

Project Management Top 20

Wayne Turk

Good project management: Is it art, science, or just dumb luck? The answer is that it's not one but actually a little of all three. There is plenty of room for creativity and flexibility, but there are some good rules to follow. And to be successful is going to require at least a little good luck most of the time. But let's go back to the rules. I would like to present 20 guidelines or key principles that, if followed, will give a project manager the highest probability of success. Sorry, no one can give a money-back guarantee of success. There are just too many variables over which the project manager doesn't have control.

Here are the 20 project management guidelines I think are critical. They aren't in any type of priority listing because all are important. Some readers are going to say they've

heard all this before, that it's old hat, tradition, common sense, or something similar. Maybe it is tradition because the guidelines work!

1. Requirements are the underpinnings.

Good requirements are the basis for success in any project. Without good requirements, you don't know what you are building or if it will be usable when you finish. Ensure the project has good, clear requirements that *everyone* agrees on.

2. Planning is the project's roadmap and is ongoing.

Project managers must do good planning. The plans must be detailed, systematic, and team-involved to be a solid foundation for project success. When the real world invalidates the original plan, it is time to make a new one that reflects the changes. Just keep it up to date.

3. Communication—up, down, and sideways—is a must.

Make sure everyone who needs to be in the know is aware of what is going on. Communicate up the chain, with your peers, and with your team. And don't just communicate the good news; people need to know the bad, too. Open communication with the team is extremely important.

4. User/customer involvement can prevent misunderstandings.

Ensure end users are involved throughout the life of the project, from requirements to testing. They have the kind of input you need to produce the products they need and will use. They can save wasted effort.

5. The three primary dimensions—cost, schedule, and quality—must be top concerns.

Project success is measured by completion of all project deliverables on time, within budget, and to a level of quality that is acceptable to all. That may not always be possible, but it is the ultimate goal.

6. Leadership and management go together.

They are not mutually exclusive concepts; good managers are leaders, too. People are a resource, and by leading—*really* leading—we manage them as a resource in the truest sense of the word. People are the ones who



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get the work done. If you learn to be a leader whom people want to follow, as well as the manager with the positional authority, they'll want to give you their best.

7 Responsibility with the appropriate authority is necessary for the PM and task leads.

Responsibility without authority is too common. Assume responsibility as the project manager and delegate some of it downward. At times, you may have to fight for it.

8 Set priorities; then re-examine them periodically.

What is important today may have to take a back seat tomorrow. Communicate the priorities to the team. Change them when necessary, but have a good reason for changing them, and explain the reason.

9 Gather the right metrics for the right reasons.

Make sure that any data collected are meaningful, useful, correct, and needed. It is easy to waste time gathering and reviewing unnecessary or useless metrics. Keep the number of metrics to a minimum, but use them to make decisions.

10 Good people make or break the project.

Having good people makes being a successful project manager much easier. Tell them the results that you want, then get out of their way. Many times, they will have better ideas about how to do it (whatever "it" is) than you. Their way might not have been your way, but so what?

11 Give people the right tools so that they can do their jobs.

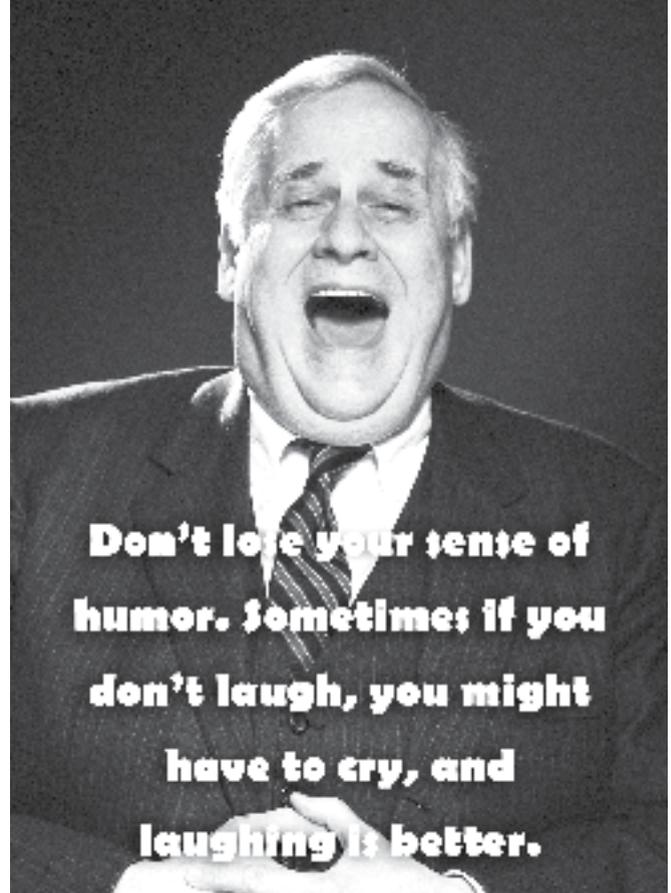
A craftsman cannot build much without the right tools. The same goes for any employee working on a project. Get them what they need (need, not just want) to do their jobs.

