

PROJECT MANAGEMENT COLLECTION

BOOK 09

30

Project Management **Mistakes** & Solutions

30 Project Management **Mistakes** & Solutions

WikiFree

Created by **WikiFree.com**

1

STARTING WITHOUT A CLEAR OUTCOME

Beginning delivery before the intended result and decision criteria are understood creates activity without direction.



1 THE MISTAKE

Starting work before the desired outcome, scope and success criteria are clear. The team focuses on activity and outputs instead of solving the real problem, leading to rework and wasted effort.



VAGUE REQUEST:

"Build a dashboard" instead of a clear intended result.



OUTPUT NOT OUTCOME:

Delivering features without a defined business benefit.



UNCLEAR AUTHORITY:

No agreement on who decides what is "done" and acceptable.



SCOPE CREEP:

New requests added because the purpose is unclear.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Pressure to start, stakeholder requests and optimism can lead teams to replace a clear outcome with a vague request. People assume the goal is obvious or that details will "emerge later," so work begins without alignment.



TIME PRESSURE:

Desire to show progress quickly.



ASSUMPTIONS:

Belief that everyone shares the same understanding.



VAGUE LANGUAGE:

Requests focus on solutions instead of the problem to solve.



WEAK BUSINESS CASE:

Benefits, beneficiaries or decision authority not confirmed before committing resources.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for early signals that the intended result is not clearly defined. Gather evidence and involve the right people to apply this card.



CONFLICTING DESCRIPTIONS:

Different stakeholders describe success in inconsistent ways.



FEATURE LIST ONLY:

A list of features or tasks with no clear use or benefit.



LACK OF OWNERSHIP:

No named process owner or beneficiary for the result.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Initial requirements, meeting notes, business case and stakeholder feedback.



KEY OWNERS:

Sponsor (decision authority), process owner (day-to-day owner), and key users or beneficiaries.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example: A project is requested to "build a dashboard." After discussion, the team agrees a clearer outcome.



FROM VAGUE REQUEST:

"Build a dashboard" for the finance team.



TO CLEAR OUTCOME:

Reduce the time needed to reconcile weekly project forecasts, with the finance manager as process owner and an agreed measurement plan.



RESULT:

The team delivers only what supports this outcome and avoids unnecessary features.

5 THE SOLUTION

Confirm a concise outcome statement before committing resources, and agree how success will be decided.



DEFINE THE OUTCOME:

State the problem, intended result, beneficiaries and value in clear, simple language.



SET SCOPE BOUNDARIES:

Include what is in scope and out of scope to prevent creep.



AGREE DECISION AUTHORITY:

Confirm who can accept the result and the criteria for completion.



CAPTURE ASSUMPTIONS:

Record key assumptions and constraints that may affect delivery.



REVISIT WHEN NEEDED:

Review and update the outcome if the business case or context changes.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Take practical steps to avoid this mistake and check that the outcome stays clear throughout the project.



DO A PRE-START CHECK:

Confirm the outcome statement, scope, assumptions and acceptance authority are documented.



INVOLVE KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

Validate the outcome with sponsor, process owner and key users.



USE A DECISION GATE:

Do not start delivery until the outcome and criteria are agreed.



VERIFY REGULARLY:

Recheck that work remains aligned to the intended result at key milestones.



AVOID THE TRAP:

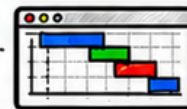
A measurable output (for example a delivered tool) is not necessarily a business benefit.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 1 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



USING VAGUE SCOPE BOUNDARIES



Unclear inclusions and exclusions make it hard to distinguish agreed work from new requests.



1 THE MISTAKE

The project's scope is written in vague terms, so it is unclear what is included and what is not. A short headline is mistaken for a shared definition, leading to different expectations and repeated new requests.



UNCLEAR DELIVERABLES:

Outputs are not described in enough detail.



BLURRED BOUNDARIES:

Inclusions and exclusions are not stated.



MISSING INTERFACES:

Handoffs with other teams or suppliers are not defined.



ASSUMPTIONS:

Stakeholders fill the gaps with their own assumptions.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Time pressure and a desire to keep documents short lead to a headline scope or high-level list being treated as the full definition. People assume a shared understanding without spelling out the details.



RUSHED PLANNING:

Scope is written quickly to meet early deadlines.



OVERCONFIDENCE:

People assume everyone understands what is meant.



STAKEHOLDER INPUT:

Key users or suppliers are not consulted fully.



FOCUS ON STARTING:

More effort is put into getting the project going than defining the scope.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for clear evidence that the scope is being interpreted differently, and identify the people and records needed to apply this card.



REPEATED ARGUMENTS:

Disputes over what was promised or is included.



UNCLEAR WORK PACKAGES:

Outputs and acceptance criteria are not specific.



EXPANDING REQUESTS:

Frequent requests described as "small" or "obvious" additions.



EVIDENCE AND OWNERS:

Check the scope document, requirements, meeting notes and change requests. Involve the project manager, product owner and key stakeholders.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative project: customer data migration.



IN SCOPE:

Migrate active customer records to the new system including core profile data.



OUT OF SCOPE:

Do not migrate archived attachments.



INTERFACES:

IT team provides data extract; the vendor performs the load.



EXCEPTIONS:

A small number of legacy records are handled through a separate process agreed by both owners for continued access.

5 THE SOLUTION

Create and baseline a clear scope description that everyone agrees. List deliverables, boundaries, interfaces, exclusions and the evidence of acceptance.



DEFINE THE SCOPE:

Write a concise but specific description of what is included and excluded.



AGREE ACCEPTANCE:

State how deliverables will be verified and who approves them.



MANAGE CHANGES:

Route genuine scope changes through a proportionate approval process with visible time, cost and risk impacts.



KEEP IT LIVE:

Update the scope when approved changes are made and share the latest version with the team.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Use practical checks to keep the scope clear and make sure work stays within agreed boundaries.



INVOLVE KEY PEOPLE:

Review scope with users, suppliers and delivery teams early and at major milestones.



CHECK INTERFACES:

Confirm what each party is responsible for and how handoffs will work.



REVIEW CHANGES:

Assess the impact on time, cost and risk before approval, and update the scope document.



VERIFY DELIVERY:

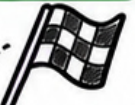
Confirm completed work meets the agreed acceptance evidence and nothing outside the scope has been included.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 2 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



SKIPPING STAKEHOLDER DISCOVERY



Missing affected groups can create late objections, unusable outputs or unsupported handover.

1 THE MISTAKE

The team only considers the sponsor or most vocal users and misses other affected groups. Important needs, concerns or constraints are not captured, leading to late objections, unusable outputs or an unsupported handover.



NARROW FOCUS:

Engages only the sponsor or a small group of users.



MISSED STAKEHOLDERS:

Overlooks operators, customers, contributors or interface teams.



REAL IMPACT:

Results may not fit real working needs or gain broad support.



WIDER CONSEQUENCES:

Can cause rework, resistance and problems at operational handover.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

It is easy to focus on visible stakeholders and assume others are already covered. Time pressure and limited engagement effort also lead to a narrow view.



VISIBLE ONLY:

Team engages the sponsor or most vocal users.



TIME PRESSURE:

Rushed planning leaves little time for broader stakeholder discovery.



ASSUMPTIONS:

Assumes other groups have the same needs or are not affected.



LIMITED OUTREACH:

Stakeholder discovery is not treated as a planned activity and is not updated as the project evolves.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs and gather evidence to confirm whether important stakeholders are missing.



LIMITED STAKEHOLDER LIST:

Only a few names, mainly the sponsor or key users.



MISSING PERSPECTIVES:

No input from operators, customers, contributors or interface teams.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Stakeholder register, meeting records, engagement plan and feedback summaries.



OWNERS:

Project manager owns the stakeholder view, with support from the sponsor and functional managers.



UNRESOLVED OWNERSHIP:

No clear owner for requirements or for operational handover.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A new approval tool is developed with managers and office staff. It works well for them, but night-shift staff cannot use it because their access needs and workflow were never considered.



WHAT HAPPENED:

Night-shift staff lack the required access and cannot complete approvals.



RESULT:

The tool is not adopted, manual workarounds continue and the project faces delay and extra effort to redesign.



KEY LESSON:

All affected groups, including less visible ones, must be engaged early to capture their specific needs and constraints.

5 THE SOLUTION

Systematically identify and engage all relevant stakeholders throughout the project.



BUILD A ROLE-BASED VIEW:

Include decision makers, contributors, operators, customers and affected interface teams.



VALIDATE NEEDS:

Discuss needs, concerns and constraints with representatives from each group.



KEEP IT CURRENT:

Update the stakeholder view when responsibilities or impacts change.



CLEAR OUTPUTS:

Maintain a stakeholder register, engagement plan and summary of agreed needs and actions.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Make stakeholder discovery a planned, ongoing activity and check that it remains complete and up to date.



PLAN EARLY:

Add stakeholder discovery to the project plan with clear activities and owners.



USE MULTIPLE CHANNELS:

Interviews, workshops and existing forums to reach less visible groups.



