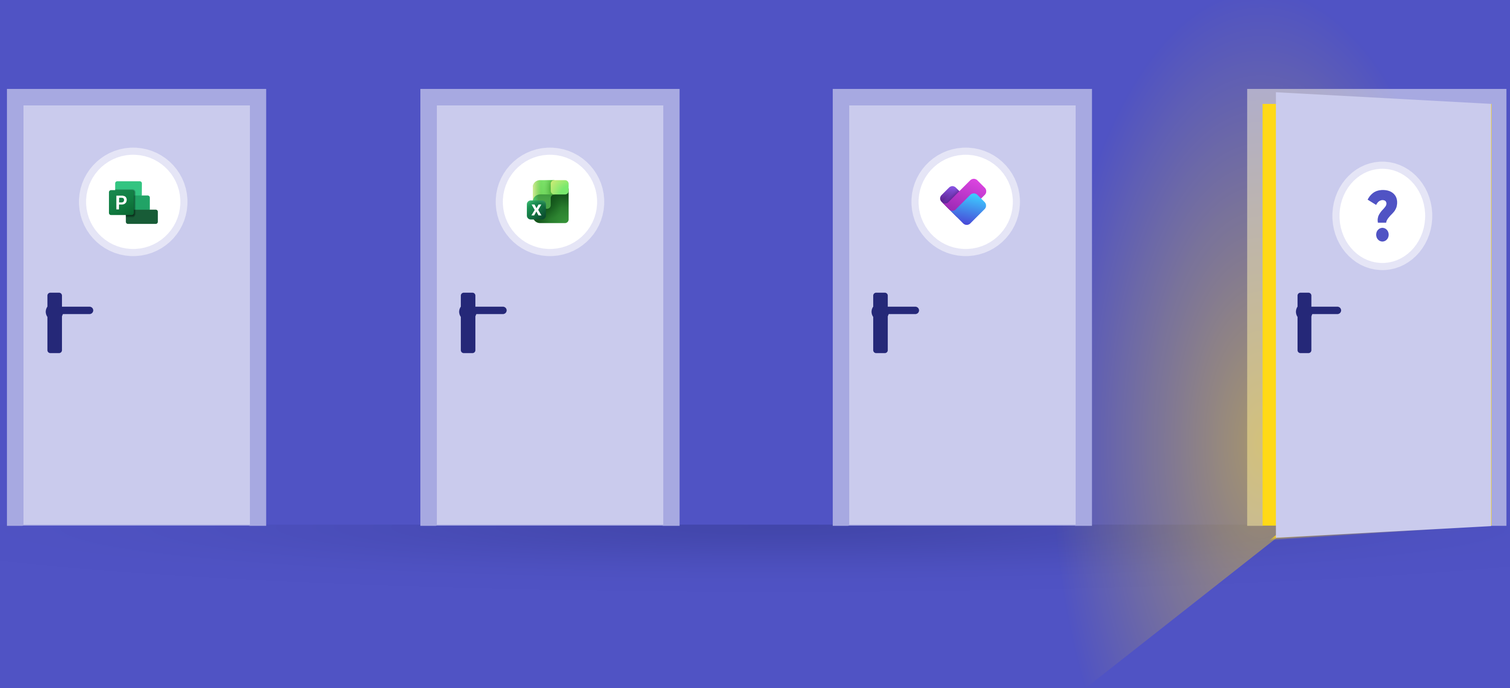
MEISTERPLAN

Life After Project Online

There are four paths to choose from. We‘ll show you what each one delivers, where their limitations lie, and which one is right for you.



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The Situation

The Lights Go Out on September 30, 2026

Microsoft is retiring Project Online and shifting its focus to other tools. For you, that means no more access to your projects after the cutoff date. And with the platform's discontinuation, you lose a whole set of capabilities your PMO relies on today:

- ✕ Planning roadmaps and resources
- ✕ Comparing priorities and scenarios
- ✕ Mapping milestones and dependencies
- ✕ Organizing tasks — and much more

Three Questions to Answer Now

1. What data do you save — and how?
2. Do you want to preserve your processes, or use this as an opportunity for a fresh start?
3. How do you replace the Project Online features that you're losing?

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Overview

What to Expect in This Document

We'll walk through four possible paths, line them up side by side, and conclude with our recommendation for you. We'll examine each path through the same three questions and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Path 1 — Excel

For Data Storage, Not Planning

Almost everyone reaches for Excel first; it's right there and costs nothing. The catch is that a spreadsheet stores data, but doesn't think. It can't see that the same person is allocated across three projects, and it won't warn you when one missed deadline throws half your roadmap off.

01 Data

Project plans, resources, and master data can be exported to a file, so they survive past the cutoff date.

02 Processes

Approvals, sign-offs, and status reports are no longer a feature — they go back to being manual work.

