

Guaranteeing Project Failures or Facilitating Their Success



“ A brief discussion of the things we can do to screw up an Information Technology project, and some things we can do to avoid them.”

Gerry Pacyna – NARUC SSIS - 2005

The IT Environment



- Tough Times
- Tight budgets, under-funded projects
- Understaffed operations
- Under-appreciated challenges
- Getting IT right is tougher than ever to accomplish

However.....



- One thing is still easy.....screwing things up....here is a handy how-to list.....

Assume



- You know what customers need.....
- You know what management expects....
- You will have no problems.....
- You'll catch up when the schedule slides....
- No problems will show up in testing....
- No one will mind all of your assumptions...
- Why should they???

Expect



- Support from management.....
- Perfection from vendors.....
- Clear specifications from customers....
- Flawless execution from IT staff.....
- Hey....it could happen, so why not expect it??

Over-promise

- Paint an improbably beautiful picture of glitch-free hardware, bug-free software, and friction-free networks.....
- Set an early delivery date.....
- Make the list of features long....
- Keep expectations high.....
- What else will spur you to do your best work??

Complicate



- Avoid straight-forward designs.....
- Sneer at simple solutions....
- Encourage complexity.....
- Who's going to respect technology that anyone can understand??

Alienate



- Customers that can explain what your systems need to do for them.....
- Business managers whose budgets you'll spend.....
- Senior management.....
- What do you need anyone's cooperation for anyhow??

Experiment



- Customers make the best guinea pigs.....
- Production systems make the best test-beds.
- Untried technology offers its greatest rewards in mission critical applications....
- When your original plans don't work out, why not give something completely untested a shot??

Deny



- Responsibility.....
- Promises you made.....
- Failure.....
- The limits of your staff, your systems, and your own abilities.....
- What's obvious to everyone else.....
- Who should they believe...you, or their own lying eyes??

Change



- What customers see on their screens.....
- Passwords.....
- What gets blocked by filtering software....
- Your help desk hours...
- Your procedures.....
- The rules....
- Variety is the spice of life.....why can't these folks get out of their rut??

Procrastinate



- Delay that status meeting.....
- Push back that design/code review....
- Put off those patches, upgrades and audits...
- Isn't there always time to get things done at the last minute.....and can't you push back that last minute one more time??

Withhold



- Information.....
- Cooperation....
- Anything that would give customers, managers, or executives a better sense of what to expect, when to expect it, and how useful it will be if it ever arrives.....
- Who ever heard of winning at poker without keeping your cards close to your chest??

Underestimate



- Make low-ball cost estimates.....
- Predict a minimum of problems.....
- Sketch out short development schedules....
- Everyone loves an optimist, so why plan for expenses and delays that might never materialize??

Avenge



- Take revenge for perceived slights and possible acts of sabotage.....
- Return real attacks and imagined affronts in kind.....
- Pay back every case of stupidity, folly and ignorance measure for measure.....
- Why risk letting someone get away with it??

Ignore



- Problems, warning signs, complaints and objections.....
- Suggestions, feedback, and test results.....
- The recommendations of management and customers.....
- Rumors and rumblings of discontent....
- Why sweat the small stuff??

Avoiding Project Failures



How do we avoid the pitfalls and problems that can easily creep into our projects?

IT Project Management History

- Lack of planning and definition
- Little communication, collaboration, and cooperation
- Poor or no issue/change management
- Fostered project failures: budget, schedule, and scope
- Reduced trust and credibility

What can we do about this?

- Heavy emphasis on Project Management
- Co-developed budgets and plans
- The Project Office
- Clear definition of roles/responsibilities
- Stronger controls
- **COMMUNICATION!!!!!!**

Project Management

- Training of Managers, Staff, and Customers
- Certifications
- Project Office/Coordination
- Documentation – Everything!
- Consistent Process
- **COMMUNICATION!!!!**

A Project Office

- Non-technical staff/person preferable
- Coordinates all project processes/activities: schedules, procurements, deliverables, costs, staffing, consultants, issues, changes
- The Science.....the Art
- Maintains all project records/documentation
- Provides support, but part of the team
- Reduces burden on technical/business team
- Consistent policies and procedures

The Process



- Starts with a request
- Project Definition Document/Charter
 - Jointly developed business document
 - Involve business and technical stakeholders
 - Scope, rationale, benefits, objectives
 - Deliverables, duration, costs, risks, impacts
 - Roles, staffing, approvals, ongoing costs
 - Establishes Steering Committee
 - Serves as high level project plan

Customer Responsibilities



- Business Planning/Needs
- Justification and Budgets/Funding
- Requirements Definition
- Testing, Acceptance, Approvals
- Business Process Implementation
- Business Changes
- Basic technical support

IT Responsibilities

- Technology Planning/Budgeting
- Project Coordination, Staffing, Tracking, Consultant/Contract Management
- Systems Analysis, Design, Development
- Technology Implementation
- System Maintenance
- Advanced Technology/Technical Support

Joint Responsibilities

- Project Planning and Definition
- Procurement, Priorities, Management, Schedules, Deliverables, Changes
- Requirement and Design Documents
- System Testing, Training, and Implementation
- Ongoing System Changes and Maintenance Requests

COMMUNICATION!!!!!!