REVIEW REGULARLY:

Revisit the stakeholder view at key milestones and when scope, team or operating model changes.



CHECK COVERAGE:

Confirm that all affected groups are represented and that their needs are reflected in requirements and handover plans.



CAUTION: Stakeholder discovery is an ongoing process and should not become an intrusive collection of personal information. Keep it relevant and proportionate.



The All-in-One PM Templates Bundle

940+ Premium Templates • One Payment • Lifetime Access

\$49

SAVE 94%

Worth \$3,300+



EXCEL & GOOGLE
SHEETS



PROFESSIONAL
& RELIABLE



AUTOMATED
DASHBOARDS



SAVE TIME &
STAY ON TRACK



INSTANT ACCESS
DOWNLOAD

GET LIFETIME ACCESS

ACCEPTING AN IMPOSSIBLE DATE

Committing to a finish date without understanding the required work hides the trade-offs needed to achieve it.



1 THE MISTAKE

Agreeing to a completion date before understanding the full scope, work required and dependencies. An aspirational date is treated as a firm forecast, so the trade-offs needed to achieve it are not visible.



ASPIRATIONAL DATE:

A desired finish date, often driven by external pressure.



COMMITMENT RISK:

Creates unrealistic expectations and future delays when the date cannot be met.



HIDDEN TRADE-OFFS:

Scope, quality, resources and time must be balanced and agreed before committing.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

The requested date is treated as evidence-based, even though key information is missing.



INCOMPLETE INFORMATION:

Activity list, estimates and dependencies are not developed.



OPTIMISM BIAS:

Pressure to say "yes" leads to overly optimistic plans.



UNCLEAR ASSUMPTIONS:

Resource availability, capacity and delivery environment are not confirmed.



LACK OF UNCERTAINTY ASSESSMENT:

Risks and variability are ignored when recommending the date.



FORMULA:

Realistic plan = Scope + Logic + Estimates + Capacity + Uncertainty

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these indicators and gather the right evidence before committing.



DATE ASSIGNED EARLY:

A finish date is set before dependencies and key work packages are known.



KEY EVIDENCE MISSING:

Activity logic, estimates, resource capacity and external dependencies.



OVERTIME AS THE PLAN:

Mandatory overtime is treated as the baseline instead of a contingency option.



EVIDENCE AND OWNERS:

Schedule owner, work-package owners, external supplier owners and the project sponsor must provide and review the evidence.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A product launch is requested in six weeks. A required external regulatory review alone has an eight-week lead time.



CONSTRAINT:

The external review cannot be completed before eight weeks, so the launch cannot meet the requested date.



OPTIONS:

Reduce scope, resequence work to launch a limited release, or negotiate a later date based on the constraint.



CONSEQUENCE:

Each option affects scope, quality, resources or time and must be agreed with stakeholders.

5 THE SOLUTION

Develop an evidence-based plan before recommending a commitment.



DEFINE THE WORK:

Create a complete activity list with clear dependencies and milestones.



ESTIMATE AND CHECK CAPACITY:

Develop time estimates and confirm resource availability and external lead times.



EXPLORE OPTIONS:

Present feasible scope, sequencing and resource options with their consequences.



AGREE AND DOCUMENT:

Obtain the authorized choice, record the assumptions and confirm the commitment.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Build discipline into planning and keep the forecast honest.



CHECK READINESS:

Do not confirm a date until activities, dependencies and external lead times are validated.



ASSESS TRADE-OFFS:

Agree the impact on scope, quality, resources and time for each option.



MONITOR AND UPDATE:

Track progress, reassess risks and update the forecast as new information emerges.



VERIFY COMMITMENT:

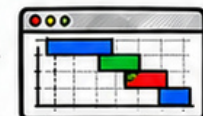
Compare actual progress with the plan and escalate early if the agreed date becomes unachievable.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 4 OF 30

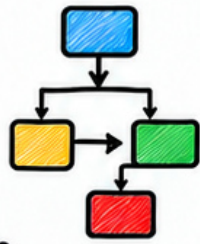
30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



IGNORING TASK DEPENDENCIES



A task list without meaningful dependency logic cannot reliably explain the effect of delay or change.



1 THE MISTAKE

Tasks are listed without meaningful dependency logic, often organized by departments rather than the sequence needed to produce usable outputs. This hides the real flow of work and the effect of any delay or change.



NO LOGIC:

Activities appear in isolation with no links.



DEPARTMENT FOCUS:

Work grouped by team not by output sequence.



MISSING INTERFACES:

Handoffs between teams and external commitments are not identified.



RESULT:

The schedule cannot show which work truly depends on what.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Common causes lead to weak or missing dependency logic.



DEPARTMENTAL PLANNING:

Tasks listed by team priorities rather than the sequence needed for usable outputs.



UNCLEAR REQUIREMENTS:

Inputs and acceptance criteria are not defined early.



MISSING OWNERS:

No single owner validates predecessor relationships and interfaces.



EXTERNAL FACTORS:

Dependencies on suppliers, clients or approvals are overlooked.



OPTIMISM BIAS:

Assumes independent work can proceed without needed inputs.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs in plans, schedules and discussions.



TASKS WITH NO LINKS:

Activities start or finish with no predecessor or successor.



EARLY STARTS:

Work begins before required inputs exist.



UNSUPPORTED MILESTONES:

Key dates with no logic detailing how they will be met.



EVIDENCE NEEDED:

Schedule file, activity list, milestone logic and assumptions document.



KEY OWNERS:

Project manager, team leads, process owners and external partners who provide inputs.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: training materials depend on an approved workflow. Drafting them before the workflow stabilizes creates avoidable rework.



1. REQUIRED INPUT:

Finalized workflow from the process team.



2. WRONG SEQUENCE:

Training materials drafted before workflow approval.



3. RESULT:

Materials must be revised, causing delays and extra effort.



LESSON:

Identify and respect predecessor relationships before starting dependent work.

5 THE SOLUTION

Build and validate clear dependency logic across the project.



IDENTIFY DEPENDENCIES:

List predecessor relationships, interfaces and external commitments.



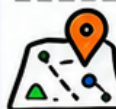
VALIDATE WITH OWNERS:

Confirm the logic with team leads and stakeholders.



USE APPROPRIATE LOGIC:

Apply finish-to-start, start-to-start or other relationships as justified. Do not force every dependency into a finish-to-start form.



DOCUMENT ASSUMPTIONS:

Record agreed overlaps and any constraints or conditions.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Keep dependency logic accurate and use it to manage change.



INCLUDE IN PLANNING:

Build dependencies when creating the schedule and review them regularly.



CHECK CHANGES:

When a task date changes, review the impact on dependent activities and key milestones.



REVIEW CRITICAL PATHS:

Check the paths that control major milestones and confirm that key dependencies are valid.



KEEP IT CURRENT:

Update logic when scope, resources or external commitments



VERIFY BEFORE EXECUTION:

Ensure required inputs are available before starting dependent work.



PLANNING BEYOND TEAM CAPACITY



Assigning more work than available people can complete creates hidden queues and unreliable commitments.



1 THE MISTAKE

The plan assigns more work than the available people can realistically complete, ignoring operational duties, leave and other projects.



OVER-ALLOCATION:

Named resources are assumed to be available full time.



IGNORED CONSTRAINTS:

Holidays, operational work and competing projects are not considered.



HIDDEN QUEUES:

Too much is started and items wait for the same specialist.



UNRELIABLE DATES:

Commitments are based on optimistic availability rather than real capacity.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Plans often use named people without checking how much time they actually have. Specialist skills create bottlenecks, and good intentions lead to too many concurrent tasks.



ASSUMED AVAILABILITY:

People are treated as if they can work on the project full time.



SPECIALIST CONSTRAINTS:

Unique skills mean some work can only be done by a few people.



COMPETING DEMANDS:

Operational duties and other projects reduce capacity.



NO TRADE-OFF:

New work is added without reprioritizing or removing lower value items.



CAUTION:

Adding more people may introduce coordination and onboarding costs.

3 WARNING SIGNS

These signals show that planned work exceeds available capacity.



PERSISTENT CARRYOVER:

Tasks regularly slip into the next period.



MANY PARTIALLY STARTED TASKS:

Lots of work is in progress but not finishing.



LONG QUEUES:

Work waits for the same specialist or approval.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Resource allocation plan, calendars, leave records, other project commitments and work queues.



OWNERS TO INVOLVE:

Project manager, resource manager, functional leads and team members to confirm actual availability.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: the only security reviewer is assigned three simultaneous reviews that each require two focused days within the same week.

Three reviews: 2 days each

Total work for reviewer: 6 days

RESULT: Cannot be completed within one week



INTERPRETATION:

The reviewer can focus on only one item at a time. The other two will queue and miss their planned dates.



LIMIT:

Adding another reviewer may help, but it can introduce coordination and onboarding time and may not be possible for highly specialist work.

5 THE SOLUTION

Plan with realistic capacity, then prioritize and sequence work to match available people and specialist skills.



