

Management Brief – Projects Fail, but what can we learn to ensure the success of your projects?



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Statistics

UK Government Statistics (OGC Report Apr'06) show that **70% of projects fail to achieve their goals**. In isolation this might be alarming, but it's not alone.

The Standish Group have been reporting on project failures for over a decade and have found improvements since 1994

| Standish Chaos Reports | 1994 | | 2004 | |
|------------------------|------|------------|------|------------|
| Impaired/Failed | 31% | 84% | 15% | 66% |
| Challenged | 53% | | 51% | |
| Succeeded | 16% | | 34% | |

In a 1997 report, the US General Accounting Office reported that around **84%** of projects fail to achieve their goals.

In conclusion, in project management circles it is widely accepted that more than **two thirds** of projects fail to meet their objectives, and many believe that the figures are much worse.

What can we Learn?

There are many assessments that have been made, and several factors have been identified:

Standish Group found that there were 5 main factors consistently observed in successful projects:

1. User involvement
2. Executive management support
3. Clear statement of requirements
4. Proper planning
5. Realistic expectations

Similarly they found the 10 causes of failure as:

1. Incomplete requirements
2. Lack of user involvement
3. Lack of resources
4. Unrealistic expectations
5. Lack of executive support
6. Changing requirements
7. Lack of planning
8. No longer needed
9. Lack of technical management
10. Technical Illiteracy



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In his success model of project management, 2006 Dongdong Jiang produced a list of 13 success factors:

1. **Clearly defined goals** (including the general project philosophy or general mission of the project, as well as commitment to those goals on the part of the team members).
2. **Competent project manager.** The importance of initial selection of skilled (interpersonally, technically, and administratively) project leader.
3. **Top Management Support.** Top or divisional management support for the project that has been conveyed to all concerned parties.
4. **Competent project team members.** The importance of selecting and, if necessary, triaging project team members.
5. **Sufficient resource allocation.** These are Resources in the form of money, personnel, logistics, etc.
6. **Adequate communication channels.** Sufficient information is available on the project objectives, status, changes, organizational coordination, clients' needs, etc.
7. **Control Mechanisms.** (Including planning, schedules, etc.). Programs are in place to deal with initial plans and schedules.
8. **Feedback capabilities.** All parties concerned with the project area able to review project status, make suggestions, and corrections through formal feedback channels or review meetings.
9. **Responsiveness to client.** All potential users of the project are consulted with and kept up to date on project status. Further, clients receive assistance after the project has been successfully implemented.
10. **Client consultation.** The project team members share solicited input from all potential clients of the project. The project team members understand the needs of those who will use the systems.
11. **Technical tasks.** The technology that is being implemented works well. Experts, consultants, or other experienced project managers outside the project team have reviewed and critiqued the basic approach.
12. **Client Acceptance.** Potential clients have been contacted about the usefulness of the project. Adequate advanced preparation has been done to best determine how to sell the project to the clients.
13. **Trouble-shooting.** Project team members spend a part of each day looking for problems that have surfaced or are about to surface. Project team members are encouraged to take quick action on problems on their own initiative.

If you need some help in maximising the success of your projects, then contact ProjExc. John Williams is Project Director at ProjExc, an independent project consultancy based on the Birmingham - Worcestershire border. He has over 16 years experience helping small and large companies achieve Project Excellence.

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