Avoiding Project Pitfalls at the University of Illinois

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The key objective in project management is to complete your project successfully. That often means steering clear of the potholes in the road.

This interactive presentation of common pitfalls helps you avoid some of the problems that plague unsuccessful projects at the University of Illinois. Come prepared to share pitfalls that you’ve experienced and if applicable, how you’ve overcame them.
Agenda

- Definition
- Common project pitfalls
- Group Activity
- Closing
Definition of Pitfall

From [http://yourdictionary.com](http://yourdictionary.com)

- The definition of a pitfall is a danger, downside or a trap that may be concealed or that you may not be aware of.
- Noun
  - a lightly covered pit used as a trap for animals
  - an unsuspected difficulty, danger, or error that one may fall into
Common Project Pitfalls

• Communication
• Testing
• Underestimation
• Monitoring and Controlling
Common Project Pitfalls

- Communication
- Testing
- Underestimation
- Monitoring and Controlling
Communication

Unclear project communication

- What’s going on with the project?
- Who’s responsible for what?
- When are my tasks due and how do they relate to what others are working on?
- What does this change or new application/service mean to users?
- What is the priority of this project among my other work?
- Who needs what project information, in what form, how often?
Pitfalls Avoidance

Create a communication plan for each project

- Who needs what communication?
- What form should the communication take?
  Active and Passive
- What is the standard cycle for communication?
- Varies with size and complexity of project
- Improves performance and team buy-in
Communication Execution

- Normal project status meetings – weekly/biweekly
  - Standardize schedule and components
    - Schedule and assignments
    - Top issues / risks
    - Current tasks due and overdue
    - Action items

- Sponsor / Management Communication - monthly
  - Project status (reuse team communication) – use the same artifact if possible
  - Discuss internal / external barriers (may be documented as issues)
  - Sponsor expectations / concerns
  - User change management planning

- Ad hoc communication
  - Email / IM
  - Stop, Talk, Stroll.....
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who/Target</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>When/Frequency</th>
<th>Type/Method(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Meeting</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>The main goal of this meeting is to identify all stakeholders and provide a forum for all project team members to discuss schedule, scope, team, and other issues.</td>
<td>At the start of the Project Initiation phase</td>
<td>Meeting. (A template for the discovery meeting is available in PMMLC materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Kick-off Meeting</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>The main goal of the project kick-off meeting is to familiarize the project team with the project, review the project charter and receive buy-in from all project participants. Future meeting schedules will be defined and discussed and meeting minutes will be documented.</td>
<td>At the end of the Project Initiation phase.</td>
<td>Meeting. (A template for the project kick-off meeting is available in PMMLC materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMO Status Reports and Review</td>
<td>All stakeholders and PMO</td>
<td>Update stakeholders on progress of the project. Use the PMO Monthly Checklist as a guide. (Available in PMMLC materials)</td>
<td>The 1st and 15th of each month.</td>
<td>Project plan updated in Clarity for PMO reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Status Meetings</td>
<td>Entire Project Team.</td>
<td>To review detailed plans: Tasks, Assignments, Action Items, Change Requests</td>
<td>Regularly Scheduled. Weekly is recommended for entire team. Weekly or twice-weekly for sub-teams as appropriate.</td>
<td>Meeting with standardized agenda / minutes. (A template for project status team meetings is available in PMMLC materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUA team working meetings or individual meetings for sub-teams, technical team, and</td>
<td>To discuss specific topics, resolve issues as a group, or work on shared tasks.</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Meeting with agenda and minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Dashboard

**ITPC-0367 SDM Front-End**

**Objective**
- Create a Service Desk user interface for end users
- Create a self-service open access to knowledge documents
- Improve customer satisfaction

**Benefit**
- Decrease the Service Desk ticket submission
- Improve the Service Desk resource availability to other tasks
- Increase information to end users

