Recovering Troubled Projects Checklist

Questions and Recommendations

1. What is your sponsor status?
   1. **Supportive** – Retool communication plans, assess team skill gaps, re-launch project
   2. **Interested but skeptical** – Determine “victory path” – retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
   3. **Interested but constrained ($ or time)** – Reconsider scope for the project and see (b) above
   4. **Non**-**Supportive** - Try to establish conditions for a new attempt to launch project, if unsuccessful “shoot the monkey” (kill the project)
   5. **Others?**
2. What is your customer status?
   1. **Supportive** – Ensure requirements are prioritized, ensure project plan reflects priority
   2. **Interested but skeptical** - Determine “victory path” – retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
   3. **Interested but constrained** - Determine “victory path” – reconsider scope change and/or retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
   4. **Business has changed** – Reinitiate project with new requirements session or “shoot the monkey” depending upon magnitude of change
   5. **“You know what I want/need”** – Ask clarifying questions – drill to detail level to establish need for customer requirements support
   6. **Non-supportive** – Return to sponsor – strategize. Leverage sponsor authority if appropriate to push project agenda
   7. **Others**?
3. What is your project team status?
   1. **Supportive/capable** – Ensure communication plans are appropriate and requirements are clear
   2. **Supportive/not fully capable** – Obtain additional staff to augment and educate permanent team members and/or apply victory path for training in building a new project plan
   3. **Mixed support** – Push your plan – closely monitor all sub-teams. If you do not gain support, make reassignments or drop staff entirely. (Also see next item).
   4. **Non-supportive** – Conduct 1-on-1 meetings with leaders and key staff; listen for their motivations and concerns. Accommodate their thoughts where practical, but ultimately play the “benevolent dictator”.
   5. **Others**?
4. What is the critical and victory path status?
   1. **Paths known/resources available –** Proceed through other areas of checklist
   2. **Paths known/resources unavailable or divided –** Approach sponsor and assess organization’s priority for the project against other initiatives
   3. **Paths** **known, but customer changes them frequently –** Approach sponsor, demonstrate costs of accommodating changes, assess priority of requirements
   4. **Critical and/or victory paths unknown** **–** Reassess requirements (see question 2). Also, rebuild project plan with key leaders and stakeholders, build in critical and victory paths. Perform project audit.
   5. **Others?**
5. Do your communication plans/status reports lack:
   1. **Clear requirements** – Stop the project; formulate succinct questions for customers to emphasize need for requirements information. If necessary, create two requirements documents – technical and business focused to ensure all parties are in synch.
   2. **Accurate actual hours tracking** – Create a manual process if automation is inaccurate, unavailable. Audit time records by person to ensure accuracy. Create roll-up reports, and publish those reports throughout the project to all key stakeholders and project team.
   3. **Clear project assignments** – Retool project plan; Assign team leaders to each area of the project to assist with coordination as needed; Create and distribute assignment record for matrix managers and vendors, get agreement/signoff; Establish weekly status on assignments with issues reporting.
   4. **Milestones/Deliverables** – Perform project audit. Define significant milestones and deliverables and how they will be tracked and reported.
   5. **Others**?