03 Features

A roadmap can be shown as a static snap-shot, but no one recalculates dependencies or scenarios automatically.

Strengths

Excel requires no additional licenses or training, it's ready in days, and everyone on the team already knows how to use it.

Best for: the first step of saving your data before the cutoff.

Weaknesses

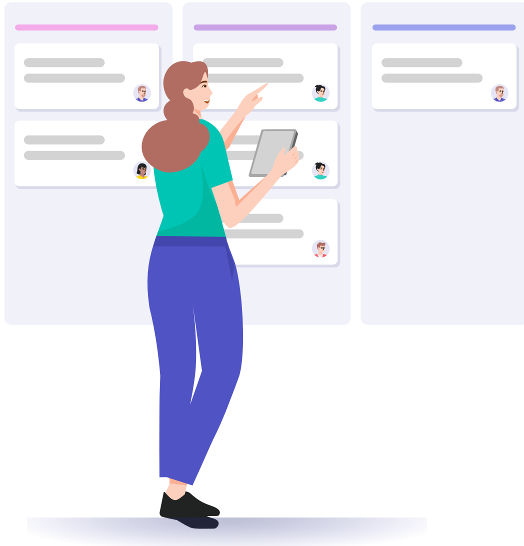
Because Excel only stores values, there's no portfolio or resource over-view. Even basic project delivery breaks down once several projects with dependencies run at once.

Not for: running a live project portfolio.

Path 2 — Planner

Strong on Tasks But Blind to the Portfolio

Microsoft is steering every Project Online customer toward Planner. For day-to-day teamwork, that's a solid choice. The difference lies in the planning level. Planner organizes individual tasks into boards and buckets. Project Online worked at the level above that — which projects compete for the same resources, and whether the portfolio still fits the budget.



01 Data

Active tasks can be moved over, but you'll have to rebuild your project history and reporting.

02 Processes

Planner is built for loose collaboration, but it doesn't know approval chains or stage gates.

03 Features

Baselines and dependencies only come with Premium — and even then, there is no cross-project capacity planning.

Strengths

Planner is already part of Microsoft 365 and looks like the tools teams use every day. That means it would be productive within days to weeks, acceptance would be high, and task-level execution would be well supported.

Best for: teams whose work stays at the task level.

Weaknesses

Beyond individual projects, the steering layer is missing. Cross-project capacity and scenarios aren't built in, and detailed structures can't be preserved.

Not for: a PMO that has to steer an entire portfolio.

Path 3 — 1:1 Replacement

When Depth Isn't Up for Debate

For many organizations, detailed processes are the heart of the work — audited, regulated, and developed over the years. But that very depth was always Project Online's burden too — powerful, yet complex and high-maintenance. If you want to preserve your processes exactly as they are, you have to take on both the strengths and the complexity. There are three ways to get there, all chasing the same goal but running very different bills.

1:1 Replacement

Three Ways

Path A — Project Server

As Close to the Original as It Gets

It's essentially Project Online itself, just running on-premises so it does everything you're used to. You pay for that full scope with setting up and maintaining your own server landscape and by keeping the same heavyweight logic as before.

01 Data
A built-in migration path moves plans and resources over with little loss.

02 Processes
Things stay unchanged because it's the same system underneath.

03 Features
You'll have the full Project feature set, just without further development.

Strengths
Structures stay intact, and the data sits entirely in your own data center.

Best for: regulated companies that need their data in their own hands.

Weaknesses
Your own servers and the migration stretch the start over months, and Microsoft isn't developing the platform any further.

Not for: teams that want to start fast and without their own IT.

Path B — Power Platform

Tailor-Made — But You're the Tailor

In principle you can build any features you need here — but only if you build it yourself. The result can fit perfectly, because it's designed exactly according to your workflows and doesn't include any extra elements. However, the quality of your portfolio and delivery is limited by your team's programming skills and time.

01 Data
Arrives as cleanly as the interfaces you build yourself.

02 Processes
Reproducible to the letter, because you set every rule.

03 Features
Anything is possible — once you've developed it.

Strengths
Built in your own tenant: data under your control, adjustable to any level of detail.

Best for: regulated companies with their own development capacity.

Weaknesses
Development and maintenance are up to you, so going live takes several months.

Not for: anyone under time pressure or without a dev team of their own.

Path C — Third-Party Vendors

Off the Rack — But Does It Fit?

These suites can usually do portfolio, resources, and delivery in full — often with far more functionality than you actually need. The limit isn't the feature set, but the fit; lots of detail, rebuilt processes that don't quite match the original, and a portfolio that only holds up if the teams keep the data current.

01 Data
Established import paths bring plans and master data over reliably in most cases.

02 Processes
These can be mapped, but rarely at the depth of detail you're used to.

03 Features
Everything is present, but it's often more extensive than necessary.

Strengths
You get a ready-to-use comprehensive feature set with no in-house development.

