October 28, 2013

Brenda Cook
Introduction to Project Management
Module 2 Paper 2
Denise Bates

The Best Laid Plans … Five Reasons Why Projects Fail, *by Brenda Lynn Cook Petrillo*

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. No matter how carefully a project is planned, anything that can go wrong will go wrong especially if a project is not managed properly. There are numerous reasons why projects fail; the number of reasons can be endless. For the sake of my sanity, the five reasons that I will highlight in this paper include immature project management framework, poor resource planning, scope creep, inadequate communication and stakeholder management, and meager risk management planning.

I know … every PMO has to start somewhere. In order to have the greatest chance for success, an organization's project management maturity is crucial and can impact the success or failure of projects. Maturity means an organization has an overarching Global Project Delivery Framework. Within this global framework there is a project and program management framework, Project Management Office (PMO) framework, and project delivery governance standards and processes.

A Global Project Delivery Framework with tightly integrated Project Portfolio Governance and Management policies, processes and procedures is critical to the successful delivery of project related services. Portfolio Governance is the project-delivery component of an over-arching IT Governance Framework. IT Governance specifies the decision rights and provides an accountability framework to drive effective IT usage behaviors. It supports the

alignment of successful IT outcomes with the customers' business and technology objectives. Portfolio Governance focuses on those decisions that impact project delivery.

The Global Project Delivery Framework should be flexible, scalable, and applicable to any type of project and it should address the people, process, and tools aspects of project, program, and portfolio management. The overall objective is simple and three-fold: (1) Doing the right projects by ensuring they are strategically aligned with the business strategy and customer needs, (2) Doing projects in the right way by following a standard project management methodology with formalized quality, performance metrics and reporting processes and procedures, and (3) Doing projects with the right people by standardizing resource management, project management and PMO roles and skill requirements, including a project management learning system and internal project management certification program.

A mature PMO model streamlines the project and program management effort and increases project delivery quality and effectiveness and reduces the probability of project failure. Some of the benefits include: (1) confidence in the ability of project managers to deliver their projects according to plan using a structured and scalable methodology, templates, and a knowledge base which provides consistency and repeatability for managing projects, (2) a predictable project delivery experience as it follows a well-defined methodology, and (3) an early warning on underperforming projects, allowing corrections to be made before impacts occur the project, and (4) strategic support at the portfolio level through a flexible and mature PMO offering which enables scalability and optimum utilization of resources. Overall, a mature framework increases the ability to replicate excellence in all projects regardless of size or complexity by improving the ability to deliver projects on time and within budget.

At the heart of a successful project is a strong team. Among other favorable traits, a strong team will communicate well, possess passion for project progress and bring metrics in on time and under budget. To build a team of this caliber, one does not have to hand-select from the top of Ivy League schools, dig in a sea of resumes or build a game room in a data center. The secret to a strong project team is simply proper management of team resources, establishing communication checkpoints and expectations around scope, schedule, and performance. A project manager is not expected to know every technical or business answer, but it is important to equip the project manager with strong business and technical support. Bad designs and decisions in the planning phase of the project will almost surely cause a project to fail. Failure to get the right people on the bus and in the right seats can lead to delays, cost increases, unexpected issues, and other negative consequences such as project cancellation.

The two most important characteristics of a project team is having the right project manager and a strong team that works synergistically to achieve a common goal. The structure and characteristics of a project team can vary, but one constant is the project manager's role as the leader of the team, regardless of what authority the project manager may have over its members.

Adopting an internal Project Management Certification Program to increase expertise, efficiency and effectiveness of program managers, project managers and project coordinators within the PMO will drive consistency and synergy in project management practices. This best practice will ensure that the most critical projects are led by thoroughly pre-qualified project managers, with an emphasis on past successes with like-sized, complex projects that will help to reduce risk of project delivery challenges and increase the probability of success.

Project integrated change control is a necessary evil and without proper change control, a project will fail. Integrated change control involves recognizing and managing all proposed changes to the baselined scope, schedule, and cost of the project. The change process is "integrated" because a change in one of these areas of the project will almost always impact the other areas. Change control is necessary because projects seldom run exactly to plan. Priorities change or business drivers change that were once strong influencing factors for the project, and often progress does not occur according to plan for various reasons. Change control is the basic mechanism for preventing and controlling scope creep, a known factor that leads to project failure. Change Control works to thoroughly control scope creep by recognizing additional scope, ensuring that the project sponsors understand the impact of the additional scope, adjusting baselines to handle the additional scope, and obtaining approvals for the additional scope prior to implementation of the additional work.

A project will definitely show signs of stress and failure if there is not a sound project communication management plan in place. Communication planning is essential and ensures timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage, retrieval, and archiving of project information. Adequate information flow among all the project stakeholders is necessary for successful communication. The objective of communication processes in any project is to keep stakeholders informed, to create an environment of trust, to provide an opportunity for feedback, and to manage expectations. A component of communication planning is managing stakeholder communications to satisfy the demands, expectations, needs of, and resolve issues with, project stakeholders. Actively managing stakeholders increases the likelihood that the project will not veer off track due to unresolved stakeholder issues,

enhances the ability of persons to operate synergistically, and limits disruptions during the project. Successful stakeholder management should result in solid expectation management, resolved project issues, approved change requests, and corrective actions, as well as a robust lessons-learned process that relies on stakeholder feedback about the performance and delivery of the project. Many communication problems simply stem from assuming that other people are like us and then treating them that way. Simplistically, proactive communication leads to happier customers, sets expectations, overcomes issues, avoids surprises, and keeps the project on track.

Every project manager must spend time on risk management. Identifying, analyzing and prioritizing risks are essential to every project's success. Failure to implement good risk management will inevitably result in project failure.

Risk management is the process through which a project manager and the project team identify project risks, assumptions, action items, issues, dependencies and then, manages those items throughout the engagement. RAID Management is a continuous process by which these items are identified for a project, responded to and controlled. Within a project, managing risk is the method of minimizing the chances of occurrence and corresponding consequences of adverse events and maximizing the probability and outcome of positive events. Identification of appropriate risks and effective management of issues leading to prompt resolution are key activities for successful execution of projects.

Risk management should be a part of the project management planning process. During the planning phase, it is important to capture all known risks and issues with accompanying mitigation plans. As the project gains momentum, previously unknown risks and issues surface.

If risks don't have mitigation plans in place and issues are not dealt with appropriately and resolved within a reasonable timeframe, they can bring the project to an immediate halt. Simply knowing about risks isn't enough. Risks require thorough analysis and systemic mitigation strategies. Contingency plans can help a project manager and the team in an ambiguous environment and improve the probability of project success.

In conclusion, there are numerous reasons why projects fail; the number of reasons can be endless. Proper planning doesn't guarantee that a project manager won't hit obstacles and challenges along the way; however with proper controls in place to help recognize early warning signs and symptoms -- the project manager is able to take immediate corrective action before a project is beyond the point of no return.