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6 Common Project Management Mistakes



2nd Edition

A guide to help you run your projects on time,
in full and on budget

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Introduction

Hi, this is Daniel Rodgers and Stuart Corrigan from Vanguard Scotland Ltd.

A little known fact about project management is that the common methods of building and managing projects don't work very well.

In compiling this guide we've worked with many Chief Executives, project managers, managers, team leaders and they all contacted us to ask the same thing:



“Why is it that we can't get our projects to deliver on time, on budget or in full?”

And here is the awful truth, every single one of them is doing exactly what they've been told to do by the traditional project management books, guides, courses and institutions. Yet they still can't get what they want, **a method that works.**

Let me give you some examples:

Example 1:

Mark is an internal consultant for a large German car company. His job is to make sure that the new designs deliver on time, they work and they come in on budget (that's what you want isn't it?).

We worked with him to get baseline data on how well his method performed. Guess what? He was using the most respected project management method in the world. In fact if you were to go into Mark's office you would find the most beautiful project plan we'd ever seen, detailing every single task that needs to be delivered and when it needs to be done. Yet a typical project **took too long to deliver**, used the wrong parts and cost €50M a year in additional test equipment.

Example 2:

Jim manages the resurfacing of roads in Glasgow. Compared to our friend in Germany he has a small team. He manages them tightly, sets them achievable due dates, starts the projects as soon as he can and gets an update once every day on how much they've completed. Compared to Mark, he has a small department, but last year he was so **over budget** and **late** that the next year's plan became redundant before it even began.

Example 3:

Let's take one of our own examples. Last winter Stuart was getting a new bathroom fitted. The owner of the bathroom shop turned up with a printed Gantt chart and said that their key to getting everything finished on time was to start all the different work streams as soon as possible. **He was a week late.** During that week the whole family had to go to the neighbours for showers. One year later... aspects of the bathroom are still not finished!

When Stuart called him to complain he said, "I just don't understand, I've **done everything by the book.**"

Unfortunately many of the books, courses and institutes are **wrong** about many things. What the people in the above cases studies later learned was that what they had been previously taught not only failed them in delivering a better job, but also that their assumptions themselves actually contributed to badly run and poorly delivered projects.



Many of the people we've worked with started by saying that it was their environment not their method.

So let me say this,
our method works for all organisations big or small.

Here are some examples of what you can get if you employ this method:

- **Road resurfacing**

Results: Improved prioritisation and annual programme completed in 8 months

- **Build of information technology systems**

Results: Project finished 4 weeks early and absorbed an addition 4 weeks of additional work.

- **Seagate Bespoke engineering in the electronics industry**

Results: 18 month project completed in 9

- **BT Radianz projects to produce financial information**

Results: 90% on time in full

- **ABRO Military reconditions equipment such as tanks**

Results: Project backlog reduced by more than 50% and projects completed 25% faster than before

No matter what type of project business you work in, we trust you will find something here to help you. In this guide we've set out to share the secrets of great project management. Specifically:

- Common problems in project environments
- Why traditional methods of project management don't work and what to do differently
- Seven steps to building and running your next project

It is worthwhile remembering that whilst many of the lessons and insights we will share in this guide are **practical and easy to use** they may be counter-intuitive.

So take time to digest each piece of information one piece at a time. In fact I would recommend that you **print out this guide**, separate the different chapters and take a day's break between each one, so you can really get your head around the concepts.

Like most guides there is only so much we can teach you without being on site and **coaching you personally** but we hope that this guide points you in the right direction.

If you have any questions you can contact either Daniel at

daniel@vanguardscotland.co.uk

And if you need more information on the courses we offer you can visit our website at

<http://systemsthinkingmethod.com/sectors-project.html>

Ok the advertisement is over so let's get on with the guide.



Section 1: Common problems

Projects suffer from three main problems

Every project we've studied has had three main issues, **poor due date** performance, **a failure to complete all the work** specified in the project and a **failure to bring the project in at the right cost**.

We've worked with organisations whose on time delivery of projects is as low as 17%. Based on the number we've seen with similar performance we think that this is considerably more wide spread than publicised. Oh, and if you think "*that's not me*", we actually mean the original promised date and not the one you have revised (probably more than once).

The problem is that at the end point there is typically a customer; someone who is waiting for the delivery of a product or service but has been let down.

Stuart's aunt has a small local authority home. The refurbishment of her kitchen was three weeks late. During that time she had little contact from the council or contractor and she was scared to leave the house just in case a tradesman turned up!