CONFIRM AVAILABILITY:

Check calendars, leave and other project commitments for each named person.



REPRIORITIZE OR REMOVE:

Reduce concurrent work to fit the available capacity.



RESEQUENCE WORK:

Order tasks so the same specialist is not needed at the same time.



MONITOR FLOW:

Track completion and queues rather than utilization alone.



REALISTIC COMMITMENTS:

Set dates the team can meet and communicate any trade-offs early.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



PLAN WITH CAPACITY:

Build the plan using realistic availability and specialist constraints.



LIMIT CONCURRENT WORK:

Keep the number of active tasks per person within what can be completed.



USE A SINGLE RESOURCE PLAN:

Keep project and operational demands in one view and review regularly.



CHECK PROGRESS:

Review completion flow and queues, not just how busy people are.



ADJUST EARLY:

Reprioritize, resequence or reduce scope when overload appears.



VERIFY NEXT CYCLE:

Compare actual throughput with planned capacity and update the plan.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 6 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



TREATING ASSUMPTIONS AS FACTS



Unverified assumptions can silently become dependencies that undermine scope, estimates and readiness.

1 THE MISTAKE

Teams treat assumptions as facts and build plans, estimates and scope on unverified information. What is expected is taken as confirmed, creating hidden dependencies.



ASSUMPTION:

A belief about a future event or condition, not yet confirmed.



IMPACT:

If wrong, it can delay work, increase cost or change scope.



HIDDEN DEPENDENCY:

Unconfirmed assumptions can become critical dependencies in the plan.



KEY POINT:

Distinguish clearly between what is known and what is only expected.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Natural optimism, incomplete information and external dependencies lead teams to assume things will be available, approved or delivered.



OPTIMISM BIAS:

We assume things will work out even without evidence.



INCOMPLETE INFORMATION:

Early planning often lacks details, so gaps are filled with assumptions.



EXTERNAL DEPENDENCIES:

Relying on suppliers, other teams or approvals increases the chance of unverified assumptions.



LACK OF CHALLENGE:

Assumptions may not be questioned or recorded, so they remain invisible.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for evidence gaps and records that show assumptions are being treated as confirmed.



MISSING EVIDENCE:

No confirmation emails, contracts or approvals for key items.



VAGUE LANGUAGE:

"Expected", "should be available" or "likely" instead of confirmed dates and commitments.



NO CLEAR OWNER:

Assumptions are not assigned to a specific person for validation.



UNREALISTIC PLANS:

Estimates or schedules depend on unconfirmed access, skills, resources or approvals.



UNTRACKED CHANGES:

Evidence is not reviewed and the plan is not updated when information changes.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A project plan assumes access to a supplier test environment by Monday, but the supplier has not confirmed the booking.



ASSUMPTION:

Supplier will provide test environment access by Monday.



REALITY:

No confirmation received from the supplier.



IMPACT:

Testing cannot start, causing delays and rework in later tasks.



LESSON:

This assumption should have been recorded, owned and validated before finalising the plan.

5 THE SOLUTION

Record, validate and manage material assumptions throughout the project lifecycle.



CREATE AN ASSUMPTION RECORD:

Document each material assumption with its rationale, owner, validation date and consequence if false.



VALIDATE EARLY:

Seek confirmation from the relevant source as soon as possible.



CONVERT TO RISK OR ISSUE:

If uncertain, log as a risk or issue and plan a response.



UPDATE THE PLAN:

When evidence changes, revise scope, schedule and resources accordingly.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Build discipline into planning and monitoring so assumptions are visible and tested.



KEEP IT RIGHT-SIZED:

Not every assumption needs a large register, but material ones do, especially with high impact.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Name a person responsible for validating each key assumption and set a target validation date.



CHECK EVIDENCE:

Obtain and review confirmation emails, contracts, approvals or access details.



MONITOR CHANGES:

Revisit assumptions regularly and update risks, issues and the plan when evidence changes.



KEEP A CLEAR AUDIT TRAIL:

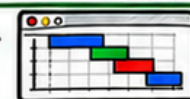
Record outcomes of validation and the actions taken.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 7 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



KEEPING A STATIC RISK REGISTER



A risk list becomes ineffective when it does not influence decisions or response actions.



1 THE MISTAKE

The risk register is treated as a one-time exercise and then left unchanged. Risks no longer influence decisions or response actions, so the team is unprepared when conditions change.



RISK REGISTER:

List of identified risks, assessments, owners and response plans.



STATIC REGISTER:

Not updated to reflect new information or progress.



CONSEQUENCE:

Missed opportunities, unplanned costs, schedule delays or reduced quality when risks materialize.



KEY POINT:

A risk list has value only if it is actively used to guide decisions and actions.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Risks are identified at project kickoff, but regular review is neglected. The team focuses on delivery and assumes the original assessment remains valid, even when conditions change.



Seen as a one-time activity during planning.



Competing priorities crowd out risk reviews.



Unclear ownership for updating assessments and actions.



New team members are not briefed on existing risks.



Belief that "nothing has changed" until a problem occurs.



CAUTION:

A risk score does not replace judgment about the seriousness of potential consequences.

3 WARNING SIGNS

These signs indicate a static risk register. Use the listed evidence and owners to confirm and act.



UNCHANGED RATINGS:

Risk likelihood and impact stay the same despite new evidence. **Evidence:** latest project updates. **Owner:** risk owner with PM.



OVERDUE RESPONSES:

Planned actions are not started or are late. **Evidence:** action log. **Owner:** risk owner and PM.



NEW RISKS NOT ADDED:

Recent issues or changes are missing. **Evidence:** change log and lessons. **Owner:** project team and PM.



REGISTER NOT USED:

Decisions are made without referring to risks. **Evidence:** meeting minutes. **Owner:** project sponsor and PM.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A key supplier has a staffing risk. The register names an owner but no response action is defined. A key engineer leaves as expected, but the register still shows the original assessment and no update.



Original entry:

- Risk: supplier loses key staff
- Owner: procurement manager
- Response: none defined



Event occurs:

Key engineer leaves and delivery slows. The register is unchanged, so the team is not prepared.



Result:

Schedule impact and extra effort to find a replacement.



Lesson:

A risk entry without an active response is not enough.

5 THE SOLUTION

Keep the risk register live and useful through regular review and action.



REVIEW REGULARLY:

Reassess changing exposure, triggers, owners, response progress and residual uncertainty at useful intervals.



LINK TO ACTIONS:

For each priority risk, define funded response actions and decision dates.



TEST READINESS:

Check that response plans can be executed and required resources are available.



REASSESS AFTER CHANGES:

Update assessments when key events occur, such as scope, supplier, market or regulatory changes.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



SET A REVIEW RHYTHM:

Include risk review in regular project meetings and at key milestones.



CONFIRM OWNERSHIP:

Assign a clear owner for each risk and each response action.



CHECK COMPLETION:

Track action progress and close actions only when the risk is reassessed.



USE CURRENT INFORMATION:

Incorporate new issues, changes and lessons learned.



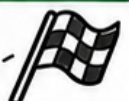
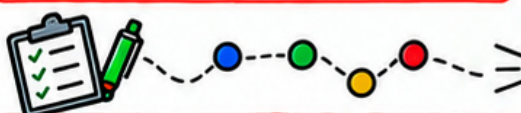
VERIFY BEFORE DECISIONS:

Check that high-priority risks and their responses are considered in major decisions and approvals.



KEEP EVIDENCE:

Maintain an updated risk register, action log and review notes.



DELAYING ISSUE ESCALATION



Keeping a material issue at a level without authority can remove the time needed for an effective response.

1 THE MISTAKE

A material issue is kept at a level without authority to decide or provide resources, which delays resolution and reduces the options available.



HELD TOO LONG:

Issue discussed within the team instead of escalating.



LIMITED AUTHORITY:

Current level cannot approve the needed action or funding.



LOST TIME:

Delay closes options and increases effort and impact.



BIGGER CONSEQUENCES:

The issue escalates anyway, but with fewer choices.



NOT A SUBSTITUTE:

Escalation is not a replacement for local problem solving.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

People delay escalation due to fear of blame, unclear escalation routes, or hoping the issue will resolve itself. Lack of clarity about triggers and decision deadlines encourages silence.



FEAR OF BLAME:

Worry about being seen as failing or creating trouble.



UNCLEAR ROUTES:

Not knowing who can decide or how to escalate.



HOPE IT IMPROVES:

Belief that more time will solve the issue.



LACK OF DEFINITIONS:

No agreed triggers for when to escalate.



DECISION DEADLINES:

Unclear when a decision is needed, so escalation is delayed.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Use the following evidence to identify when an issue is being kept too low, and who should be involved.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Issue log, impact assessment, options considered, and current status with dates.



IMPACT OWNER:

Project manager to confirm effect on scope, schedule, cost and quality.



DECISION OWNER:

Person or group with authority to approve action or resources.



ESCALATION RECORD:

Date raised, level escalated to, information provided and response.



AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS:

Teams or customers who need to know about the issue and resulting actions.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A test environment outage threatens a release gate. The team documents the impact, recovery options and escalates to the programme board for a decision.