**Accomplishments**
- Created high-level block diagrams and UI design
- Project kickoff was held on 5/16/14
- The kickoff for redesigning request area was held on 6/19/14
- Project planning completed, use cases finalized
- Technical requirements completed
- Wireframe design completed

**Upcoming Milestones**
- Campus planning - 11/20/14
- Integrating KMS into Service Desk - 11/20/14

**Project Status:** Green

**Issues/Risks**
- None

**Decisions**
- Due to accessibility issues, we discovered in SDM front end
- activity, an additional approach to design was recommended on 8/15/14 for the project to proceed without further delay

**Summary Project Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kick-off Meeting</td>
<td>05/14/14</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drupal Theme Selection</td>
<td>06/10/14</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Stories created</td>
<td>09/22/14</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed technical requirements complete</td>
<td>10/11/14</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select design option</td>
<td>10/21/14</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus planning complete</td>
<td>12/20/14</td>
<td>incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireframe design complete</td>
<td>10/26/14</td>
<td>incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete UAC timeline</td>
<td>01/30/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All required area changes completed</td>
<td>12/17/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVS forms created in FormBuilder</td>
<td>11/19/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVS forms designed in AVS builder</td>
<td>11/20/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVS forms design from AVS complete</td>
<td>11/19/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Server versions updated with AVS</td>
<td>11/27/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAT Test complete</td>
<td>01/29/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Test Cases complete</td>
<td>02/12/14</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain Customer Sign Off</td>
<td>03/09/15</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execute GoLive Roll Out</td>
<td>03/09/15</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close the project</td>
<td>03/21/15</td>
<td>not revised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**October 2014**
Common Project Pitfalls

• Communication
• **Testing**
• Underestimation
• Monitoring and Controlling
Testing

• Is testing estimate included in the proposal?
• Do you invite the QA team to your kickoff?
• During planning, do you engage the QA team?
  Do you create requirements and use cases that would help your QA team to test?
  How do you know what kind of testing you need?
• How do you keep QA team in the loop during execution?
Pitfalls Avoidance

• Invite QA (or testers) to project kickoff
• Create a Test Plan
  – Requirements testing
  – Performance testing (load, stress, volume)
  – Web Application Security testing
  – Accessibility testing
  – Configuration testing
• Testing estimates should be provided by QA team
Common Project Pitfalls

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Underestimation

Common Areas of Underestimation:

• Budget
  – Tools for mitigating the issue:
    • Similar to the communications plan, establish set times for tracking the budget (weekly, bi-weekly, etc.)
    • Include the budget as an agenda item when you meet with your sponsors
    • Create or utilize tools that make tracking easy but also make it easy for others to understand (spreadsheets, burn charts, etc.)
Underestimation

Common Areas of Underestimation:

• Schedule
  – Tools for mitigating the issue:
    • Similar to the communications plan, establish set times for reviewing the schedule (weekly, bi-weekly, etc.)
    • Communication! Talk to those doing the work to get their input. They will be your best resource for accurate task durations.
    • Include the schedule as an agenda item for your status meetings and meetings with sponsors
    • Create or utilize tools that make tracking easy but also make it easy for others to understand (spreadsheets, burn charts, etc.)
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Project Management Process Groups

- Initiating Process Group (Start)
- Planning Process Group (Plan)
- Executing Process Group (D0)
- Monitoring and Controlling Process Group (Check and act)
- Closing Process Group (End)
Project Management Process
Group Interactions

Figure 3-1. Project Management Process Groups
Monitoring and Controlling Process Group (Check and Act)

- Control scope, schedule, and cost to their baselines
- New Risks
- Documentation
Your Project Pitfalls Story
Group Activity

• Each table should appoint a scriber and a leader
• Share project pitfalls that you’ve experienced and if applicable, how you’ve overcame them.
• Select one pitfall to share with the class by your appointed leader
What Have You Learned Today?
Thank you for coming!!!

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