floor plans, department layout and group work spaces
4. Staff migration and training
 - a. General training issues, for example: cultural changes, management and leadership training
 - b. New technology-related training issues
 - c. Staff positions retitled and redefined

Delivery concept definition

The project's methodology will allow us to deliver the associated projects in a timely, cost-effective, flexible and quality manner. This concept will be achieved through:

- Overhauling the newsroom's culture into a 24/7 multi-platform operation
- Budgeting for individual projects
- Creating an Internal Communication Plan
- Planning and integrating process, technology, organization, people and leadership
- Envisioning, planning and designing the physical newsroom environment
- Planning and implementing future process maps

Areas of impact

The entire Times Union community will be directly affected by Prometheus, as will our existing print and online audiences, and customers yet to be reached.

During the deployment phases — concept validation, full-scale development and implementation — the Internal Communication Plan will be integral to reinforcing the project's mission and advising staff of the program's progress and the need for their support.

Prometheus project leaders will provide communications, support staffing initiatives, analyze technology physical environment issues, research, propose and implement, implement future process maps and conduct and participate in project meetings. Specific resource requirements for each project will be determined at project start-up.

Risks

Risk Area	Assessment	Impact	Mitigation
Leadership, Support and Buy-In	High	Project requires primary support of executive staff, senior newsroom management and newsroom staff.	Dedicated communications/marketing and change management efforts.
Scope	High	<p>Project scope is extremely broad as it has many moving parts and variables.</p> <p>Scope is very ambitious with many potential opportunities for derailment.</p> <p>Although project scope is extremely broad, it will expand even more as new avenues for revision and reexamination become apparent as program proceeds.</p>	<p>Consistent delivery of the project's mission/charter and vocal support from the Executive Sponsor and senior management.</p> <p>Agreement from all parties, critical stakeholders, project leaders and executive sponsors, to abide by the scope and mission of the project as defined by the charter.</p> <p>Agree to the integrity of the project timeline.</p>
Cost	High	<p>Only very high level cost estimates have been performed in certain narrowly defined areas (i.e. the ECMS).</p> <p>If budgeting is to be secured for 2008 for the physical environment, IDEAS, etc. process must be accelerated to define and obtain funding.</p> <p>Incremental costs are expected but unknown at this time.</p>	<p>Assign necessary project leaders, define discrete project scopes, obtain necessary resource estimates.</p> <p>Write justifications, gain necessary executive buy-in and approval.</p> <p>Follow through on project funding and contract awards (where applicable) to guarantee project execution.</p>
Schedule	Medium / High	<p>No master timeline has been created.</p> <p>Budgetary issues could impact timeline.</p> <p>Critical support communities will lose interest and morale will dissipate.</p> <p>Loss of competitive edge.</p>	<p>Create a clear timeline and define major milestones.</p> <p>Choose project leaders and begin project definition process immediately to obtain necessary funding.</p> <p>Refine change methodologies, project plans and clarify communications plan.</p> <p>Maintain project momentum through frequent emphasis of mission and charter.</p>
Staffing	Medium/High	Success of project depends on staffing flexibility, union relations, experience and training in technical and non-technical areas.	Educate staff in technical and non-technical functions; redefine workflow, realign work units to comply with charter and mission; refine labor contracts as necessary.

Assumptions

Our methodology will be piloted by smaller pathfinder projects to help the project team prepare and acquire lessons learned prior to larger rollout.

Prometheus team members will lead and participate in the pathfinder projects to gain knowledge of the effectiveness of the methodology.

Initial high level project plans will be defined and project leaders will be identified as soon as possible.

Creation of project plans will begin immediately after kick-off which is expected to take place sometime in the second quarter.

Constraints

Budget process may not keep pace with program timeline.

Implementation schedule for technology is unknown.

Key project leaders have other responsibilities which may divert their energy and attention.

Implementation approach

The implementation will begin in May 2007 and take no more than two years. The following phases are currently planned:

An important first step of the program is concept validation which will begin immediately and function within the pathfinder phase of each project. Concept validation will help ensure targeted and consistent execution of the projects. Overall implementation planning also will be completed during this phase.

Projects will roll out in a phased approach along a timeline yet to be determined.

The implementation plan will include specific tasks and deliverables for each phase. The plan also will define the overall program completion goals and will set specific objectives for each year of the implementation.

Specific implementation project plans for each approved phase will be developed at milestone decision points.

Functional requirements

The following table reflects the requirements for each phase of the project. Project plans will be developed at the start of each phase and will define specific tasks, resource requirements and milestones.

Concept Validation 2007	Project Level Deployment 2008	Full Scale Implementation 2009
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project's approach approved by Executive Committee. 2. Communication plan established. 3. Define Systems Editor position and hire. Select IS&S lead for ECMS. Pivotal for ECMS rollout. 4. Create specs / RFP for IDEAS and obtain quotes. 5. Project budget developed. 6. Process map implementation begins. 7. Staffing migration requirements defined and begins. 8. Initial training assessments made and training begins. 9. Pathfinder pilot project teams test methodologies. 10. Staff-related enabling technologies deployment begins. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical environment implementation begins. 2. Editorial Content Management System deployed. 3. IDEAS developed and deployed internally. 4. Staffing migrations ongoing. 5. Staff training ongoing. 6. Pathfinder projects ongoing in sub-projects. 7. Staff-related enabling technologies deployment ongoing. 8. Technology dependent process map implementation begins. 9. Technical infrastructure deployed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. External IDEAS deployment complete. 2. Physical environment changes complete. 3. Staffing Migrations complete. 4. Staff Training ongoing. 5. Staff-related enabling technologies deployment ongoing. 6. Process map implementation complete. 7. Proficiency is achieved.

Key endorsements

- Publisher: Mark Aldam
- Executive Sponsor : Rex Smith
- Project Manager: Mary Fran Gleason
- Project Leads: Mike Spain and Jeff Wilson

Approvals:

Publisher

Date: _____

Executive Sponsor

Date: _____

Project Manager

Date: _____

Project Lead

Date: _____

Project Lead

Date: _____