

From vision to value:

The program management handbook for professional services

 smartsheet

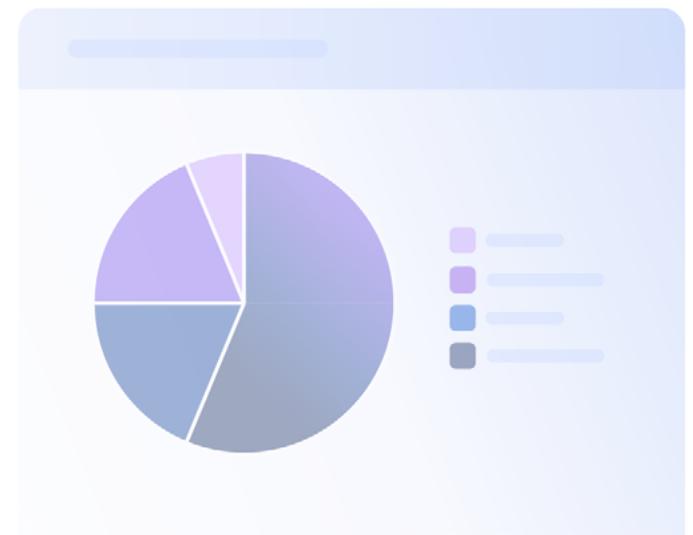
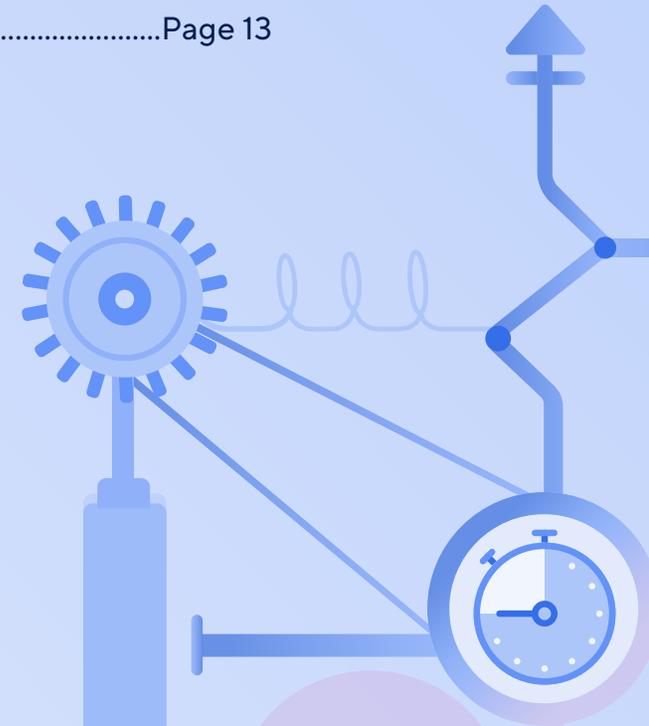


Table of contents

Introduction	Page 3
Signs you need to evaluate your approach to program management	Page 4
What does successful program management for professional services look like?	Page 5
Five steps to optimize your program management strategy	Page 7
Conclusion	Page 12
About Smartsheet	Page 13