ISSUE:

Test environment is unavailable, blocking final testing.



INFORMATION SHARED:

Impact on release date, options with effort and implications, and a specific decision request.



ESCALATION:

Escalated to the programme board with recommended option.



OUTCOME:

Decision made to approve additional resources and adjust the plan, communicated to all affected teams.

5 THE SOLUTION

Escalate early enough to preserve options. Use clear triggers and provide concise information to the right decision maker.



DEFINE TRIGGERS:

Escalate based on impact, urgency, authority needed and last useful decision date.



IDENTIFY DECISION MAKER:

Know who can approve action or provide resources.



PROVIDE KEY INFORMATION:

Explain the issue, impact, options considered and the specific decision requested.



COMMUNICATE RESULT:

Share the decision and agreed actions with all affected teams.



CONTINUE LOCAL ACTIONS:

Keep working on solutions while escalation is in progress.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Build clear escalation rules and verify they are followed, so issues reach the right level at the right time.



SET ESCALATION RULES:

Define triggers using impact, urgency, authority and decision deadlines.



TRAIN THE TEAM:

Ensure everyone understands when and how to escalate.



MAKE IT EASY:

Provide clear routes, templates and points of contact.



CHECK COMPLIANCE:

Review issue logs to confirm escalation happened in time and to the right owner.



IMPROVE CONTINUOUSLY:

Learn from delayed escalations and update rules and training.



MAKING CHANGES WITHOUT APPROVAL



Informal additions can consume budget and capacity while leaving the approved plan misleading.



1 THE MISTAKE

Making changes to scope, deliverables or features without going through the agreed change control process. Helpful requests are accepted as small favors without assessing the cumulative impact.



UNASSESSED CHANGES:

Extra work is started without decision or impact check.



APPROVED PLAN MISLEADING:

Baseline no longer reflects actual scope and effort.



CONSUMES RESOURCES:

Uses budget and team capacity meant for planned work.



CREATES RISK:

Can delay key deliverables and lower quality through unplanned work.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Requests often sound helpful, urgent or easy, so they are accepted informally. The wider impact is not assessed, and one small change leads to many more.



SMALL FAVOR MENTALITY:

Viewed as minor and low effort, so formal approval is skipped.



GOOD INTENTIONS:

Team wants to be helpful and keep stakeholders happy.



CUMULATIVE IMPACT:

Many small changes add up to a large workload.



DEPENDENCIES IGNORED:

Extra work can affect other tasks, resources and deadlines.



UNCLEAR UNCERTAINTY:

Benefits, effort and risks are not assessed before starting.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for early signs that work is being added without approval. Use the following evidence and owners to confirm it.



NEW DELIVERABLES:

Outputs or features not in the baseline scope or product backlog.



SUPPORTING EVIDENCE:

Emails, messages, meeting notes and informal requests.



REPEATED EXTRA WORK:

Team regularly does unpaid additions or rework.



OWNERS TO CHECK:

Project sponsor, product owner and project manager to confirm authorization and priorities.



RECORDS TO REVIEW:

Change log, requirements list and updated schedule to see what was approved.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: Five apparently small reporting additions are requested by different stakeholders. Each needs two days of work. They are accepted without formal approval.



Report A: 2 days



Report B: 2 days



Report C: 2 days



Report D: 2 days



Report E: 2 days

Total effort:
10 days
of work
not approved.



IMPACT:

The team must reallocate time from planned work, which can delay agreed deliverables.

5 THE SOLUTION

Use the agreed change control process for all scope changes, no matter how small. Assess the request and obtain the appropriate decision before work begins.



RECORD THE REQUEST:

Log the change with clear description and rationale.



ASSESS THE IMPACT:

Evaluate benefits, effort, dependencies and uncertainty.



OBTAIN A DECISION:

Get approval from the right person or group.



UPDATE RECORDS:

If approved, update the scope, schedule, budget and related plans.



COMMUNICATE THE CHANGE:

Inform the team and stakeholders about what is approved and why.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Put in place clear practices to avoid unauthorized changes and keep a traceable history of what changed and why.



DEFINE THE PROCESS:

Set a change control process that fits the project's size and lifecycle.



RAISE A CHANGE REQUEST:

Use a simple, accessible template so all requests are captured.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Make the project manager or product owner responsible for review and decision.



MAINTAIN A TRACEABLE HISTORY:
Record what changed, the decision, date and rationale.



VERIFY DURING DELIVERY:

Regularly check that delivered work matches the approved scope. Address any unauthorized work.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 10 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



HIDING UNFAVORABLE STATUS



Reports that protect appearances prevent sponsors and teams from acting while recovery options still exist.

1 THE MISTAKE

Presenting status reports that hide or downplay problems to keep stakeholders comfortable. This creates a false sense of progress and delays decisions.



APPEARANCE OVER REALITY:

Reports are shaped to look good instead of being accurate.



INCOMPLETE INFORMATION:

Key risks, delays or issues are omitted or minimized.



LOST OPPORTUNITY:

Sponsors and teams cannot take action while there is still time to recover.



BROADER IMPACT:

Damages trust, leads to larger problems and reduces credibility for future reports.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

People confuse transparent reporting with personal failure.



FEAR OF BLAME:

Team members worry that bad news will be seen as poor performance.



POSITIVE BIAS:

Natural tendency to focus on what is going well and minimize concerns.



UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS:

Status definitions are inconsistent, so people interpret them differently.



PRESSURE TO PLEASE:

Desire to keep stakeholders happy leads to selective reporting.



CAUTION:

Transparent reporting is not a sign of failure. It enables faster, better decisions and protects the project.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs in reports, conversations and evidence.



UNEXPLAINED STATUS:

Color ratings (e.g., green) without clear evidence or rationale.



OVERLY OPTIMISTIC SUMMARIES:

Written updates that do not match delivery evidence.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Actual progress data, milestone completion, test results and open issues.



OWNERS NEEDED:

Project manager provides consolidated status. Work-package owners supply detailed evidence and explain deviations.



LIMITATION:

A single adverse measure does not tell the entire story. Assess multiple indicators and context.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A key milestone is reported green although its forecast has moved seven days beyond the approved date.



REPORTED STATUS:

Milestone shown as green in the status report.



ACTUAL FORECAST:

Latest forecast is seven days later than the approved date.



IMPACT:

Sponsor sees the exception too late and cannot take action while recovery options still exist.



LESSON:

Accurate and timely reporting helps escalate issues early and gives more time to agree and implement recovery actions.

5 THE SOLUTION

Report exceptions with context and ownership.



SEPARATE THE INFORMATION:

Report observed facts, forecast, uncertainty, recovery actions and decisions needed.



BE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT:

Use agreed status definitions across the project so everyone interprets ratings the same way.



SHOW OWNERSHIP:

Identify who is responsible for each issue and the agreed recovery actions.



ENABLE DECISIONS:

State what decisions or support are needed from sponsors and when.



KEEP IT FACT-BASED:

Use evidence from schedules, tests, deliverables and risks. Avoid speculation.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



AGREE DEFINITIONS:

Set clear, consistent status criteria for each rating and communicate them to the team.



CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT:

Encourage early, evidence-based reporting and focus on solving problems, not blaming people.



CHECK EVIDENCE:

Regularly review reported status against delivery evidence and supporting data.



TRACK ACTIONS:

Maintain a visible log of issues, recovery actions, owners and target dates.



VERIFY IMPROVEMENT:

Check that issues are closed, forecasts are updated and lessons are applied to future reporting.





MEASURING ACTIVITY INSTEAD OF PROGRESS

High effort and busy teams do not always mean work is completed or delivering value.



1 THE MISTAKE

Counting hours spent, meetings held or tasks started as progress. These show effort and activity, but reveal little about accepted outputs or business benefits.



ACTIVITY: Work performed, such as hours, emails, meetings or tasks started.



PROGRESS: Accepted deliverables completed to agreed standards.



OUTPUT: Tangible result, ready for use or handover.



OUTCOME: Expected benefit delivered to stakeholders.



KEY POINT: Activity is useful information, but it is not the same as progress.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Activity counts are easy to collect and visible, so they often replace evidence of completion. Teams may feel productive, but outputs, quality checks or benefits are missing.



EASY TO TRACK: Hours, meetings and tasks are simple to report, so they get used by default.



FEELS PRODUCTIVE: Busy teams create a sense of progress, even without finished deliverables.



UNCLEAR DEFINITION: No agreed rules for what "done" means for each type of work.



DIFFERENT APPROACHES: Agile and predictive work need different completion evidence.



CAUTION:

Time-based measures can still help with capacity planning and cost tracking when used appropriately.

3 WARNING SIGNS

High reported completion with little demonstrable output or benefit. Activity appears on track, but acceptance, quality checks or handover are missing.



EVIDENCE REQUIRED:

Accepted deliverables, test results, quality checks and handover records.



OWNERS: Project manager, product owner, delivery team and business owner must confirm acceptance.



SIGNS TO WATCH:

High activity reports, but few completed outputs or benefits.



