



9 Secrets to Keeping Your IT Projects Under Control

There's no denying that IT projects can be some of the most difficult to manage, even under the best of circumstances. They're often riddled with variables, complexities, challenges, complications, and other issues that can easily cause the project to extend beyond its original budget, timeline and scope.

While the use of well-suited project management processes and best practices can help you minimize the potential negative impact, dealing with these issues against limited time and resources, as well as shifting requirements, rapidly changing

technologies, stakeholder contradictions, and more, can make the demands of an IT project seem unachievable. Furthermore, because the successful completion of IT projects is so important to the immediate and future success of an organization, there's added pressure to get things done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

With all that said, it's easy to see how a seemingly well-planned project can start to go sideways. There are potential pitfalls and landmines everywhere, and one misstep can cause your project to spin out of control.

Each project has its own set of unique characteristics, and while there is no exact recipe to ensure project success each and every time, there are some general recommendations you can apply to most IT projects to help you keep them under control. Here are nine secrets to preventing your projects from running wild:

1.

Set Clear Goals and Reasonable Expectations

Deadlines, tasks, deliverables, and end goals are all things that should be well-known by your entire project team. Team members should be fully aware of changing conditions, and have a clear understanding of requirements at all times. Additionally, expectations for goal achievement should be reasonably set given the project's parameters, resource availability, and other factors. Setting them too high and you may set yourself up for failure. Too low and you may skew the perception of what your teams are capable of.

2

Know the strengths and weaknesses of your team

With a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each of your team members, you can select ideal participants and assign tasks more appropriately. This can benefit the team as a whole, as well as each individual member, given that each member or group will be working on tasks that fit their skillsets and styles.

3

Be Flexible

Remain flexible and open to suggestions whenever possible throughout the project. During the project workflow, team members may come up with ideas, or identify more appropriate tools, that can lead to a quicker completion of objectives, cut costs, or produce other positive results.

4

Distraction Management

Because of the demands of the modern digital business environment, most team members are not dedicating all of their time to one single task. They're typically juggling multiple task assignments and priorities while doing all they can to produce high-quality work and meet deadlines. Dedicated team working sessions, re-allocating resources, and re-distributing work can help spur action for slow-moving task assignments.

5

Embrace Feedback

As challenging as it can be in the moment, the feedback you receive throughout the course of a project can prevent complicated and time-consuming changes at the end. Embracing feedback as opportunities instead of hindrances can have a profound and positive effect on the workflow.

6

Lean on Project Management Software

With all the moving parts in an IT project, it can be extremely difficult, and risky, to manage projects without advanced project management software. While there are many to choose from, and not all are well-suited for all types of projects, finding one that fits the needs of your project can make scheduling, communication, estimating, task assignments, and tracking much easier.

7

Keep a Holistic View

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8

Active Monitoring

To ensure they stay on track, projects must be astutely and actively monitored. If not, surprises can arise and derail a project from successful completion. It's critical that there is progress and activity awareness at all times through chosen project management tools, and effective communication with team members.

9

Scope Creep - Get it Out of Here

Scope creep is the foremost cause of projects getting out of control. By clearly defining the scope of the project up front, and by spending time to set the foundation for the project's needs and requirements, you can help keep the project on track. Additionally, effectively managing out-of-scope change requests by introducing phases of deployment can help keep the original scope intact, while ensuring all needs get met.