



Check list

- What are the business goals?
- How can we map IT initiatives to organisational goals?
- Can our objectives be achieved?
- What is the value of the project? (What will the change & why is that important?)
- Where is the money coming from?
- Does the organisation still embrace the desirability of the benefits?



Rowallan Software Services

Rowallan Software Services Ltd was established in 1994 in response to a need for realistic and practicable advice for busy IT departments and, in particular, development teams.

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Software Project Failure – Part 2

by Larysa Szalapaj

In Part 1 we looked at some examples of failed projects. Here I'd like to look at some important lessons learned from those failures.

Linkage

Organisational change is only enabled by IT if it is clearly linked with business objectives. Put simply, if we are involved in low-cost, efficient activities that do not satisfy the needs of the business then we cannot be delivering value for money, we are simply focused on the wrong objectives.

The alignment of IT to organisational objectives calls for initiatives in portfolio management & governance. 'Business' people should set out to gain better awareness of the potential offered by technology and 'IT' should improve its understanding of organisational needs.

Ownership

A key ingredient for success is that change programmes are seen as organisational and not specifically IT solutions; business improves itself and is enabled by IT. The involvement and input of key stakeholders – the board, finance, users, and internal customers - is necessary.

Evaluation

Project proposals should be evaluated and selected on the basis of the best investment of resources – money and people – that the organisation has the capability to deliver. I am reminded that we are often able to spot a bad idea but less able to differentiate between the 'loud idea' and the 'good idea'.

Engagement

One way to enable valid decision - making is to engage with those whose future we are changing. Stakeholders invest their time and thought in considering how the organisation will function in the future and what is needed to achieve this. This effort may need to be stewarded.

Skills

Initiatives are enabled through resourcing the time and skills of the necessary staff. It is important to be able to assess the level of skill and quality of technical skill available. It is common for projects to require specific skills that are not required for other projects.

Approach

Obstacles will arise during project activities. It is important that time is taken at the start to consider what will be needed during the course of the project and to put this into place before its absence creates the need to cancel delivery of the proposed benefits.

An appropriate development process should be in place and an efficient project management approach.

Project managers of suitable experience should be appointed to drive projects forward, to plan, organise and manage required resources.

Manageability

Development and implementation should be broken into manageable steps. Robust issue and risk management procedures should be instituted alongside other project activities.

Team integration

Create dialogue with stakeholders, be they clients or suppliers: it helps identify possible future directions and engenders understanding and trust.

Communication

Change can impact large numbers of people. Relevant information must be available and communicated to all levels of people throughout the project.

Conclusion

This is a list of the most commonly identified causes of failure. Use this list to check that your initiatives are on track to realise their envisaged value.