



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

WHY PROJECT MANAGEMENT IS BROKEN

And Three Ways to Fix It



“I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind.
Some come from ahead and some come from behind.
But I’ve bought a big bat.
I’m all ready you see.
Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!”

- Dr. Seuss, *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew*

\$250 BILLION

More than \$250 billion each year is spent on IT projects in the U.S.

Imagine canoeing upstream with a broken paddle. That’s effectively what today’s project managers and IT directors, like you, are doing. Whether you’re managing the corporate IT application development group—tasked with delivering the systems that keep the business running—or some other enterprise team, manual processes, disconnected tools, numerous methodologies, and scattered stakeholders have most likely left you scrambling to control projects and deliver successful business solutions.

In the United States, more than \$250 billion each year is spent on IT projects.¹ Project managers are key to ensuring these projects deliver a return on that investment. But, 62% of projects are delivered late,² and 49% of projects are over budget.³ Project management is clearly broken.

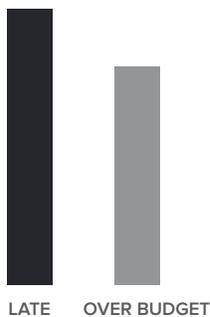
It’s not that project managers lack the skills to manage projects. Actually, most are very good at it. Finding resources, coordinating task deliverable dates, and tracking budgets—the skills are there. What’s different is the speed and sheer complexity of business. Heightened competition, rapid advances in technology, and a global economy have organizations operating at a dizzying pace.

These changes have impacted the environment that project managers and IT directors have to work in. In response, companies have invested in a variety of project management tools. But these tools are restrictive, take time to learn, are rarely adopted, and don’t solve the bigger issues. So, team members and stakeholders resort to familiar habits of phone calls, email threads, and hallway conversations that inhibit productivity and imperil project timelines and budgets.

Yet without a solution, enterprise teams face countless obstacles: redundant work, hours of unnecessary meetings, manual reporting that eats into actual work time, and a continuous cycle of hurry-up-and-finish-this-today projects that lack scope, direction, and quality checkpoints.

Fortunately, there are some things you can do to successfully manage projects in this rapidly changing environment. It starts with understanding the underlying issues and then working to improve your processes.

Here are the three leading reasons why project management is broken and ways to fix the problems.



62% of projects are delivered late and 49% of projects are over budget.

Problem #1:

Herding the cats.

“Did you ever fly a kite in bed?
Did you ever walk with ten cats on your head?”

- Dr. Seuss, *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*

You know how to manage projects. Schedules, budgets, tasks, dependencies—you’ve got it. But, you still have to manage all of the other daily work, and it comes at you from every angle. No doubt, you’ve seen changes in project scope buried in email threads, executives making special requests in hallway conversations, and status updates left on sticky notes. Getting a handle on all of these activities is like herding cats. Add the time wasted on manually updating status reports and time spent in status meetings, and projects can fall dangerously behind before you even realize it.

The average IT organization spends 45% to 55% of its time on unplanned (and urgent) activities.⁴ Non-project work like ad hoc requests, maintenance, and fixes can distract resources and derail project plans in a hurry. Without visibility across the entire lifecycle of work, it’s nearly impossible to assess the real impact of these requests. Until you take a broader view of enterprise work, you put every project at risk of failure.

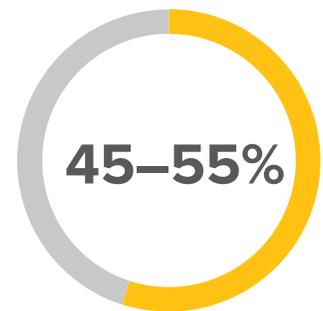
The Fix:

See the big picture.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to more effectively manage all of your team’s work—not just projects—and get the visibility you need. Begin with a single place for intake of new requests and changes, whether that is a specific email address or point person. No back doors, no end-arounds. Period. Now, with all of your team’s work requests in one place, you can compare them, and prioritize them strategically so you can always make sure your team is doing the right work at the right time.

Build trust by providing visibility into the process. By creating access to project and activity information in one place, your customers can see for themselves the status of their requests without having to bombard you with emails and phone calls. And, you’ll have an easy way to demonstrate your value and results to your executive team.

When the time is right, invest in technology that can manage the entire lifecycle of work from end to end in real time. The solution you choose should be easy to use and provide additional features that make your team more productive, such as social collaboration and mobile access.



The average IT organization spends 45 – 55% of its time on unplanned and urgent activities.

Problem #2:

Managing the mix of methodologies.

“When beetles fight these battles in a bottle with their paddles and the bottle’s on a poodle and the poodle’s eating noodles...”

- Dr. Seuss, *Fox in Socks: Green Back Book*

Whether it’s storyboards in Agile or critical dependencies in Waterfall, it can be difficult to track the various stages, let alone manage them all.

Lately, Agile is all the rage. Its more responsive approach can bring better, faster results to certain types of projects. But Agile can disrupt the traditional processes of budget forecasting, performance benchmarking, and accountability. For project managers, it means rethinking how these types of projects are managed.

Project management methodologies and frameworks come in all flavors, from vanilla to spumoni. Each of your project teams has its favorites, and you are left trying to manage them all. Whether it’s storyboards in Agile or critical dependencies in Waterfall, it can be difficult to track the various stages, let alone manage them all. You can end up with several different tools to manage each kind or, even worse, limit your team to the methodology you can support.

Even then, you still have to figure out how to manage the one-off, ad hoc requests that always make their way to you.

The Fix:

Embrace the choices.

Don’t let the tool choose or limit your work methodology. For your project teams to be as effective as possible, they need to use the best methodology for the job. It’s up to you to figure out a way to support them and help them be successful.