CHECK FOR GAPS:

Compare activity logs with the actual delivered and accepted work.



INVESTIGATE:

Ask why activity is high but outputs, quality or benefits are missing.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example: A team logs 200 hours on a data conversion project, but reconciliation has not passed and the output is not ready for use.



REPORTED ACTIVITY:

200 hours spent and tasks marked as in progress.



STATUS:

Data loaded, but reconciliation has not passed.



RESULT:

Output is not complete and cannot be used by the business.



LESSON:

High effort does not equal progress. Completion depends on meeting the agreed rules and quality checks.

5 THE SOLUTION

Define progress using objective completion rules, and combine activity data with accepted deliverables, remaining work and outcome indicators.



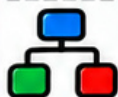
DEFINE "DONE":

Set clear acceptance criteria for each deliverable or work package.



USE OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE:

Rely on test results, quality checks, sign-off and handover records.



COMBINE MEASURES:

Track activity, accepted outputs, remaining work and outcomes together.



APPLY CONSISTENT RULES:

Use the same completion definitions across the project and delivery approach.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Put simple controls in place to ensure progress is measured by outputs and benefits, not just activity. Regularly check and explain any differences.



PLAN MEASURES:

Agree progress indicators for each phase, including accepted deliverables and outcomes.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Owner confirms completion and acceptance, with clear responsibility.



REVIEW FREQUENTLY:

Compare reported activity with delivered outputs and remaining work.



INVESTIGATE DIFFERENCES:

Understand causes and take action when activity is high but progress is low.



KEEP USING ACTIVITY DATA:

Use time and effort measures for capacity and cost, alongside progress and outcome indicators.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 12 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



ESTIMATING WITH FALSE PRECISION



A single exact number can hide limited knowledge and lead to risky commitments.

1 THE MISTAKE

Using a single precise estimate when the scope, assumptions and uncertainty are not well understood.



FALSE CERTAINTY:

An exact number implies more certainty than actually exists.



MISSING BASIS:

Estimate shared without assumptions, scope maturity or supporting evidence.



RISKY COMMITMENTS:

Encourages deadlines that cannot tolerate normal uncertainty.



LIMITED FLEXIBILITY:

Makes it harder to adapt when new information emerges.



CAN HIDE GAPS:

Important unknowns may be overlooked or downplayed.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Pressure for quick answers and a desire to appear confident lead to precise estimates too early.



TIME PRESSURE:

Stakeholders want a number now, before the work is clear.



OPTIMISM BIAS:

Natural tendency to be overly confident.



LIMITED INFORMATION:

Key details, dependencies or assumptions are still unknown.



EXACT NUMBERS SEEM MORE CREDIBLE:

A single figure feels definitive and is easier to communicate.



POLITICAL PRESSURE:

Teams may give a precise number to gain approval or avoid difficult conversations.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs that an estimate uses false precision and lacks evidence.



EXACT NUMBER EARLY:

A single precise estimate shared before scope is mature.



SAME CONFIDENCE:

Identical confidence for both familiar and uncertain work.



MISSING ASSUMPTIONS:

No clear list of assumptions or estimate dates.



NO EVIDENCE:

Lack of supporting data, expert input or historical information.



KEY EVIDENCE MISSING:

Required input from technical experts, vendors or customers not yet obtained.



UNCLEAR OWNERS:

No named owner responsible for providing the missing evidence.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example of false precision:

A preliminary integration task is stated as exactly 17 days, but two external interfaces remain untested and their behaviour is unknown.



Stated estimate:

"Integration will take 17 days."



Missing details:

Two external interfaces are still untested. Their complexity and data formats may change the effort required.



Result:

The exact number creates unrealistic confidence and may lead to a commitment that cannot absorb normal uncertainty.

5 THE SOLUTION

Use suitable estimation methods, show the basis, document assumptions and express uncertainty.



USE A RANGE:

Reflects uncertainty until more is known, for example "10-25 days" (illustrative).



STATE THE BASIS:

Describe the scope, assumptions, estimation method and estimate date.



EXPLORE UNCERTAINTY:

Identify key unknowns and dependencies, and consider their possible impact.



REFINE OVER TIME:

Update the estimate when relevant evidence becomes available and the scope matures.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Build good estimation practice into your process and check the estimate as new information emerges.



DOCUMENT ASSUMPTIONS:

List what is included, excluded and any constraints.



INVOLVE THE RIGHT EXPERTS:

Get input from technical experts, vendors and customers.



SET ESTIMATE DATES:

Record when the estimate was made and what information it is based on.



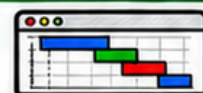
VERIFY AND UPDATE:

Review the estimate when key evidence is obtained and adjust as needed.



KEEP ACCOUNTABILITY:

Ranges are not an excuse to avoid refinement. Track actions to close major unknowns.



LOSING THE APPROVED BASELINE



Without a controlled reference, teams cannot distinguish performance variation from authorized changes.



1 THE MISTAKE

The approved baseline is lost, replaced or mixed with forecasts, so actual performance is compared with the wrong plan.



BASELINE:
Approved scope, schedule and cost used to measure performance.



LOST BASELINE:
Original commitment overwritten or not available with version history.



RESULT:
Teams cannot tell if a difference is real variation or an authorized change.



IMPACT:
Misleading status, wrong decisions and reduced trust in project reporting.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS



Latest forecast overwrites the original commitment in the schedule or budget.



Multiple versions circulate without a clear authority or version history.



Teams update plans to show progress, not to record authorized changes.



No change control process or approvals for baseline revisions.



Pressure to show a better position leads to unofficial targets and hidden changes.



CONTROL:
Keep the approved baseline separate from forecasts and maintain a complete version history.

3 WARNING SIGNS



Reports compare different baseline versions or use unofficial targets.



No record of approvals for changes to the baseline scope, schedule or cost.



Status shows on track after a plan update, but no formal change request is logged.



Evidence missing or inconsistent: baseline files, change approvals, version history and reporting cutoff.



OWNERS:
Project manager (maintains baseline), change control board (approves revisions), PMO (governs standards), and functional leads (provide data).

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: a delayed finish is silently moved in the plan, making a late project appear on time against a new unofficial target.



Original baseline finish: end of June (approved).



Plan is updated to finish end of July without a formal change request.



Status report now shows the project as on time, although it is actually late against the approved baseline.



LESSON:
Without the original baseline, true performance is hidden and decisions may be based on a moving target. This example is illustrative.

5 THE SOLUTION



Keep the approved baseline for scope, schedule and cost in a controlled location.



Store all versions with dates, approvals and a clear revision reason.



Use a formal change control process to authorize baseline revisions.



Maintain forecasts separately from the baseline and update them honestly.



Apply a common reporting cutoff date for actuals, forecast and baseline comparisons.



CAUTION:
Do not change the baseline to make the project look better. Forecasts should reflect the likely outcome even when the baseline remains unchanged.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



ESTABLISH GOVERNANCE:
Define who can approve baseline changes and how they are recorded.



KEEP IT SEPARATE:
Maintain the approved baseline separate from working forecasts and what-if plans.



RECORD CHANGES:
Log each approved revision with date, reason, impact and updated version.



USE A COMMON CUTOFF:
Ensure actuals, forecast and baseline comparisons use the same reporting date.



VERIFY REGULARLY:
Check that reported performance uses the correct baseline version and that approvals exist.



OUTPUTS:
Controlled baseline files, change log, version history, and variance reports against the approved baseline.



LEAVING DECISION OWNERSHIP UNCLEAR



Work stalls when everyone can comment but no one knows who can make the final decision.

1 THE MISTAKE

Everyone is invited to give input, but no one has clear authority to make the final decision, so the choice is delayed.



INPUT: Sharing opinions and information.



AUTHORITY: Explicit right to decide and approve.



DECISION OWNERSHIP: One named role accountable for the outcome.



COMMON CONFUSION: Participation is not the same as authority.



RESULT: Decisions drift, work stalls and frustration increases.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Participation is encouraged, but decision rights are not defined. Roles, scope and timing are unclear.



UNCLEAR SCOPE: The decision is not well defined.



DIFFUSE AUTHORITY: Multiple roles assume someone else will decide.



OVER-CONSULTATION: Too many opinions without a clear end point.



MISSING GOVERNANCE: No agreed route for escalating and resolving conflicts.



LATE DECISIONS: The decision latest useful date is not set, so it keeps slipping.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs and gather relevant evidence and owners.



RECURRING MEETINGS:

The same choice is discussed repeatedly with no decision.



CONTRADICTORY INSTRUCTIONS:

Different stakeholders give conflicting guidance.



MISSING EVIDENCE:

No clear record of who can decide, what is required and by when.



KEY OWNERS:

Project sponsor, governance board or named decision maker and required consultants.



CHECK RECORDS:

Look for terms of reference, approved decision log and escalation route.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: three teams debate a data format for two weeks because none has authority to approve the interface standard.



SITUATION: Team A prefers one format, Team B another, and Team C wants changes, but no one is authorized to decide.