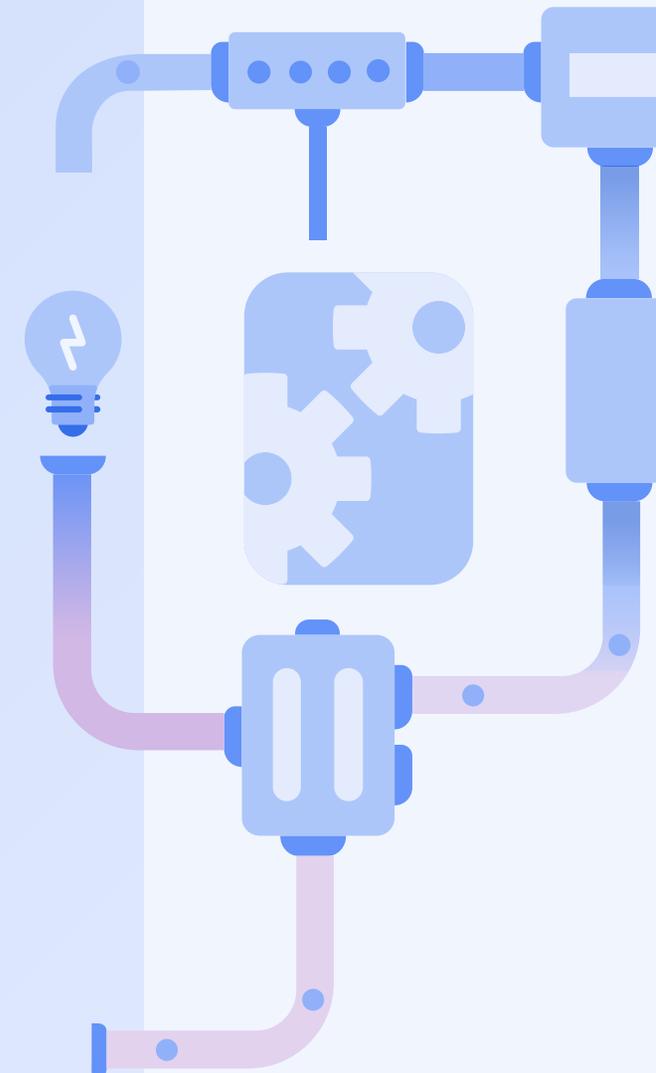
As professional services organizations grow, the amount of work to prioritize, produce, and deliver increases exponentially. Matching the right skills to the right jobs becomes more complex, and the consequences of ineffective systems and processes get more expensive.

On average, professional services organizations lose 4.3% of their revenue every year—an average of \$8 million for a mid-sized consulting firm (source: *Service Performance Insight*).

We've created this handbook to help you evolve your approach to project management, ensuring your professional services team is well-equipped to tackle complex customer projects and engagements at scale. The approach we outline in this handbook embraces flexibility, combining collaborative work execution with process standardization and automation to achieve repeatability, transparency, and efficiency. It helps you differentiate your organization from the competition by connecting the right tools, improving visibility into work progress and performance, and powering both consistency and innovation.

In this handbook, we will:

- Reveal how to identify pain points that can be addressed by updating your approach to managing services projects and programs
- Show you real-life examples of service-centric businesses that have successfully evolved their approach to program management
- Walk you through how to implement an updated strategy of your own



Signs you need to evaluate your approach to program management

Many of the challenges you may be currently facing can be alleviated by evaluating and evolving the way you manage projects and programs. These pain points include:



Difficulty managing project volume and variety:

Your current tools are rigid, lack configurability, and fail to manage the full project lifecycle.



Siloed systems and fragmented data:

You find it difficult to keep track of project-related details and documents because they live in so many disconnected systems.



Consultant turnover and overworked teams:

You struggle to plan capacity across projects or match the right skills to the right jobs, preventing teams and consultants from doing their best work, ultimately impacting project quality and delivery.



Revenue loss:

Your team struggles with identifying risks, as well as inaccurate scoping and prioritizing of engagements that offer the most value, eventually contributing to revenue loss.



Time-consuming administrative tasks:

You spend a lot of time balancing budgets and managing schedules, minimizing billable consultant utilization.



Poor client expectation management:

Your customer feedback loops are broken.



Delayed, inconsistent project delivery:

You are often unable to produce project deliverables on time or on budget, and outcomes tend to vary.



Inefficient communication and collaboration:

You struggle to share information and work effectively with cross-functional team members and customers.



Manual data collection and reporting:

You constantly have to manually aggregate data and provide status updates, impeding your ability to be agile and mitigate risks.

What does successful program management for professional services look like?

