

HOW TO BRING FAILING PROJECTS BACK ON TRACK



Practical recommendations to help you regain and retain control of your project portfolio

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1 GET YOUR IT PROJECTS BACK ON TRACK

There are so many inter-related reasons a project can go out of control and it's often difficult to pinpoint what needs to be fixed or how. The inevitable frustration can lead to implementing quick-fixes that show positive intent but actually just makes things worse, resulting in further over-run, risk and disillusionment.

A more considered approach is needed, one in which the problems are more fully appreciated before a remediation plan is implemented. This doesn't need to be an onerous exercise, just a focused and empowered one performed by qualified personnel. This approach will identify if the issues prevail at a specific project level, or whether there are wider issues that impair project performance at a programme or portfolio level.

Only by approaching things in this more considered way can the various "levers" be adjusted or augmented to ensure fixing one thing does not break another. It could be an issue relating to demand versus supply, quality of project definition, or team resource management; whatever it is, the issues are many and a qualified remediation review will identify the root causes and give you the right information and guidance to fix them.



2 RUN AN EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Approximately two thirds of IT organisations run a PMO today, however they are very different in the functions they perform. In our experience, there are several types of PMO in operation today, each of which are applied, often inconsistently, to individual projects, programmes or portfolios.

Project Support: Providing tools, methods and sometimes resources, to support the Project Manager in the day to day delivery of their IT projects.

Project Control: Providing quality measures to ensure project performance, including project definition, tracking, quality measurement, lessons learned and coaching of PM's to ensure the consistency of IT project delivery.

Project Assurance: Ensuring wider alignment of IT objectives, including the effective management of business and IT demand, use and sourcing of resources, flexing within financial constraints and ensuring effective customer management.

To run an effective PMO, requirements need to be mapped against the maturity of IT generally. For example, it would be more of a priority to build effective Project Support if all the PM's go about their tasks disparately; it would be a priority to build Project Control if visibility of project performance was the issue; or perhaps to build Project Assurance if the business demand was beyond that of IT to deliver.



3 BREAK THROUGH THE SKILLS CEILING

Every IT organisation faces the same challenge, in that they are constrained by internal ceilings on resources and skills. Similarly, most IT organisations see PMO as a core competency and not part of a wider outsource arrangement. As described in **Part I of our mini-series**, the challenge therefore, is how to break through this ceiling – how to extend the PMO function, whilst retaining control?

Many requirements to support a project are transient, requiring capability and capacity for short bursts. Similarly, many projects are sufficiently small enough that full time resources either cannot be justified or cannot provide the necessary focus. The challenges of using contract staff to fill these gaps was explored in detail in our **Next-Gen Approach to IT Resourcing eGuide**, so a next-generation approach is required.

Increasingly, a number of specialist professional services organisations are seizing on this opportunity, providing skills as a service rather than as traditional day rate. In this way the professional services company will typically:

- Provide access to a range of skills rather than a single resource
 - Blend these skills with a service package rather than a day rate
 - Provide options to deliver the service against a scope or outcome, as opposed to a job spec
 - Provide the service on flexible delivery terms to ensure cost effective delivery versus full time resources
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By selecting a service partner approach to filling the project services gap, it becomes possible for IT departments to access a far greater range of capabilities and commercial advantage than would otherwise be possible internally or via traditional service providers.