IMPACT: Work on integration and testing is delayed while more opinions are collected.



ROOT CAUSE: Decision ownership and escalation route were not defined.



LESSON: Agree who can decide, what evidence is needed and by when, before seeking input.

5 THE SOLUTION

Define the decision, confirm the authorized decision maker, and document the outcome.



DEFINE THE DECISION:

State the exact choice, scope and success criteria.



CONFIRM AUTHORITY:

Name the accountable role who can approve the decision.



AGREE CONSULTATION:

Identify who must be consulted and how their input will be used.



SET EVIDENCE & DATE:

Define the information needed and the latest useful date.



RECORD THE DECISION:

Capture the decision, rationale and key implications. Communicate the outcome to all affected parties.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



ESTABLISH GOVERNANCE:

Set a clear decision-making process with escalation for conflicts.



DEFINE ROLES EARLY:

Include decision rights in the project charter and role descriptions.



SET DECISION DATES:

Agree the latest useful date and review progress regularly.



VERIFY DOCUMENTATION:

Check the decision log shows the owner, evidence, date and result with implications.



KEEP IT CURRENT:

Reconfirm ownership if scope, people or context changes.



CAUTION:

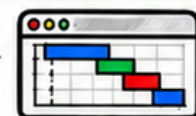
A responsibility matrix alone does not establish delegated authority.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 15 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



HOLDING MEETINGS WITHOUT OUTCOMES



A busy calendar can consume delivery capacity without producing decisions, learning or action.



1 THE MISTAKE

Meetings are scheduled and repeated without a clear purpose, required participants, preparation or expected output, consuming time without producing decisions, learning or action.



REPEATED BY HABIT:

Sessions continue even when no longer needed.



WRONG ATTENDEES:

People attend who are not needed to make progress.



NO CLEAR OUTPUT:

Discussion happens but no decisions, owners or actions are recorded.



OPPORTUNITY COST:

Time spent in meetings reduces time available for delivery work.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Meetings start with good intentions but continue by habit. Purpose, attendees, preparation and expected output are not defined before the meeting is scheduled.



HABIT:

Recurring sessions continue without being re-evaluated.



UNCLEAR PURPOSE:

The meeting goal is vague or too broad.



TOO MANY ATTENDEES:

Invitations are sent widely "just in case".



INSUFFICIENT PREPARATION:

Participants arrive without up-to-date information or specific topics.



CAUTION:

Not all meetings must make a decision. Some support exploration, alignment or relationships and need an appropriate purpose rather than a forced decision.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Use the following evidence to identify meetings that are not delivering value, and who should review it.



REPEATED DISCUSSION:

The same topics are discussed with no visible progress.

Owner: Meeting facilitator.



ABSENT ACTION RECORDS:

Meeting notes do not show decisions, actions, owners and dates.

Owner: Project manager.



LARGE OR UNCHANGED ATTENDEE LISTS:

Many attendees who do not need to be there.

Owner: Meeting organizer.



CONFLICTS WITH DELIVERY TIME:

Frequent meetings leave little time for actual project work.

Owner: Team leads.



ONGOING BLOCKERS:

Known issues are discussed repeatedly without a decision or owner.

Owner: Project sponsor or lead.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A weekly status meeting repeats the same dashboard that everyone has already read. A key dependency remains blocked, but the meeting ends without a decision or owner.



BEFORE THE MEETING:

Attendees read the same status report in advance.



DURING THE MEETING:

Team members discuss the blocked dependency again.



AFTER THE MEETING:

No decision, no owner and no action is recorded. The blocker remains unresolved and is re-discussed next week.

5 THE SOLUTION

Define the purpose, required participants, preparation and expected output before scheduling a meeting. Use asynchronous updates where suitable and always close with clear outcomes.



DEFINE PURPOSE:

Be clear on the decision, input or update needed.



INVITE THE RIGHT PEOPLE:

Include only those who need to contribute or decide.



PREPARE IN ADVANCE:

Share agenda and materials before the meeting.



CLOSE WITH OUTCOMES:

Record decisions, actions, owners and dates, and share the notes.



USE ASYNCHRONOUS UPDATES:

For routine status updates, use written updates or collaboration tools instead of a meeting.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



SET A MEETING CHECK:

Before scheduling, confirm the purpose, expected output and required attendees.



REVIEW RECURRENCE:

Regularly challenge whether recurring meetings are still needed or can be combined or cancelled.



USE A STANDARD AGENDA:

Include purpose, timebox, expected outcome and preparation required.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Nominate a facilitator and a note-taker to capture actions, owners and dates.



VERIFY FOLLOW-UP:

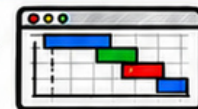
Check that actions are completed and blockers are resolved. If not, adjust the format or stop the meeting.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 16 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions





SENDING THE SAME MESSAGE TO EVERYONE



Generic reporting can overwhelm some recipients while omitting the evidence or action others need.

① THE MISTAKE

Sending the same message, report or update to everyone, regardless of their role, decisions or needs.



ONE SIZE FITS ALL:

Same content, detail and format for all recipients.



MISALIGNED INFORMATION:

Some get too much detail, others miss what they need.



WASTES TIME:

Recipients must filter irrelevant information.



REDUCES ENGAGEMENT:

Important messages can be overlooked or ignored.

② WHY IT HAPPENS

Communication is organized around the sender's convenience rather than the recipient's decision context.



EASY FOR THE SENDER:

One message is quicker than tailoring multiple versions.



LACK OF PLANNING:

Audience needs are not identified and mapped.



UNCLEAR DECISION CONTEXT:

Different roles need different levels of detail and focus.



WRONG CHANNEL OR TIMING:

Information may arrive in a format or at a time that does not suit the recipient.



CONTROL:

Tailor detail, channel, timing and feedback route for each audience.

③ WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs and gather the following evidence to apply this card.



REPEATED CLARIFICATION REQUESTS:

People ask for more detail or different formats.



DECISIONS DELAYED:

Key decisions take longer despite many messages.



IRRELEVANT FEEDBACK:

Recipients focus on minor details or ask for basic context.



EVIDENCE NEEDED:

Copies of messages, reports and communication channels used.



OWNERS TO INVOLVE:

Project manager, communication owner, key stakeholders and representatives from each audience group.

④ PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example from a software project:



SAME MESSAGE:

Executives receive detailed raw defect logs from testing.



MISSING CONTEXT:

Test owners receive only a green status indicator.



RESULT:

Executives cannot see the overall risk or needed actions, and test owners do not have the detail to investigate issues.



EXPLANATION:

The same information does not meet the needs of different roles, so both groups lack usable information.

⑤ THE SOLUTION

Tailor communication to each audience's needs and required actions.



MAP AUDIENCES:

Identify each recipient group, what they need to know, and the actions they must take.



TAILOR THE MESSAGE:

Adjust level of detail, format, channel and timing for each group.



CHECK UNDERSTANDING:

Confirm that the message is received and clear, and allow a feedback route.



ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH:

Keep a single, controlled source for project facts so all tailored messages use consistent data.

⑥ PREVENT & VERIFY



PLAN A COMMUNICATION MAP:

Define audiences, key messages, preferred channels and timing as part of the project plan.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Give a clear owner for each audience group's communication and update responsibilities.



MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY:

Tailor the format and detail, but use the same underlying facts from a single source.



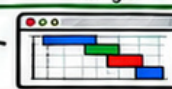
VERIFY EFFECTIVENESS:

Periodically check understanding and adjust based on feedback, questions and actions taken.



REVIEW REGULARLY:

Update the communication plan as roles, risks and project needs change.





MAKING VERBAL AGREEMENTS ONLY



Unrecorded decisions and commitments are difficult to verify later.

1 THE MISTAKE

Relying on verbal agreements instead of a written record. When people remember details differently or leave the project, it becomes difficult to verify what was agreed.



VERBAL AGREEMENT:

A promise or decision made in conversation, not documented.



HARD TO VERIFY:

Different recollections can lead to disputes.



PEOPLE CHANGE:

Team members may move roles or leave the project.



A RECORD IS NEEDED:

Important agreements should be captured in a shared, written form.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Project work is fast moving and people often agree things quickly to keep progress going. The pressure for speed can discourage formal documentation.



SPEED AND URGENCY:

Get things done quickly and move on.



FOCUS ON DELIVERY:

Attention is on doing the work, not recording it.



SEEMS INFORMAL:

It feels simpler to agree verbally for small or early decisions.



DOCUMENTATION DELAYED:

The record is left until later, but then gets forgotten.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for missing or disputed commitments in your project records. The following evidence and owners help apply this card.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Meeting notes, action logs, emails, messages and decision records.



KEY OWNERS:

Project manager, decision maker, action owner and relevant stakeholders.



DISPUTED RECOLLECTIONS:

People remember different details about what was agreed.



MISSING FROM PLANS:

Commitments are not in the current project plan, schedule or scope.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A supplier verbally agrees to provide a revised interface, but the delivery teams use different interpretations of the promised format.