Updating the way you manage projects and programs has a wide variety of benefits, from cost savings to efficiency gains. In the real world, successful program management looks like:



Global systems integrator

**Convergint accelerated invoice collection
by 30+ days**

by unifying processes across 180 global locations, 10,000 internal users, and 4,000+ collaborators in Smartsheet.



Global provider of cloud-based human capital management (HCM) solutions

**ADP saved
150+ hours annually**

by reducing the amount of manual effort necessary to get project details and reports.



Leading provider of retail technology

**Toshiba saw a
25% efficiency gain**

when they used Smartsheet for coordinating projects, reporting, and running meetings.



Global information management and storage provider

**Iron Mountain saves
\$4 million per year**

thanks to centralizing project details, automating workflows, and building dashboards in Smartsheet.

A new approach

A fresh approach to program management also makes it easier for professional services firms to:



Prioritize

and scope the highest value projects and programs



Foresee

risks before they become major roadblocks



Standardize

the best frameworks and workflows to ensure repeatability



Manage

Effectively manage costs, timelines, and skills



Ensure

alignment with overall company goals



Demonstrate

value to customers and leadership



Increase

project success rates



Adapt

to shifting priorities and changing requirements



Maximize

billable consultant utilization



Drive

greater customer value and outcomes

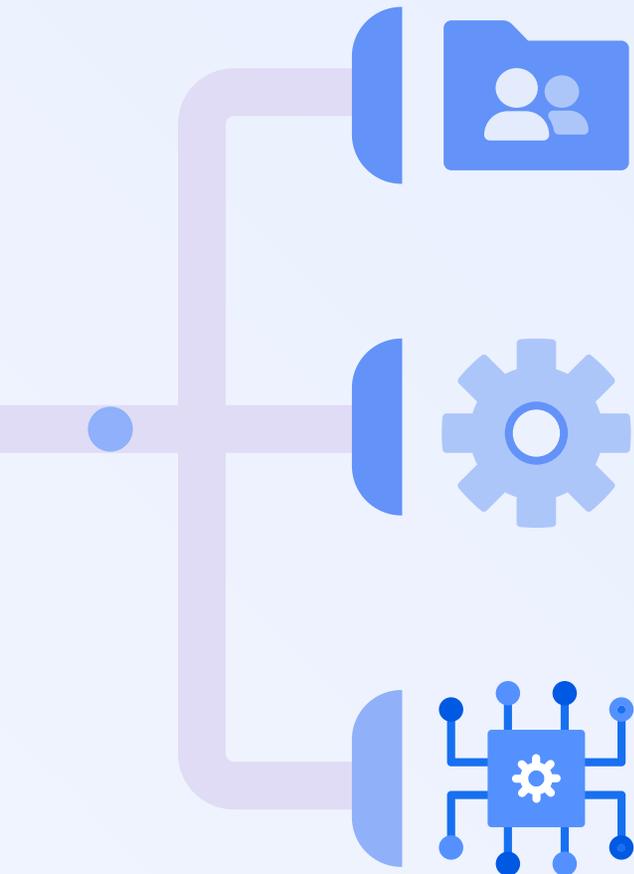
Five steps to optimize your program management strategy

Professional services organizations of all types and sizes can benefit from evaluating and optimizing their strategy. To implement an effective solution that makes sense for your team and clients, follow these five steps:

1. Evaluate your tech stack.

Your tech stack is the full set of technology tools, platforms, and applications that your team uses to conduct business and track results. There are many different tools to consider when building a tech stack to meet the specific needs of your organization and clients—which opens up the possibility of tool sprawl, data silos, and disconnection. To prevent this, your stack should include a unified work management solution in addition to other tools that can integrate easily with each other, tie into your business strategy, and scale along with your organization as it evolves. Additionally, look for a platform that is highly reviewed and has robust support teams to aid in setup and troubleshooting.

