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5 Easy Tips for Successfully Managing Your Projects

Too many projects fail because the right foundation wasn't in place to support their success. These 5 tips will help make sure your next project goes off without a hitch.

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Successfully managing a business project to completion isn't easy. According to a 2013 report from the Project Management Institute, "[Pulse of the Profession: The High Cost of Low Performance](#)," less than two-thirds of projects meet their goals and business intent (success rates have been falling since 2008), and about 17 percent fail outright.

But regardless of why business projects fail, it's your business's bottom line that takes the hit. The PMI report found that 13.5 percent of every dollar invested in a project is completely unrecoverable if a project fails. That's a huge waste of money. And what small business can afford that?

With so many moving parts to a project, keeping everything in line to ensure it comes in on time and on budget, and achieves its intended goals can be a real challenge. While no one can ever guarantee success, there are a few things you can do to give yourself a greater chance of hitting it out of the park on your first try.

1. Have a Well-Defined Vision and Goals

Two things that make a project “a project” are a distinct purpose with a defined beginning and end. Getting clear on the vision of your project will take you a long way to ensuring its success. It’s also critical to define the goals the project is meant to achieve. And making sure that everyone from the key stakeholder—the person who has the most to gain from its success—to the project’s leader and team members completely understands and agrees upon the project’s vision and goals before the project begins will help your project team define the road map to make your idea a reality. Setting the parameters in the beginning will also help you eliminate the dreaded scope creep that’s inevitable in pretty much any project.

2. Assign Detailed Roles and Responsibilities

One of the biggest stumbling blocks a team often runs into on a project is not knowing who plays what role and what their responsibilities are. It’s a huge waste of time for multiple people to do the same task, so take some time up front to detail what roles are needed, the exact responsibilities of each role and which project team member will fill it. Make sure every team member is clear on their specific roles and has the talents and strengths to be the best at it.

3. Make Communication a Priority

When your team is working to complete a project, there’s no such thing as communicating too much. To assist them, you should create a communication plan at the start of the project that details every type of communication method that will occur as well as when it will take place.

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It’s also important to identify what types of messages will be communicated and the general topics they’ll address. Ensuring the right message is paired up with the right audience will help minimize problems as you move along the project timeline. Don’t be tempted to skip this step! I’ve never heard of a project failing because of over-communication, but I’ve seen plenty that have failed because there wasn’t enough.

4. Emphasize the Importance of Process

Projects have a predictable path from initiation to completion. Although each project has its own unique aspects, it’s important you define the standard policies, procedures, rules and

processes that your team members will use to help them be the most successful in their assigned project roles. Standards help you replicate success from project to project and will also help you minimize mistakes. Don't forget to train the project team on those policies and processes so you can achieve the best results.

5. Be Flexible and Adaptable

Nothing is static on a project. No matter how hard you try to make things run exactly like the last successful project, there will be anomalies for every single project you complete. So it's important that your project team members are capable of responding quickly and adapting to changes in both internal and external project environments. Find people for your project team who can work within your prescribed guidelines but who also value change as an opportunity to improve. It's a winning combination.

Perhaps you've noticed that none of these tips mention technology or tools—that's intentional. Adding project management tools and technology to your project can help you manage it, but it's not the most critical piece. Put your money and your focus on the people, and your success rate is sure to improve.

Completing projects successfully can be an exhilarating experience. Leveraging these five tips for your next project can help you make sure yours is a win.

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