12 Selling the project can garner support from above.

Without that support, it is an uphill battle to succeed. There are times when the project manager must function as a salesperson to maintain the commitment of stakeholders and sponsors. Without that commitment, it is hard to get the resources you need for the project. So learn to make your presentations sell the project.

13 Manage risk—but take risks when you have to.

You have to know what risks are out there and be ready for them. That is what the risk management program is for. But you also must be willing to take risks to help the project succeed. That is part of being flexible and creative. Be judicious in the risks you take, but don't be totally risk-averse.



14 Use good people skills, and people will respond with good work.

That means using common courtesy, listening to your people, giving recognition in public and correction in private, keeping commitments, and so on. Treat them as you would want to be treated. People will respond well.

15 Adequate, thorough, and timely testing with good test plans makes for good products.

Testing prevents major problems in the field. Make sure the users/customers are involved. Always allow enough time for testing and to fix any discovered problems. If there aren't problems (slim possibility), you are ahead of schedule.

16 Transmitting the appropriate urgency is the right kind of motivation.

Every task can't—or at least shouldn't—be an urgent priority. Admittedly, you'll have limited time, money, and resources at your disposal, and crises do come up. Finding the right balance and assigning the right resources can help minimize the crisis mentality. Too many urgent priorities can burn out a team. When something is truly urgent, though, it can change the rules on how the task is presented, assigned, and monitored.

17 Monitor, but don't micromanage.

Since most team members have lots of other

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management and federated, collaborative identity and access management.

Participation in the TSCP provides multiple benefits in support of DoD's overall vision of the move to net-centric operations:

- The re-use of data-sharing models and tools across programs
- The definition of a common baseline of organizational and individual security on which trust can be formed
- Collaborative toolsets that will interoperate with partners, suppliers, and customers.

Specific to the A&D supply chain, participants gain:

- Compliance with export control regulations in a more predictable and controlled manner
- The ability to meet the emerging requirements of identity assurance—a major new DoD initiative.

In addition to the work with the TSCP, DoD is progressing on separate but completely inter-related areas of responsibility, including unique asset identification, export-control compliance, information assurance, and activity-based costing. It is mutually beneficial to use the TSCP to achieve collaborative progress in these areas, across defense industries, thereby benefiting each other.

DoD will maintain its current level of effort in participation and membership with the TSCP. In the near future, it hopes to recognize some of the potential benefits for major acquisition programs to become early adopters of TSCP output, including JSF, DD(X) [*next-generation multi-mission surface combatants tailored for land attack and littoral dominance*], and Alliance Ground Surveillance.

Looking Ahead

The TSCP is a rare example of a trust fabric and federation that has come together to figure out how best to implement a complex set of relationships in a digital setting. Lessons learned have come not only from the technical output and proofs of concept but also from the very way in which the TSCP has organized itself to work. Significant effort has gone into defining the ways of working to ensure that everyone's needs are met. TSCP represents not only best practices in secure collaboration but some of the very best thinking and practical implementations in teaming.

In Parts II and III, we will examine the collaboration efforts behind the TSCP and the implementations of the TSCP's specifications for information sharing among member organizations for major programs.

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priorities, it's up to the project manager to keep their attention on the right project deliverables and deadlines. However, hovering around people and looking over their shoulders won't help and will probably hinder. Periodic status reports should be sufficient.

18. Using "outsiders" correctly is a team multiplier.

Whether it is quality assurance, configuration management, testing, matrixed personnel, or even upper management, use non-team members in tasks where their talents can fill a need. Ask for help when you need it, and apply the help where it does the most good.

19. Focus on the important areas, but don't ignore the rest.

It is the project manager who is ultimately responsible for everything. Put the emphasis where it is required, but leave the detailed activities to the appropriate team members. It is the manager's job to oversee and monitor. It may mean giving encouragement, correcting people, or jumping in to help at times, but that can't be all of the time or in all areas. Just don't forget the "outliers"—those things on the edges that don't require constant attention.

20. Expectations should be high for your self and your people, and realistic for the stakeholders.

People live up to—or down to—expectations. If you set high but reachable goals and share those expectations with the team members, they can attain them. At the same time, setting realistic expectations with the boss and/or the customer is critical. Don't over-promise.

There are many more axioms that could be added to the list. In fact, I'll add one as a bonus:

21. Don't lose your sense of humor.

Step back and look. There is plenty that is funny about what we do, how we go about things, the situations, and the people. Sometimes if you don't laugh, you might have to cry, and laughing is better.

Project management is certainly a mix of art, science, and luck. However, good luck seems to gravitate to the well-prepared person who works hard at his or her craft. Following the guidelines in this article will help you to be more prepared, and then there's a much better chance the good luck you need for success in your project will come your way.

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