It's critical that the solution you choose is easy to learn and use not just for internal teams, but also for your customers. It should provide support for the full project lifecycle and continuum of engagements. Flexibility is key since your team will be using the platform for a variety of projects and delivery models based on clients' different needs. It's especially important to choose a solution that integrates seamlessly with your customer relationship management platform (CRM). This will help keep sales and services teams aligned and ensure that there's a seamless transition for clients.



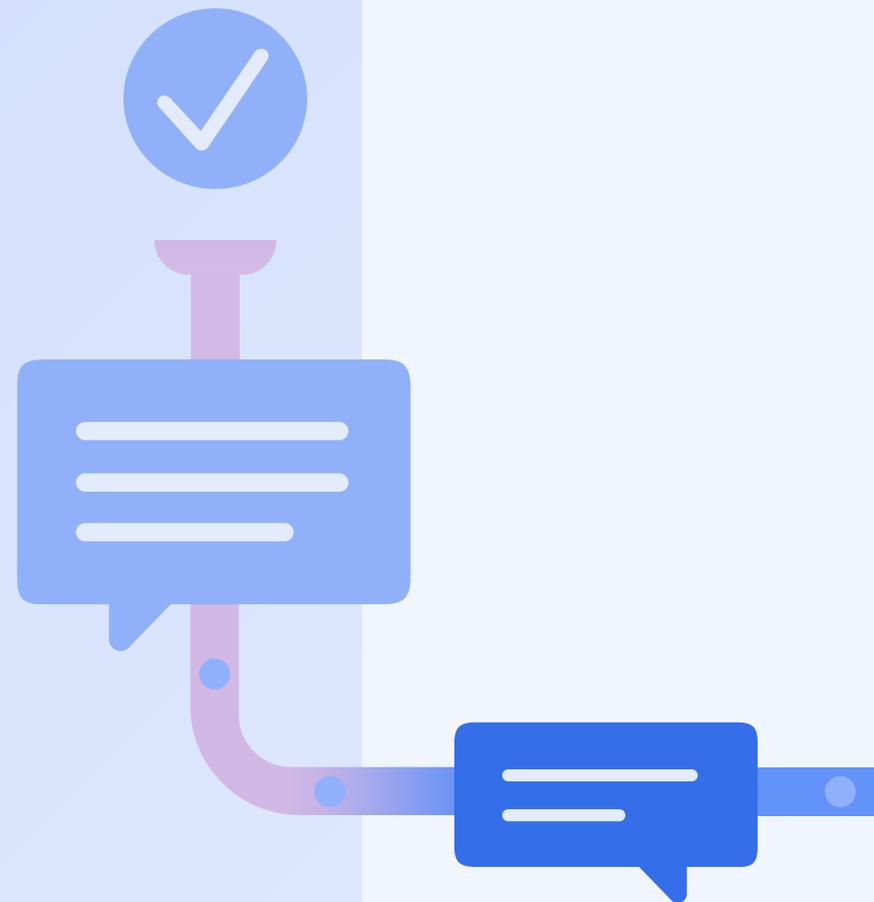
2. Streamline communication, sharing, and customer co-creation.

Communication is at the core of successful work management. Without effective communication, team members may misinterpret client needs or direction, misunderstand large-scale company priorities, or fail to respond effectively to change. Clients might miss important updates, fail to provide time-sensitive feedback, and become dissatisfied with your services.

Once you have evaluated and assembled your tech stack, assess the ways your team shares project information and deliverables between themselves and with both internal and external stakeholders. Identify places where communication can be streamlined, and create new processes that keep collaboration in the context of the work that's being done. This ability to easily communicate and collaborate with customers enables co-creation of solutions and services that best suit their needs.

Encourage your teams to communicate visibly about project details to reduce the number of questions that others might have about the status of their work. Empower stakeholders to visually comment on and mark up in-progress designs, documents, and other project deliverables to minimize feedback loops, encourage customer engagement, and accelerate approvals.

As the number of people involved in projects grows, so does the possibility of lost content and duplicate work. Use your tools, like digital asset management (DAM), to keep important documents and final deliverables centrally located and highly organized. This makes it easy for internal teams to find the materials they need when they need them, as well as securely share them with the right customers in just a couple clicks.

