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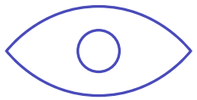
The 5 Most Common Mistakes That Lead to Project Failure

Chances are if you've ever worked on an IT project in your career, you've probably encountered some challenges along the way. You're not alone. According to **The Standish Group**, a leading IT think-tank, only "an average of 16.2% of IT projects are completed on-time and on-budget."[1]

Beyond just cost and timeline, most projects face problems of missed expectations by delivering something different than the owner's intended vision and goal. While there are many factors that can contribute to project failure, let's look at the five most common reasons and offer some recommendations on how to avoid these pitfalls.

1

Lack of a clear project vision and goals



This is top of the list and probably the most significant challenge. Oftentimes, this issue begins with leadership not having a clear definition to start. A lack of vision and clear goals filters down to the team and all stakeholders on a project, leading to confusion and even a decrease in morale as folks are not sure of why they are working on a project.

Our recommendation is to create a road-map that visualizes the target and the path to completion. This helps to share the vision with everyone involved and is easier to understand than a lengthy written report.

2

Expecting technology to be the silver bullet

Another common trend is for companies to rely on technology alone to be the solution. This is often done, because it is easier to simply pick a technology and blame it if it doesn't work. The key is to remember that technology is an enabler. Its job is to serve the people who use it.

Our recommendation is to start with people instead of technology. Listen to their needs and let their goals drive the choice in technology as a solution.

3

Missed expectations with leadership

A typical outcome for many IT projects is delivering the wrong solution. Simply put, releasing a product on-time, but failing to verify with the owner that their expectations have been properly met. This is a classic case of "we checked the box" to deliver functionality, but it wasn't the right solution.

Our recommendation is to leverage a highly-iterative and visual approach that offers transparency for all stakeholders along the way to delivery. Using Agile and Prototyping can help clarify the solution that is being built and offer a useful tool to communicate progress.

4

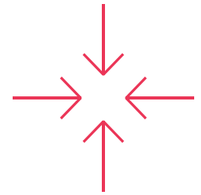
Lack of subject matter expertise

Oftentimes a lack of expertise is either not available for the team or worse, the wrong experts have been assigned per the problem trying to be solved. This occurs mainly because management, the team, and stakeholders have not accurately defined the problem to be solved.

Our recommendation is to employ human-centered design research techniques, such as contextual-inquiry to better learn and understand the root causes to define the problem from the start.

5

Poor alignment of people, process, and project goals



While similar to having a lack of subject matter expertise, equally important is ensuring that the people involved are using the right approach and working in concert toward a commonly understood goal. Poor alignment is often manifested as people "working in silos" throughout a project. This problem also occurs when the team gets caught up in the methodology and loses sight of the real goal is to deliver results. This is commonly referred to as "process for the sake of process".

Our recommendation is to emphasize work activities that generate value and outcomes early in the project and continue to deliver throughout until final release. Using Design Thinking to learn and prototype offers this value from the very beginning.

With over a decade of experience in successfully delivering both commercial and government IT projects, OneSpring has leveraged the power of Design Thinking and Visual Communication to address these common project mistakes and more. Learn more about how to avoid these roadblocks and deliver better results than ever before by visiting **OneSpring.net**