

Fresh Face In IT Estimating Software

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We at ProjectExperts get a lot of use from our own tools, such as Quest For Better Estimates™. However, we also use commercially available products, to triangulate an estimate, and get other points of view. In coaching the formation of Project Management Offices we always recommend one of a handful of commercial products, in addition to our ExperTools.

But that's not the purpose of this article. What *is* the purpose of this article is to introduce you to a fresh face in IT Estimating Software. The product is PQM*Plus* version 3.0, developed by Union Pacific Technologies and inspired and marketed by our friends at Q/P Management Group, Inc. We reviewed a demo version.

The product has the features of today's most popular packages, but at a more reasonable price: At most it is \$3885 per user, rather than the \$25-30K site license we've seen. This makes this tool a candidate for your Project Management Office. And for those who need just some of the features, there are three different ways you can package it, for different audiences.

First Glances

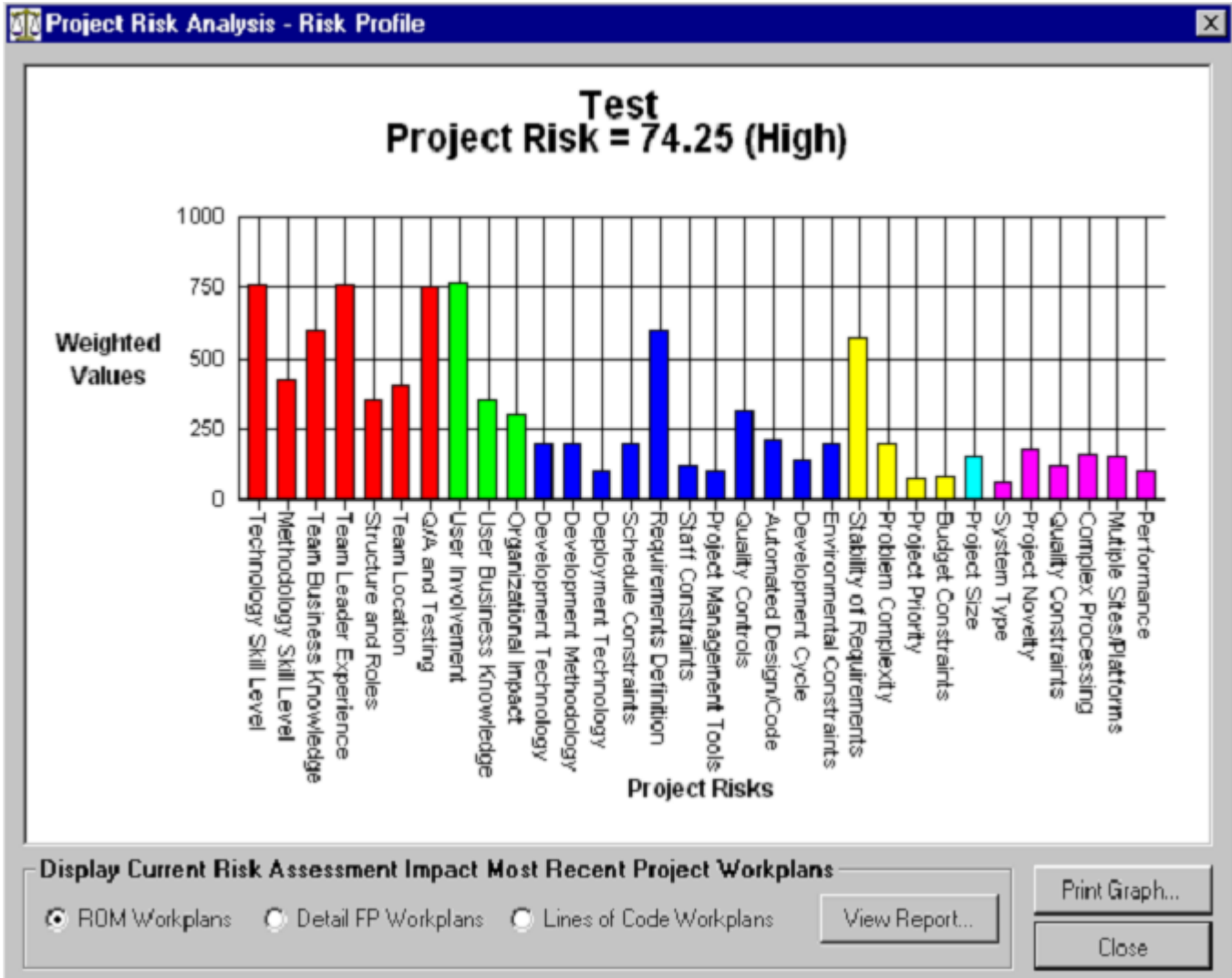
- Installation is straight-forward, given the company's clear email instructions.
- On startup, a Wizard takes control, walking you through the steps of customizing and project startup.
- Once customizing was complete, you can either use the Wizard or interact directly with the menus.
- Anyone with a background of estimating and measurement can quickly explore the tool's features.