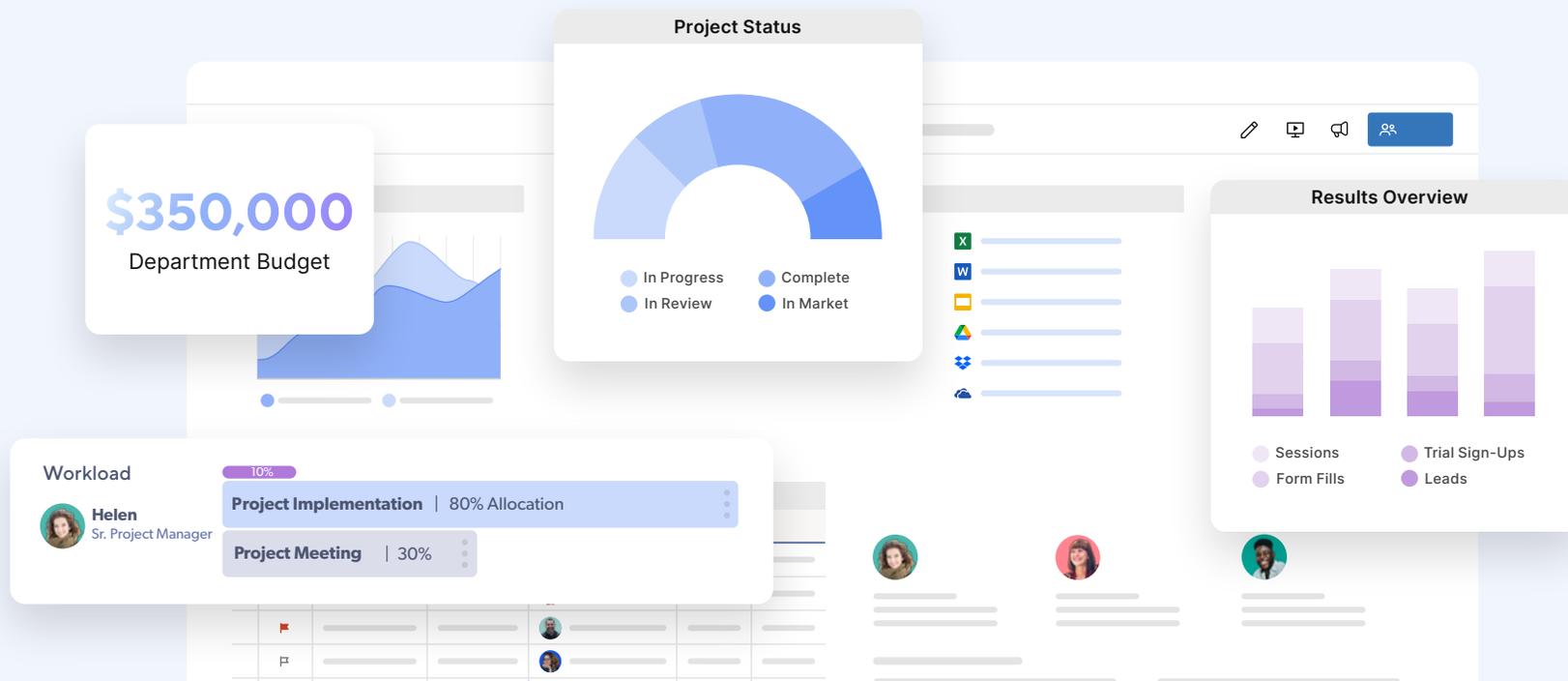


3. Review workflows for opportunities to standardize and automate.

Your tools should make it easy to automate time-consuming and repetitive tasks, such as sending status reports, task notifications and assignments, and update requests. Audit your existing processes to find bottlenecks, and then leverage software to ease the burdens of your team.