Best for: those who want depth without building it and are planning for change management.

Weaknesses
Switching to an outside system takes weeks to months, and a portfolio only holds up if the teams actually use it.

Not for: teams looking for a lean solution that won't force adoption.

Path 4 — Separate Tools

Not Just One Replacement — The Right Tool for Each Job

Project Online tried to unite everything in a single system and became unwieldy as a result. The fourth path flips the principle around: each team works where it's strongest — say in Planner, Jira, or Azure DevOps. Above that sits a lean layer that brings every project together into one portfolio. So teams keep their strong delivery, and you still get the overview across all projects.

01 Data

Tasks move into Planner or Jira, and the project and resource data move into the layer above.

02 Processes

Instead of rebuilding old workflows, you streamline them — each team stays with a tool that fits its work.

03 Features

The specialized tools handle delivery, and the lean layer above handles the portfolio and resources.

Strengths

Because teams keep their familiar tools, adoption is high, nothing changes about delivery, and going live takes a matter of weeks. The layer above delivers the cross-project portfolio overview.

Best for: those who treat change as an opportunity rather than trying to recreate old burdens.

Weaknesses

That layer has to be put in place deliberately, or you end up with lots of good tools but no full picture. And some legacy structures don't translate well to a modern tool landscape and are better simplified than recreated.

Not for: anyone who absolutely must keep old, highly detailed structures exactly as they are.

The Comparison

Everything at a Glance

	Change Effort & Time-to-Value	Team Adoption	Portfolio & Resources	Project Delivery	Keeping Structures & Processes
Excel	✓	○	✗	✗	✗
Planner	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
1:1 Replacement					
Project Server	✗	○	○	○	✓
Power Platform	✗	○	○	○	✓
Third-Party Vendors	✗	○	○	○	✓
Separate Tools	○	✓	✓	✓	○

✓ strong / suitable ○ with limitations ✗ weak / unsuitable

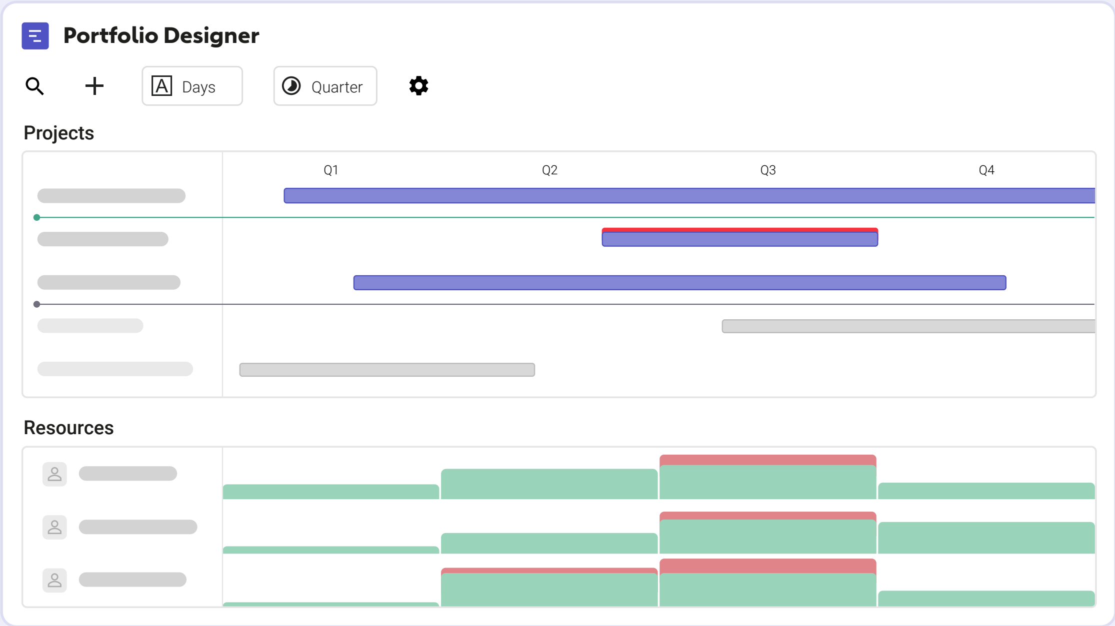
Our Recommendation

You Don't Have to Pick a Single Tool

Ultimately, we recommend the fourth path. Excel saves your data quickly but can't plan. Planner and Jira deliver projects well but never see the whole portfolio.

What both are missing is the layer above — and that's Meisterplan. It's where every project comes together: utilization across projects, bottlenecks at a glance, and what-if scenarios with simple drag and drop planning. Your teams keep their tools, and you regain control.

Save · **Excel** + Deliver · **Planner, Jira** → Steer · **Meisterplan**



Get to know Meisterplan