Often, the choice of methodology is pinned on company culture. However, culture can easily be confused with capabilities. Improving the ability to support various methodologies, like Agile, will often ease cultural acceptance. Building this mixed-methodology support requires the following capabilities:

- A common understanding of the steps and rules
- Visibility, not just across multiple projects, but the entire workflow
- The ability to communicate across methodologies by understanding relevant terms
- Collaboration in the context of work, not buried in email threads and frequent meetings

- Metrics and benchmarks that are common across projects
- The ability to prioritize across a variety of ad hoc requests and projects

Like learning a foreign language—once you can understand and speak it, you expand your world. Break down the language barriers and watch your project and development teams excel.

Problem #3: Enforcing the tools.

“Your Majesty. Please...
I don’t like to complain.
But down here below,
we are feeling great pain.”

- Dr. Seuss, *Yertle the Turtle*

You rely on your team members to update you on the status of their deliverables. You thought a bright, shiny, new project management tool would do the trick. But, you still get hallway updates, voicemails, and drive-bys. That’s if you’re lucky. Usually, it’s you spending the time tracking down team members for updates.

Getting your users to embrace your project management tools can be very difficult. It doesn’t help that the average person uses 13 different methods to control and manage their time.⁵ To make things worse, a recent survey by PMP Research shows that very few companies think their project management tools are very effective. Nearly half (49%) view them as only moderately effective, and 26% saw them as not very effective.⁶

When any of those tools are not easy to use and not seen as effective, people simply don’t use them. And, that doesn’t leave you with a whole lot of options.

The Fix: Make the experience easy.

In order to get your users back on board, managing their own updates and project communication, you need to meet them where they are. That will require a change in mindset. It may sound crazy, but a spreadsheet is far better than a multi-million dollar solution if that’s what your team members and stakeholders want to use. Sometimes, simple is better.

When project management solutions are easy, you’ll find your team members become active participants. And, when solutions are as intuitive and interactive as social media or mobile apps, your team members will happily engage—ensuring quality conversations and updates happen automatically.

13 DIFFERENT
METHODOLOGIES

The average person uses 13 different methods to control and manage their time.

Going Beyond Fixed: Getting to fabulous.

“You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”

- Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

When it all comes together—a broader view of work, an intuitive experience, and support for mixed methodologies—organizations like yours can begin to transcend traditional project management in favor of true, comprehensive Enterprise Work Management. That’s what happened with Peregrine.

Peregrine Semiconductor moved away from a patchwork of project management tools and selected an Enterprise Work Management solution to provide greater visibility across all types of work. This solution has become the single point to intake new requests, schedule and manage projects, provide collaboration on tasks, and produce accurate and detailed reports. Peregrine was able to shift its model from one where project managers manually updated the timeline and completion status to one in which this data flowed up from the team automatically. This shift saved enough time to increase their project capacity by 200% .



49% of users view project management tools as only moderately effective, and 26% view them as not very effective.

“With AtTask, our team is hugely more productive and we’re able to handle a workload that we simply wouldn’t be able to handle without it. Our project throughput increased by 200%.”

PEREGRINE SEMICONDUCTOR

AtTask Enterprise Work Management

“Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple.”

- Dr. Seuss

AtTask is a cloud-based Enterprise Work Management solution that helps IT application development groups and other enterprise teams conquer the problems associated with traditional project management. Using a combination of technology and expertise acquired from observing the customers we've served, AtTask provides a single system of truth that eliminates work chaos, provides global visibility, and increases productivity. It offers a complete, adoptable solution—powerful enough for technical users, intuitive enough for business stakeholders, and flexible enough to utilize Agile, Waterfall, or a mix of the two.

To learn more about AtTask Enterprise Work Management and how it increases enterprise visibility, please contact us at the following:

 www.attask.com

 + 1.866.441.0001

 +44 (0)845 5083771

“You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting,
So...get on your way!”

-DR. SEUSS
OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

HBO



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC



CISCO



FedEx



BAUER



Schneider
Electric



ESPN

PVH

Kellogg's

Endnotes

1. "New Standish Group report shows more projects failing and less successful projects" (2009). The Standish Group, http://www.standishgroup.com/newsroom/chaos_2009.php
2. Kaplan, Robert S. and Norton, David P. "Strategy-Focused Organization." Harvard Business School Press. 2001.
3. <http://www.basexblog.com/2010/11/04/our-findings/>
4. <http://www.basexblog.com/2010/11/04/our-findings/>
5. National Safety Council, Priority Magazine, 1-2/2007
6. <http://www.shirleyfinelee.com/MgmtStats>
7. http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy
8. National Safety Council, Priority Magazine, 1-2/2007
9. <http://interruptions.net/literature/CubeSmart-productivity-wp1.pdf>
10. <http://interruptions.net/literature/CubeSmart-productivity-wp1.pdf>
11. <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/04/22/text.iq/>
12. Spira, Jonathan. "Overload! How too much information is hazardous to your organization. 2011
13. <http://asapm.org/asapmag/articles/AdditionalConstraint.pdf>
14. <http://www.sei.cmu.edu/library/assets/tutorialmod3.pdf>
15. <http://www.dynamicmarkets.co.uk/>
16. "HR Measurement and Metrics: Gaining HR a Seat at the Strategy Table." Birkman International. 2008
17. <http://www.shirleyfinelee.com/MgmtStats>
18. Happiness at Work survey, Nic Marks, New Economics Foundation, London. 2012
19. <http://www.iag.biz/images/resources/iag%20business%20analysis%20benchmark%20-%20full%20report.pdf>
20. http://www.tcs.com/Insights/Documents/independant_markets_research_report.pdf
21. "Team Measurement and Rewards: How Some Companies are Getting it Right." Shaw, Douglas G. and Schneier, Craig Eric. Human Resource Planning. September 1995.