You can even automate more complex tasks, like time tracking and updating project plans and dashboards. Automation can free your team from busywork and give them time back to better serve clients and perform more meaningful work. This in turn allows professional services organizations to optimize the billable utilization of consultants.

Similarly, top tools enable professional services organizations to standardize certain project elements to deliver more consistent and higher quality customer experiences. For instance, standardizing intake forms ensures the right information is always captured to accurately scope and prioritize projects and hit the ground running. Templating recurring processes and project types not only drives repeatability and accelerates value delivery times, but it also prevents important tasks and milestones from accidentally slipping through the cracks.



4. Ensure real-time visibility for project status, goals, and results.

Visibility into tasks and status helps to foster strategic alignment, organization-wide accountability, and trust between internal and external stakeholders. On the other hand, low visibility creates risks that could lead to project failures and customer churn. When leadership can see the work that needs to be done and the steps required to complete it, they can better anticipate risks and roadblocks that might otherwise become major issues. This also makes it possible for individual consultants to see how their work fits into the bigger picture.

To facilitate better visibility and transparency both internally and externally, create a single source of truth for project and portfolio information, including task assignments and statuses, schedules, resource allocation, and other important documentation. Your software should allow anyone with access to make updates to project plans or check their status in real-time, from anywhere. It's also possible to dynamically adjust what stakeholders can see and control based on their specific roles and responsibilities.

In addition to viewing this information for internal initiatives and by client, professional services organizations also need the ability to see it across multiple clients' projects and portfolios. Only then can they adequately prioritize requests, assign resources, manage time, allocate budgets, and more as their business grows.



5. Implement data-driven decision-making.

Once you have implemented updated tools and processes, use them to inform future business decisions and improve your services. Software can help track project trends like success rates, schedule adherence, and budget needs, so use that data to make decisions around prioritization and resource allocation for your clients and portfolios.

The best work management platforms integrate with most third-party systems, so teams are able to achieve centralized data management, tracking, and reporting. Eliminating the need for manual data aggregation empowers teams to create dashboards and reports that enable them to effectively measure the impact of consultants, projects, and programs in real-time. This level of visibility also makes it easier for leaders to shift plans quickly and with confidence, ensuring that the projects and programs that contribute the most value to the organization are always being prioritized.

Success is a moving target, and the benchmarks can change often based on the market, your clients' needs, and your own priorities. Set a schedule to audit your processes and review your prioritization based on the changing needs and goals of your organization and customer base. Regular evaluation and measurement can help your business stay competitive and identify new opportunities for growth as well as anticipate market trends.

Our [Maturity Assessment](#) Tool can determine your organization's current project management maturity and identify growth opportunities to ensure you're making the most of your programs.