THE AGREEMENT:

Supplier says they will provide a revised interface "next month".



DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS:

One team expects a data file, another expects an API, and a third expects documentation.



THE IMPACT:

Work is delayed while teams resolve what was actually promised.



LESSON:

A clear written record of the decision, scope and format would have prevented confusion.

5 THE SOLUTION

Capture and confirm material agreements in a proportionate, shared record.



RECORD THE DECISION:

Write a clear note with the decision or action, owner, date and scope.



INCLUDE KEY DETAILS:

State any assumptions, dependencies and what is out of scope.



CONFIRM AND SHARE:

Check the record with the decision maker and affected parties.



UPDATE PROJECT RECORDS:

Add the agreed item to the relevant plans, logs or decision register.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Make it routine to confirm important agreements through the proper channel and keep records up to date.



USE THE RIGHT CHANNEL:

Follow your project's agreed approvals and communication routes.



CAPTURE KEY INFORMATION:

Decision or action, owner, date, scope, assumptions and confirmation.



VERIFY IN RECORDS:

Check that the agreed item is reflected in the current plans, schedule or scope.



REMEMBER THE LIMITATION:

A written note does not automatically amend a contract or give authority. Use the formal process where required.



IGNORING THE FULL COST PICTURE

Tracking paid invoices alone can understate the cost of work already received or future contractual commitments.



1 THE MISTAKE

Looking only at paid invoices to understand project costs.



INVOICES ARE NOT ENOUGH:
Work may be received but not yet invoiced, and there may be contractual commitments.



INCOMPLETE PICTURE:
Paid amounts alone can understate the true cost of work already done or still to be delivered.



WRONG DECISIONS:
Leads to false confidence about remaining budget and available funds.



MIXED DEFINITIONS:
Finance and project teams may use different scopes, periods or cost definitions.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Financial reporting often mixes scopes, periods and definitions.



1 Different cutoffs:
Project and finance data use different dates.



2 Different definitions:
Costs may include or exclude taxes, fees or internal effort.



3 Multiple sources:
Actuals, accruals, commitments and forecast come from separate systems.



4 Overlaps:
Commitments and forecast amounts can include the same work and need reconciliation.



CONTROL:
Reconcile actuals, accruals, commitments and the remaining forecast without double-counting.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for indications that the full cost picture is missing.



INVOICES & PAYMENTS:
Paid invoices and payment records. Owner: Finance.



RECEIVED WORK:
Accepted deliverables or progress evidence not yet invoiced. Owner: Project team.



CONTRACT COMMITMENTS:
Signed contracts, change orders and approved variations. Owner: Procurement.



FORECAST & PLAN:
Latest forecast, remaining scope and assumptions. Owner: Project manager.



INCONSISTENT CUTOFFS:
Totals change at period end or when new invoices arrive.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example at a reporting date:

Paid invoices: \$40,000
Received work (uninvoiced): \$15,000

A view based only on paid invoices would show \$40,000 as the cost.

**UNDERSTATED BY:
\$15,000**

The true cost of work already received is \$40,000 + \$15,000 = \$55,000.



METHOD:
Include paid amounts and uninvoiced received work, then add commitments and the remaining forecast, avoiding double-counting.



LIMITATION:
Examples are illustrative only. Thresholds and reporting rules are project-specific.

5 THE SOLUTION



AGREE DEFINITIONS:
Align scope, periods and cost definitions with finance, including taxes, fees and internal costs.



RECONCILE TO EVIDENCE:
Match actuals, accruals, commitments and forecast to contracts, invoices and accepted deliverables.



EXPLAIN VARIANCES:
Investigate differences and document the reasons.



FORECAST CLEARLY:
State assumptions, outstanding items and what is included or excluded.



SINGLE VIEW:
Combine actuals, accruals, commitments and remaining forecast, without double-counting.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



ESTABLISH A PROCESS:
Regularly reconcile costs with finance and agree data sources and cutoffs.



CHECK COVERAGE:
Ensure all work, commitments and expected changes are included and not double-counted.



ASSIGN OWNERS:
Finance provides actuals and accruals. Project manager reviews forecast. Procurement confirms commitments.



REVIEW REGULARLY:
Update the full cost picture at each reporting cycle and after scope or contract changes.



VERIFY BEFORE REPORTING:
Check totals against source documents and confirm the basis and any unresolved items.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 19 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



ADDING QUALITY CHECKS TOO LATE



Defects found near release can require expensive rework and threaten acceptance.

1 THE MISTAKE

Quality checks are added at the end of the project instead of being planned and performed throughout delivery, so defects reach release and require costly rework.



LATE DETECTION:

Defects found near release when changes are harder and slower.



EXPENSIVE REWORK:

Rework can consume time, budget and team capacity.



THREATENS ACCEPTANCE:

Key stakeholders may not accept the output.



MISPLACED FOCUS:

Quality treated as a final inspection rather than ongoing assurance.



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

Learning and improvement are delayed.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams focus on delivering features and plan quality as a final check, not as regular assurance and verification. Reviews and tests are not aligned with how defects arise, so issues go unnoticed.



PRESSURE TO DELIVER:

Schedule pressure pushes quality activities to the end.



UNCLEAR STANDARDS:

Acceptance criteria are not defined early.



SILOLED TEAMS:

Developers, testers and users do not collaborate early.



INADEQUATE PLANNING:

Reviews and tests are not aligned with key risks.



FALSE ASSUMPTION:

Belief that a final review will catch everything.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs and gather evidence early. Assign clear owners to investigate and act.



NO INTERMEDIATE EVIDENCE:

No review notes, test results or defect logs during delivery.



ACCEPTANCE LATE:

Acceptance criteria are first discussed at the end.



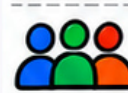
RISING DEFECTS:

Many defects found in final review or user testing.



REWORK CYCLES:

Repeated fixes for similar issues.



EVIDENCE AND OWNERS:

Results: review records, test reports, defect log and approvals. Owners: project manager (oversight), team lead (reviews), quality/test owner (testing), product owner (acceptance).

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: a data report is produced and distributed to many users. After release, a logic error is found in one calculation. Many dependent outputs must be corrected and republished.



STEP 1: REPORT RELEASED

Report with calculated results sent to multiple users.



STEP 2: ERROR FOUND

One calculation is incorrect.



STEP 3: WIDE REWORK

Affected reports and derived outputs must be corrected and resent.



RESULT:

Rework takes significant time, disrupts users and could have been avoided with earlier checks.

5 THE SOLUTION

Plan proportionate quality checks throughout the project, aligned to key risks, and verify fixes. Retain evidence of acceptance.



DEFINE CRITERIA EARLY:

Agree acceptance criteria and quality standards with stakeholders.



PLAN CHECKS BY RISK:

Schedule reviews and tests at appropriate stages.



INVOLVE KEY ROLES:

Include developers, testers and users in reviews.



VERIFY FIXES:

Retest after changes to confirm defects are resolved.



KEEP EVIDENCE:

Retain review records, test results, defect logs and approval sign-offs.



USE DEFECTS TO IMPROVE:

Analyse root causes and update processes to prevent recurrence.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



INTEGRATE QUALITY:

Include reviews and testing in the project plan and definition of done.



FOCUS ON KEY RISKS:

Target checks at high-risk areas such as complex logic, integrations and data changes.



ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES:

Define who performs each check and who approves the results.



CHECK COMPLETENESS:

Ensure all agreed checks are completed before release.



RETAIN EVIDENCE:

Keep test results, review notes and approvals for audit and operational readiness.



REVIEW AND IMPROVE:

Use defect trends to refine standards, checklists and the project process.





CONFUSING ACCEPTANCE WITH COMPLETION



Finishing the work does not mean it meets agreed conditions or has been accepted.

1 THE MISTAKE

Treating the completion of work activities as acceptance of the deliverable, without evidence that it meets the agreed requirements and has been approved.



COMPLETION:

Assigned work is finished according to the internal plan.



ACCEPTANCE:

Deliverable meets agreed criteria and is approved by the authorized reviewer.



MAIN RISK:

The project moves on with defects, missing requirements or unmanaged exceptions.



RESULT:

Rework, delays, disputes and potential cost impacts.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams feel pressure to show progress and may rely on internal completion claims instead of objective acceptance evidence.



FOCUS ON OUTPUT:

Emphasis on finishing tasks rather than meeting agreed acceptance criteria.



TIME PRESSURE:

Desire to close work quickly and report progress.



UNCLEAR ROLES:

Reviewer and approval authority not defined early.



CHANGING EXPECTATIONS:

New acceptance demands introduced after delivery.



CONTROL:

Define acceptance criteria, reviewer and approval authority early, and agree how to handle exceptions.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for signs that acceptance evidence is missing, incomplete or not from the authorized owner.



SIGN-OFF REQUESTS WITHOUT EVIDENCE:

Claims that work is done, but no test results, reviews or approvals.



MISSING EVIDENCE:

Required test reports, inspection records, user validation or other acceptance artifacts are absent.



WRONG OWNER:

Approval sought from someone without the proper authority.



