

Turning Around Failing Projects

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Agenda

1. How To Spot a Failing Project

2. What Causes Projects to Fail?

3. Real Failures and the Turnaround

4. Lessons Learned

5. Q&A



Too close to home?

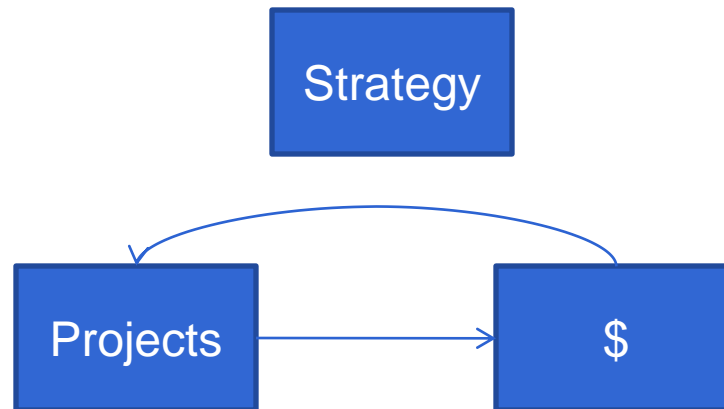
- Projects with realistic budgets and timetables don't get approved.
- The more desperate the situation the more optimistic the progress report.
- A user is somebody who rejects the system because it's what he asked for.
- The difference between project success and failure is a good PR company.
- Nothing is impossible for the person who doesn't have to do it.
- A freeze on change melts whenever heat is applied.
- You understood what I said, not what I meant.
- If at first you don't succeed, rename the project.
- Everyone wants a strong project manager - until they get him.
- The worst project managers sleep at night.
- A failing project has benefits which are always spoken of in the future tense.
- Projects don't fail in the end; they fail at conception.
- Visions are usually treatable.
- Overly ambitious projects can never fail if they have a beginning, middle and no end.

- Adapted from Michael Krigsman – TechRepublic.com



Finding Value in Project Management

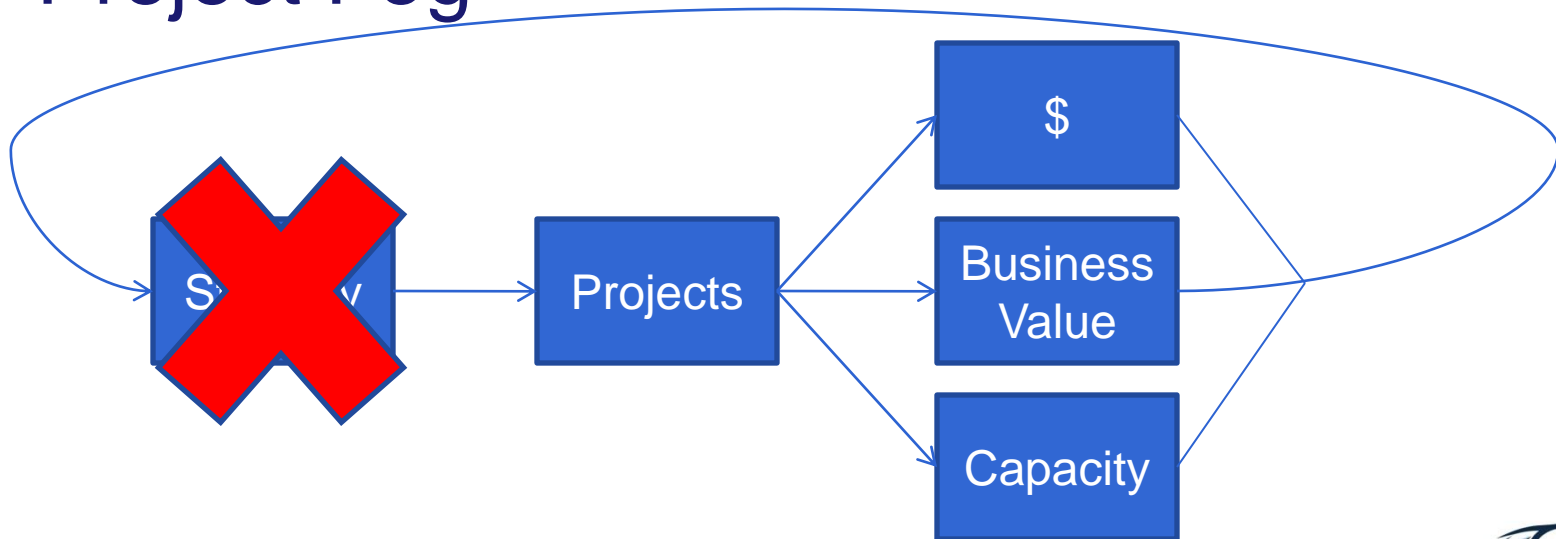
- PMI Study
- Dr. James Norrie – Breaking Through The Project Fog



Finding Value in Project Management

➤ PMI Study

➤ Dr. James Norrie – Breaking Through The Project Fog



My Defining Moment

“Projects fail because of
context, not content.”

*(Thomsett, Radical Project Management,
2002, p37)*



Mayday! Mayday!

- 59% to 94% of Projects Fail!

- Some Bad Signs:
 - Poor project planning or no plan at all
 - Disagreement on project requirements
 - Lack of team involvement
 - Lack of a clearly defined end
 - Unrealistic demands
 - Failure or fear to stop or plan again



What Causes Projects to Fail?

- This may not be the list you are thinking of:
 - The Halo Effect....gone wild!
 - Mandated Dates
 - Stressed/Overworked Team Members
 - Nobody agreed on what the project was going to be in the first place



Someone Isn't Being Heard

- Groupthink: The act or practice of reasoning or decision-making by a group, especially when characterized by uncritical acceptance or conformity to prevailing points of view.
- Turning Around a Support Project
- Ahh.....the Columbo Close!



When It's Wrong, It's Wrong!

- Sometimes it can't be or shouldn't be saved!
- Technology can be the biggest issue!
- If we had just two more weeks.....



It Is What It Is

- Sometimes, you just have to make a move.
- Don't be afraid to ask for what you need.
- If you don't get what you want, document that and move on.
- Sometimes, it is you or them.



Assess and Create a Plan that Works!

- Stop the current progress and begin a re-planning effort.
- Determine the progress made to date and estimate the work and durations remaining.
- Determine impact to the other project management plans (cost, schedule, risk, communications, etc.)
- Re-publish the plan and reset expectations.



Lessons Learned

- Be honest, at all costs! It is what it is!
- Get to the data, it truly does rule all!
- Use the Six Sigma process of DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control)
- You do not have to be right!
- Listen to your people. In my experience, when projects fail, someone knows why and is not being heard.



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Q&A

