

Golden Rules for Project Managers

PMIWDC

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A Little About Me...

- » Graduated from UVA in 1994
- » Founded Excella in January, 2002
- » Started my career as a developer – and then went into “management consulting”
- » I am not a PMP



Why I'm Here

- » Picked up “rules of thumb” over the course of my career
- » “Rules” are generally true, with obvious caveats, exceptions, and nuances – they are not meant to be applied blindly
- » 53 rules and counting...



Some of the Obvious Ones...

- » “You gotta have a plan.”
- » “Any problem can be solved given enough time and money.”
- » “Scope creep kills.”
- » “Communicate, communicate, communicate.”
- » “It's not so much where you are, it's your trajectory.”

Rule #4

- » **“Consistently right, consistently wrong – at least it's consistent.”**
- » Make sure the information you present now is consistent with information you've presented in the past. Use the same assumptions, formatting, business logic, timing, ... – until you explicitly decide to make a change and communication it.
- » *Examples: program dashboard, naming conventions*

Rule #50



- » “If you’re going to fail, fail fast.”
- » Get ideas in front of people early. Identify risks and take steps to mitigate them. It’s better to discover “showstoppers” as soon as possible, rather than getting to the one-yard line and finding out you can’t get into the end zone.
- » *Examples: application prototyping and proofs-of concept, document outlines, executive support*

Rule #44

- » **“Give things their due attention.”**
- » Spend time and resources on activities proportional to the value you get from them. Sometimes just “answering the mail” is OK. Sometimes going above and beyond expectations is necessary.
- » *Examples: status reports, “data calls”, business cases, white papers*

Rule #30

- » “The one who frames the discussion usually wins the argument.”
- » Get people talking in your terms. Be proactive about presenting ideas, alternatives, and solutions instead of reacting to those of others. There are usually many “right” ways to solve a problem. The one that gets selected is often the first one put on the table for consideration.
- » *Examples: alternatives analysis, white papers, “strawman” documents*

“The clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him.”

– Sun Tzu

Rule #36

- » “First prove it's possible, then prove it's practical, then prove it's inevitable.”
- » Anticipate the progression of “standard” objections to what you’re doing. It starts with, “It can’t be done.” Next comes, “It’ll cost too much and take too long.” Finally you’ll hear, “I don’t have to do that.”
- » *Example: any program trying to do something new*

Rule #22

- » “Don't take on too many impossible tasks at once.”
- » Be practical and realistic. Manage expectations. Build momentum and show value quickly and consistently. It's good to have a “Big Idea” to rally around, but trying to do too much is risky, overwhelming, and dilutes your impact.
- » *Examples: most ERP implementations*



Rule #17

- » “Success is dependent on people, process, technology – in that order.”
- » Great people can do great things. Great people enabled with a great process and great technology can do the seemingly impossible. Process and technology are important ingredients in the recipe for success, but people are the most important.
- » *Examples: the last high-performing team you can remember, the last vendor you “fired”*

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

–Margaret Mead

Questions?

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