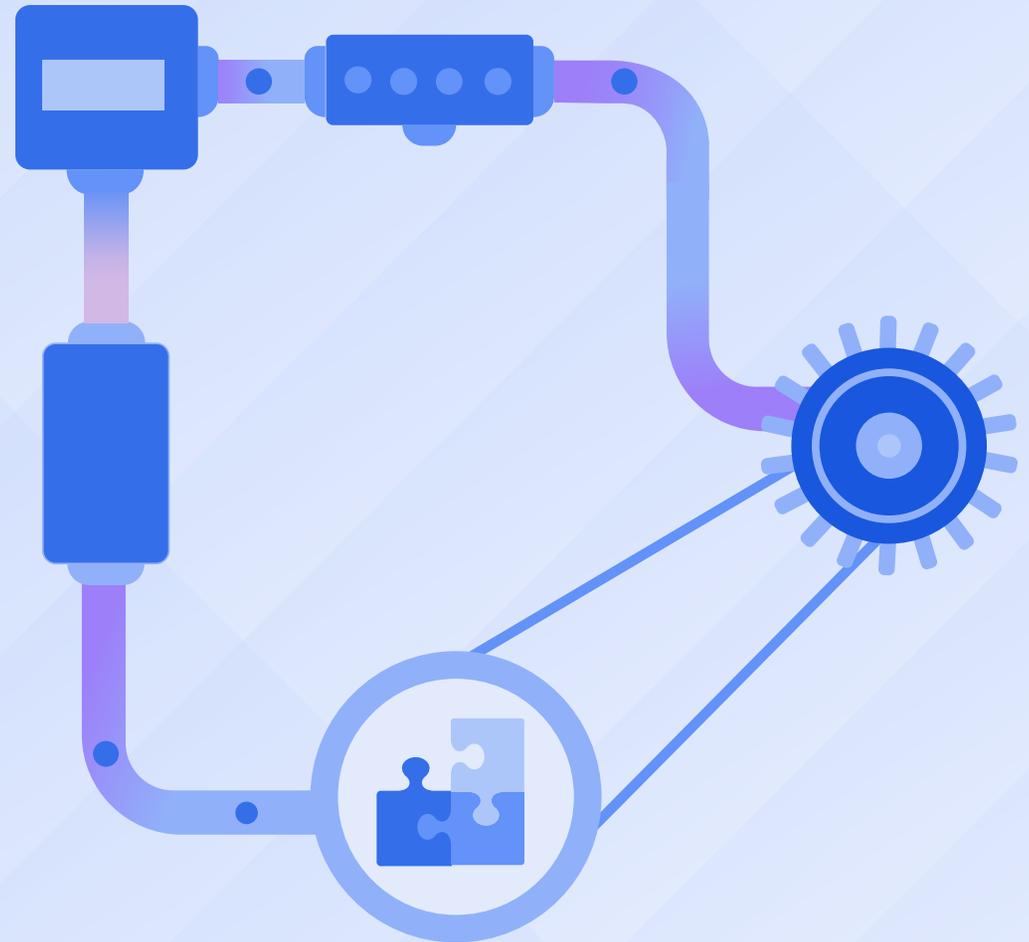


Conclusion

Successful, streamlined processes can help your professional services organization achieve its goals by automating project workflows, optimizing resources, and providing full services visibility and control. This approach improves repeatability and efficiency, increases billable consultant utilization, and ensures project success while accelerating time to value.

