

10 Reasons Why Projects Fail and Tips to Project Management Best Practices

The goal of any project is to create a plan that can be implemented with ease. However, in the real world, creating the perfect project plan is not easily achievable. But there are project management best practices to improve chances of a successful project.

When you line up your specific goals and set your project up to meet those goals, every project becomes an opportunity for success.

1. Insufficient project planning
2. Too little project management
3. Limited commitment to the project
4. Lack of defined goals
5. Absence of change management
6. Unrealistic timelines
7. Scope creep
8. Staff changes
9. Too many simultaneous projects
10. Insufficient testing



Integrating people, process and IT

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Insufficient project planning

Defining a project's scope requires the active involvement of key business partners and teams right from the start. Inclusive planning upfront ensures that everyone shares a mutual understanding of the project's goals. Proper planning serves as a catalyst for bringing together people, processes and technologies, and aligning them with the envisioned future of the business. The process extends beyond a mere catalog of applications to be implemented. Rather, it is a thoughtful design process taking into account future anticipated needs while addressing existing gaps.

2

Too little project management

Once a company has invested in a software solution, executing project management best practices is critical. Managing a project is a multifaceted endeavor and should not be treated as another work "task" that diverts attention from daily responsibilities. When retailers do not have the internal resources or specialized expertise required to deliver project management best practices, bringing in an outside resource is time and money well spent. This approach helps employees maintain focus on day-to-day operations while ensuring that the project receives the dedicated and skilled attention required.

3

Limited commitment to the project

Somebody at the executive level approved the project to initiate the effort, but does the team truly have full support? One key to setting the scope and gaining commitment to the project is to get the management team, business partners and users that are most directly involved in the planning stage. Everyone should be on the same page with the same end goal. Conducting status meetings and ongoing communication with project updates helps keep everyone in the loop as milestones are achieved or obstacles appear and are resolved.

4

Lack of defined goals

Projects often fail because everyone on the executive and project team did not agree on what the project was supposed to accomplish. If everyone involved can agree on the end goals and major deliverables, the project has a much greater chance of being viewed as a success at the conclusion. The objective is to understand not just the current tools and processes, but also the business goals. Once a plan and team is in place, it is important to stay focused. Keep the end goal in mind and practice scope management throughout the life of the project.

5

Absence of change management

Having the tools to manage change helps to ensure the desired outcomes and objectives are met. Change management helps minimize disruptions to tasks, processes and even job functions as employees must adopt and embrace the solution to deliver value. It requires a combination of managing change and managing people. Communicating the reason for the changes, the benefits and providing training and support help teams acclimatize to the new ways of working, creating a culture of adaptability and improvement.

6

Unrealistic timelines

The project team has only so many bodies and hours in the day to complete their work. Understand the limitations and set expectations early on. Plus, be sure to plan time for the unknown. Every project will have its unexpected occurrences. A timeline that has no cushion for issue resolution, personnel vacations, holidays breaks or staff changes will often lead to problems as the project progresses. It is important to include time for testing and training. When everyone has a clear, realistic picture of the target date for completion, achieving that date is going to be easier.

7

Scope creep

While the initial project is designed to fulfill a specific function or address a particular challenge, the inevitable addition of tasks to the scope is known as scope creep. As ongoing processes and tools are scrutinized, users often identify opportunities to pursue additional objectives. Despite the temptation to address these extra issues, it is crucial not to let these distractions jeopardize the success of the original project, as defined by the approved scope. Implement a rigorous scope change process so that all alterations require approval from the project team.

8

Staff changes

Every organization contends with staff turnover, and when individuals leave or join a project team, disruptions are inevitable. Managing these transitions effectively is essential for maintaining project momentum and ensuring that new team members integrate seamlessly. Consistent communication, clear role definitions and a proactive approach to knowledge transfer can help mitigate the impact of staff changes on project continuity.

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Too many simultaneous projects

Managing numerous projects concurrently can overwhelm even the most experienced project manager. External resources can be a valuable addition, focusing entirely on the project without juggling other responsibilities. Outside professionals are experienced in project management best practices and team dynamics. Depending on the project's size, duration and complexity, hiring a full-time project manager may be justified. This helps to guarantee a dedicated focus on the project plan and deliverables, minimizing the impact of competing priorities and enhancing the overall quality of project results.

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Insufficient testing

Proper testing is a vital component of project success, yet it is frequently overlooked or not performed rigorously. Running a single transaction is not proper testing. The testing objective should be to challenge and, if possible, identify weaknesses or vulnerabilities in the system. In the real world, users will make keying mistakes, run one-off transactions and not follow the proper steps. Testing should address a wide range of scenarios. Many retailers fail to take the extra step of testing as it requires extensive preparation and coordination. But for those that do, the payoff is well worth the investment of time and resources.

Although final outcomes and processes are unique to every project, proper planning, management and adherence to proven methodologies will help to ensure a productive and effective project. Following these best practices can drastically improve project success.