

Recovering Troubled Projects Checklist

Questions and Recommendations

1) What is your sponsor status?

- a. **Supportive** – Retool communication plans, assess team skill gaps, re-launch project
- b. **Interested but skeptical** – Determine “victory path” – retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
- c. **Interested but constrained (\$ or time)** – Reconsider scope for the project and see (b) above
- d. **Non-Supportive** - Try to establish conditions for a new attempt to launch project, if unsuccessful “shoot the monkey” (kill the project)
- e. **Others?**

2) What is your customer status?

- a. **Supportive** – Ensure requirements are prioritized, ensure project plan reflects priority
- b. **Interested but skeptical** - Determine “victory path” – retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
- c. **Interested but constrained** - Determine “victory path” – reconsider scope change and/or retool project plan to increase confidence by delivering function in pieces
- d. **Business has changed** – Reinitiate project with new requirements session or “shoot the monkey” depending upon magnitude of change
- e. **“You know what I want/need”** – Ask clarifying questions – drill to detail level to establish need for customer requirements support
- f. **Non-supportive** – Return to sponsor – strategize. Leverage sponsor authority if appropriate to push project agenda
- g. **Others?**

3) What is your project team status?

- a. **Supportive/capable** – Ensure communication plans are appropriate and requirements are clear
- b. **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
- c. **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).
- d. **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”.
- e. **Others?**

4) What is the critical and victory path status?

- a. **Paths known/resources available** – Proceed through other areas of checklist
- b. **Paths known/resources unavailable or divided** – Approach sponsor and assess organization's priority for the project against other initiatives
- c. **Paths known, but customer changes them frequently** – Approach sponsor, demonstrate costs of accommodating changes, assess priority of requirements
- d. **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.
- e. **Others?**

5) Do your communication plans/status reports lack:

- a. **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.
- b. **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.
- c. **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.
- d. **Milestones/Deliverables** – Perform project audit. Define significant milestones and deliverables and how they will be tracked and reported.
- e. **Others?**