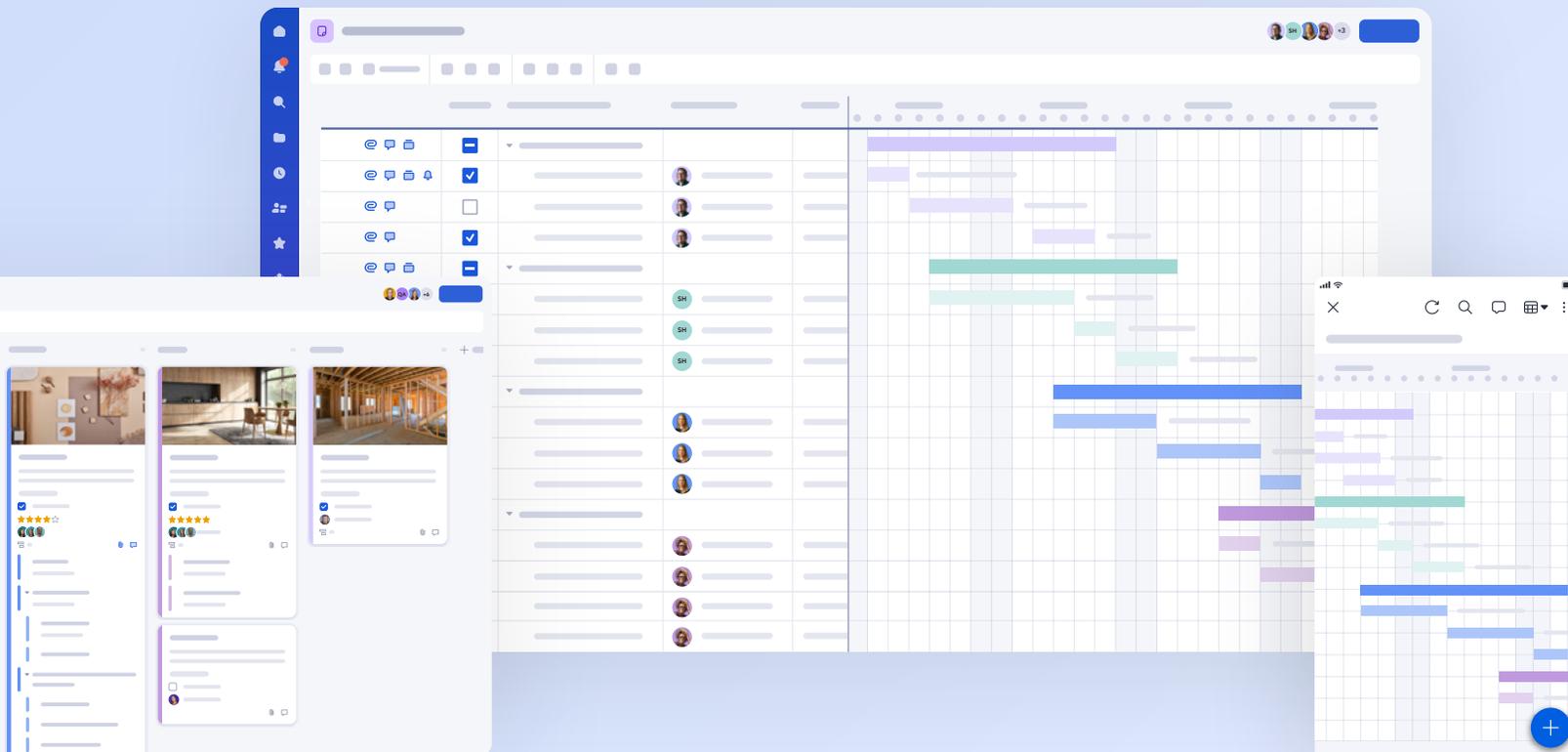
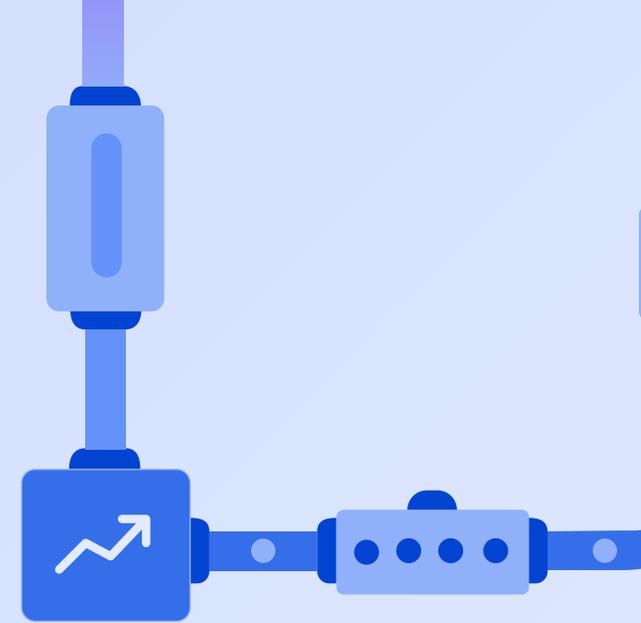
Every professional services organization can benefit from evaluating and optimizing its project and program management practices, no matter the current stage of its maturity. With Smartsheet, you'll find it easy to streamline processes and empower your teams to drive meaningful outcomes and change, both for your organization and your clients.

[Watch a demo](#)



About Smartsheet

Smartsheet is the enterprise work management platform that empowers companies of all sizes to scale and deliver value as business requirements evolve. Backed by enterprise-grade security, Smartsheet is used by more than 85% of the companies in the Fortune 500 to implement, manage, and automate processes across a broad array of departments and use cases.





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