Among the Things We Really Liked

- The Wizard remembers where you left off. Nice!
- The Wizard walks you through three different planning and record keeping stages for a project.
- Easy to start and set up a new project.
- Built-in Guidelines in ROM estimating that suggested Input/Output counts, based on Files count.

Functions

- Select Methodology from included ones, or add your own-maybe we should embed THE Guide!
- Provide a Rough Order of Magnitude estimate, using preliminary Function Points, with the cost per point driven by technologies used.
- Perform a Risk Assessment: it results in a Risk Factor, smart for bidding. It does a nice chart, too (see example, below). Note that in modeling a web-based project, we more than doubled the estimate with the Risk!
- Perform a Corporate Value Analysis with a graphical view, great for getting approvals.
- Perform serious Function Point Counting: We'd expect this, as Q/P are experts in this field.
- Project Defect Log: This gets into the quality tracking side of the tool
- Generate and "what if" a top-down project plan, using either the ROM or Detailed estimates.
- Export the project plan in either Microsoft Project or ABT Workbench.
- At project end, capture defects, quality survey results and project actuals for history.



On top of all this, PQMPlus provides a host of reporting and fine-tuning features.

What We Didn't Like As Much

- The Wizard has no clear frame of reference, so it is a little hard to see where you are in the process.
- Sometimes there is no feedback. For example, opening a file merely shows more menu options.
- In this beta version, technology choices did not always seem to affect the ROM estimate.
- We exported WBS Activities and effort estimates, but could not export Roles, duration or precedent relationships.

Summary

As mentioned earlier, we recommend that every shop should have at least one commercial estimating tool. PQMPlus should be on your evaluation list, especially if you are interested in quality measurement and metrics. That is one of the strengths of this product, and unique at this price point. And if you need help doing baseline Function Point counts, or just learning more about estimating, the folks at Q/P Management can help you there, too.

Reference: Q/P Management Website: www.QPMG.com

About the Author



STACY A. GOFF, PMP, the *PM Performance*™ Coach, is CEO of ProjectExperts®, a global Program and Project Management consulting, methods, tools and Learning consultancy.

A co-founder and past President of IPMA-USA, Stacy has been an officer in IPMA®, the International Project Management Association. In 2015, he was named an IPMA Honorary Fellow. As well, he has contributed to the success of Project Management Institute since 1983.

A Project Management practitioner since 1970 and PM consultant since 1982, he improves Enterprise or project team PM competence, efficiency, and Performance. Mr. Goff speaks at industry events, offers coaching and consulting services, and presents workshops of great interest to Executives, Managers, Project Managers and leaders, technical staff, and individual contributors.

His Project Management tools and methods are used by Government Agencies, Enterprises, Consultancies, and individuals on six continents.

He combines his PM Process insights with wide-ranging experience in projects and programs, and with sensitivity for the human aspects of projects.

The result: Measurably increased ***PM Performance--Personal, Project, Program, and Portfolio Performance.***

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