

When Good Projects Go Bad

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Objectives

- Describe key factors for project success
- Describe why projects fail
- List common warning signs of potential project problems
- Apply proven practices to mitigate project problems
- Take steps to ensure on-time, in-budget project completion
- Manage virtual workers
- Allow for and adjust to corporate politics
- Manage yourself

Critical Success Factors

- Project aligns with corporate strategy
- Project is based on needs assessment
- Design is based on user requirements
- Project has a detailed plan
- Realistic budget & schedule
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Appropriate personnel
- Adequate hours

Management Basics

- Select the right team
- Partner with your client
- Know when (& how) to say no
- Document agreements
- Continuously clarify expectations
- Submit samples and get signoff
- Pick your battles
- Use “no surprises” strategy



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Share responsibility for decisions
Under promise, over deliver

Why Projects Fail

Unclear expectations
Unrealistic expectations
Poor communication
Warring vested interests
Hidden agendas
Unstable products
Personnel changes

Warning Signs: Unclear Expectations

Absence of written or verbal validation
Memos or comments that don't make sense
Project plan seems to be changing

Warning Signs: Unrealistic Expectations

Impossible schedule
Refusal to acknowledge problems
Realignment of goals and objectives
“We don't have time for you.”

Warning Signs: Poor Communication

Unreturned email or phone calls
Meetings skipped or routinely rescheduled
No review or feedback on deliverables
Finding out things from second-hand sources

Warning Signs: Warring Interests, Hidden Agendas

Conflicting directions from different individuals
Directions that change from day to day
Lack of information
Rampant misunderstanding

What You Can Do to Avoid Problems

Include the user at every stage
Know when (and how) to say no
Don't be afraid to be the bad guy
Be a communicator



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Document agreements
Continuously clarify expectations
Submit samples and get signoff
Recognize your strengths and weaknesses
Do what you do best, delegate the rest
Pick your battles
Use “no surprises” strategy
Share responsibility for decisions
Under promise, over deliver

When Problems Occur

Confront problems early
Listen to all sides
Offer alternatives
Be willing to negotiate
Know your limits
Escalate as necessary

Managing Unrealistic Schedules

Negotiate based on reality
Set priorities
Manage to milestones
Start with templates, standards, and styles
Discuss fall-back strategies up front

Managing to the Bottom Line

Everything works backwards from budget
Plan for the worst, hope for the best
Prioritize with management
Adjust as necessary

Surviving in a Political World

Learn how to “manage up”
Network outside and within the company
Publicize achievements and successes
Pick your battles
Use “no surprises” strategy
Share responsibility for tricky decisions
Under promise, over deliver
Develop a set of trusted advisors



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Managing the Virtual Workforce

- Document instructions and provide examples
- Divide deliverables into chunks
- Review frequently
- Update instructions
- Use email and voicemail aggressively
- Leverage web meetings
- Use teambuilding techniques

The Hard Part of Management

- Don't be afraid to be the bad guy
- Give direct, performance-oriented feedback
- Provide clear consequences and timeframes
- Follow through consistently
- Get rid of non-performers
- Manage by productivity, not face time

Managing Yourself

- Reserve your most productive hours
- Schedule blocks of time for your work
- Screen your calls
- Set aside time to read, research, and think
- Set long and short term goals,
- You'll never get it all done—
prioritize & delegate

Resources from the Bookshelf

- How to Deal with Difficult People*, Brinkman and Kirshner (cassette)
- Zen Lessons, The Art of Leadership*, Thomas Cleary (translator)
- Sharpen Your Team's Skills in Project Management*, Jean Harris (workbook with exercises)
- Debugging the Development Process*, Steve Maguire (for programmers, but many good tips)
- In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters (old standby)
- Organized to Be the Best*, Susan Silver (time management, etc.)



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