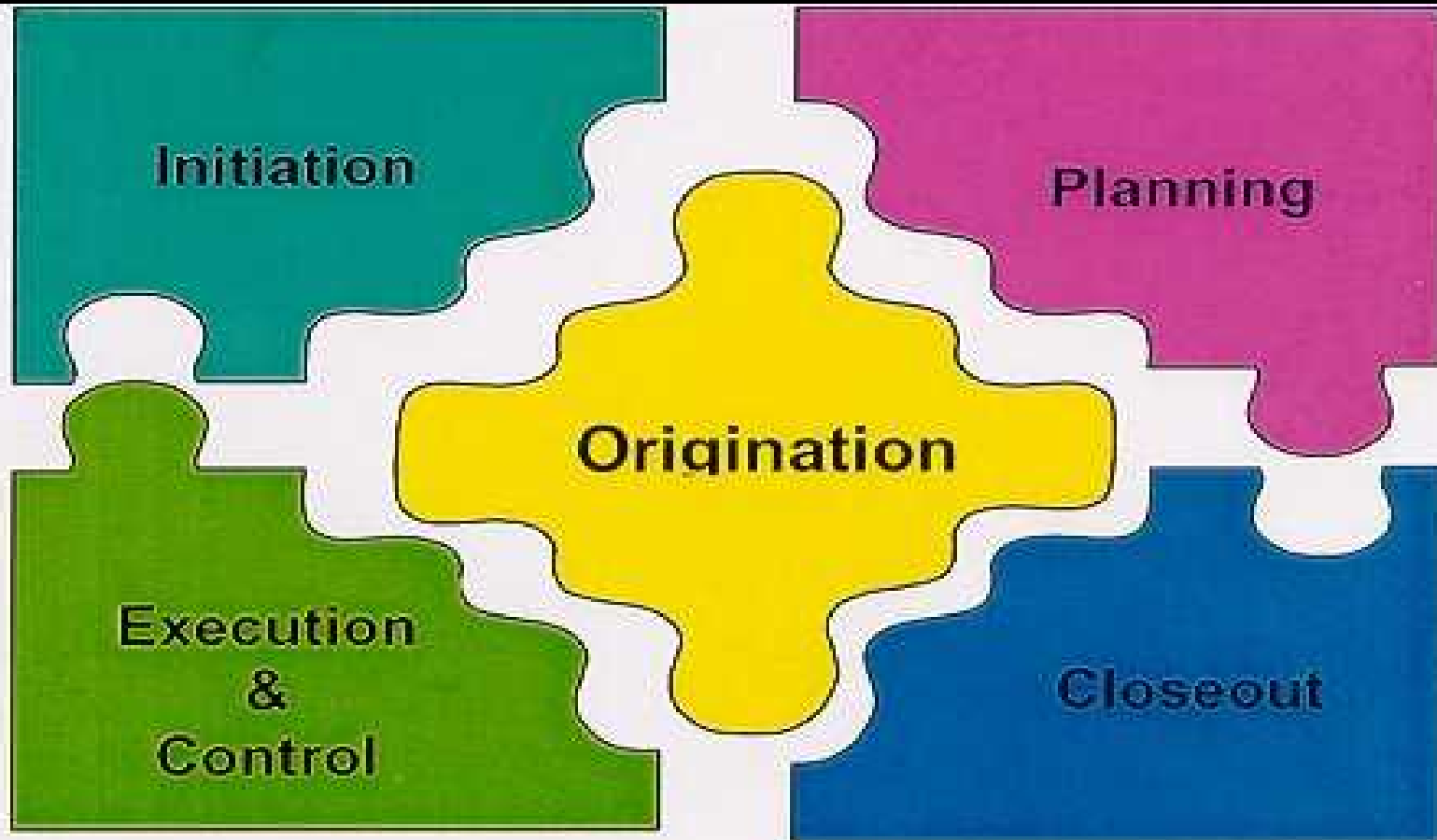


- Commissioners
- Customer/IT Management
- Steering Committee
- Joint Project Team/Management
- The Project Office
- Status Meetings/Reports
- Documentation: Paper and Online

The Results



- Clear Definition and Understanding of Projects/Roles and Expectations
- Control of Scope, Schedule, and Costs
- True Collaboration and Joint Management – a Team Approach
- Early Warning/Control of Issues/Changes
- Reduced Risks, Increased Successes
- Confidence and Trust



An Integrated Approach to Project Management