NEW DEMANDS AFTER DELIVERY:

Additional acceptance conditions introduced late.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE & OWNERS:

Test results, review records, acceptance checklist and formal approval from the authorized customer or sponsor.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A software deliverable is coded and the development team mark it as complete. The required accessibility tests have not passed, so the team cannot treat coding completion as final acceptance.



SITUATION:

All features coded and internal tasks closed.



MISSING ACCEPTANCE:

Accessibility testing fails and required criteria are not met.



IMPACT:

Delivery team must fix the issues and retest before seeking formal acceptance from the customer.



LESSON:

Completion of work output is not the same as accepted delivery.

5 THE SOLUTION

Keep completion and acceptance separate and obtain documented acceptance from the authorized reviewer.



DEFINE ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA:

Clearly state the requirements that the deliverable must meet.



AGREE ROLES:

Identify the reviewer and approval authority.



CHECK AND RESOLVE GAPS:

Review test results and address any issues or exceptions.



OBTAIN DOCUMENTED DECISION:

Record formal acceptance or approved exceptions.



UPDATE RECORDS:

Close only after acceptance is documented and communicated to all stakeholders.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



PLAN EARLY:

Include acceptance criteria, evidence required, reviewer and authority in the project plan.



TRACK SEPARATELY:

Monitor completion and acceptance as distinct milestones.



REVIEW EVIDENCE:

Check that all required tests, inspections and validations are complete and satisfactory.



MANAGE EXCEPTIONS:

Agree how exceptions will be handled and who approves them.



CONFIRM AND CLOSE:

Obtain written acceptance from the authorized owner and update the project records.



VERIFY LATER USE:

Ensure the accepted deliverable is the version used for the next phase and in ongoing operations.



ASSUMING SUPPLIERS WILL DELIVER

Unverified external commitments can control project outcomes.



① THE MISTAKE

Treating supplier promises, purchase orders or optimistic updates as proof that materials, equipment or services will arrive in time and be ready for use.



PURCHASE ORDER (PO):
Confirms intent to buy but does not guarantee delivery.



SUPPLIER PROMISE:
A verbal or informal update is not proof of readiness.



EXTERNAL DEPENDENCY:
Supplier performance can control project outcomes but sits outside the team's daily view.



RISK:
Delays, rework and extra costs if delivery or quality is late or incomplete.

② WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams rely on supplier updates to keep momentum, especially under time pressure, and assume earlier commitments remain valid.



OPTIMISTIC UPDATES:
Progress reports sound positive but lack supporting evidence.



TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS:
Past good performance can create over-confidence.



FOCUS ON INTERNAL WORK:
Attention stays on in-house tasks while supplier readiness is overlooked.



COMPLEX SUPPLY CHAINS:
Multiple interfaces and handoffs make real status hard to see.



ASSUMPTION BIAS:
A PO or approved design is mistaken for confirmed delivery and successful testing.

③ WARNING SIGNS

Look for weak evidence and missing milestones. Confirm with the right suppliers and internal owners.



VAGUE PROGRESS CLAIMS:
Phrases like "on track" without specific dates or evidence.



OVERDUE EVIDENCE:
Test reports, certifications or production records missing or late.



KEY OWNERS NEEDED:
Supplier account manager, procurement, technical owner and project manager.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:
Confirmed production slot, factory test plan and results, quality certificates, and agreed shipping details.



DEPENDENCY IMPACT:
Interfaces and downstream activities at risk if delivery or acceptance slips.

④ PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative example: A critical component is reported on schedule. The supplier confirms production is complete.



MISSING TEST:
The required factory test has not been booked, so the component cannot ship yet.



CONDITION FOR SHIPPING:
Delivery depends on passing the factory test and receiving the test certificate.



PROJECT IMPACT:
Installation is delayed and downstream work cannot start as planned.



LESSON:
A completion claim does not mean it is ready for delivery or use. Always verify key milestones and evidence.

⑤ THE SOLUTION

Actively verify supplier readiness and keep feasible options for material risks.



CONFIRM COMMITMENTS:
Agree and document key milestones, interfaces and acceptance criteria.



CHECK EVIDENCE:
Review test results, quality records and shipping details proportionately to the risk.



COORDINATE INTERFACES:
Ensure design, technical and logistics requirements are fully understood.



MAINTAIN OPTIONS:
Keep feasible contingency plans such as alternative sources or schedule flexibility for significant exposure.



ESCALATE EARLY:
Raise evidence-based concerns with the right owners so action can be agreed in time.

⑥ PREVENT & VERIFY

Build supplier assurance into normal project control and keep it visible.



PLAN EARLY:
Define supplier deliverables, critical dates and required evidence in the project plan.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:
Name internal and supplier owners for each critical commitment.



TRACK AND REVIEW:
Check evidence at agreed intervals and record the results in a visible log.



MANAGE CHANGES:
Assess and agree the impact of any supplier changes on scope, schedule and cost.



KEEP OPTIONS READY:
Maintain feasible response options for high-impact items.



RESPECT CONTRACTS:
Follow contractual rights and commercial responsibilities when seeking information.





STARTING HANDOVER AT THE END



Treating operational handover as a final meeting leads to unusable outputs.

① THE MISTAKE

Handover to operations is left until the end of the project, so the receiving team may get outputs without the knowledge, access, support or ownership needed to use them reliably.



Seen as a final meeting instead of ongoing work.



Runbooks, access and training are not prepared in time.



Operational needs are not considered during delivery.



Creates rework, delays and an unsupported service after go-live.

② WHY IT HAPPENS

Delivery teams focus on building and testing, while transition activities are assumed to be quick or somebody else's job. Operational input, resources and ownership are not secured early.



Project scope prioritizes features over operational readiness.



Receiving owners are not identified early.



Documentation is written by the project team without end-user input.



There is an assumption that operations will "figure it out" after handover.



Responsibilities for support, maintenance and resourcing are unclear.

③ WARNING SIGNS

Look for these indicators early:



No named service owner or operations lead for the output.



Missing or incomplete runbooks, user guides and support procedures.



Lack of access setup for systems, tools and monitoring.



No evidence of training for operational teams.



Documentation not reviewed with end users.



A signed handover checklist exists but there is no proof that the team can operate the service.

④ PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: An application passes testing and is released, but operations cannot take it over because key items are missing.



Tests complete and the application is deployed.



Runbooks and support procedures are not available.



Operations lacks system access and monitoring setup.



Without this knowledge and access, the team cannot provide support, so a sustainable transfer is not achieved.

⑤ THE SOLUTION

Plan the transition to operations alongside delivery from the start.



DEFINE READINESS EVIDENCE:
List the documentation, access, training and support items required for handover.



IDENTIFY RECEIVING OWNERS:
Agree the operations owner, support team and their responsibilities early.



BUILD TRANSITION TASKS:
Include runbooks, access setup, training and operational testing in the project plan.



TEST OPERATIONAL TASKS:
Have the receiving team perform key tasks (e.g. start, stop, recover, monitor) before approval.



AUTHORIZE THE TRANSITION:
Confirm all readiness evidence is complete before handover.

⑥ PREVENT & VERIFY



INTEGRATE EARLY:

Plan handover activities and milestones from the beginning and track them.



INVOLVE OPERATIONS:

Include end users in design, documentation and testing.



BUILD AND REVIEW DOCS:

Create runbooks and user guides with input from the receiving team.



TRAIN AND PRACTICE:

Provide training and test essential operating tasks in a non-production environment.



VERIFY READINESS:

Check that all agreed evidence is complete and the team can operate the service before closure.



KEEP SUPPORT:

Ensure ongoing support and a clear ownership model after handover. Set review points post-transition.



COLLECTING LESSONS WITHOUT ACTION



Documenting experience produces little improvement when no one adopts or tests the changes.



1 THE MISTAKE

Lessons are documented but not used, so the same problems repeat in future work. The lessons report becomes an archive deliverable instead of driving real change.



Treated as a formality:

Lessons captured to close a phase, not to improve practice.



No adoption:

Recommendations are not integrated into working processes.



Repeated issues:

The same preventable problems occur in later projects.



Lost opportunity:

Time and effort spent on capturing lessons does not create value.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Useful lessons are not applied because of missing details, unclear ownership, low priority or lack of integration into daily work.



Incomplete lessons:

Observations lack evidence, context or specific actions, so they are hard to use.



No owner:

No one is responsible for testing or implementing the change.



Not in the workflow:

Lessons are not linked to methods, templates or decision points.



Competing priorities:

Teams focus on current delivery and do not take time to apply past learning.

3 WARNING SIGNS

These signs show that lessons are not leading to improvement.



Recurring problems:

The same preventable issues appear in multiple projects.



No receiving owner:

Lessons have no clear person or team to take them forward.



Weak evidence:

Lessons lack supporting data, examples or context, making them hard to apply.



Unclear applicability:

A lesson that worked once may not generalize to a different context or project type.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: repeated projects record late stakeholder involvement, but the next kickoff process still contains no stakeholder discovery step.



Lesson recorded:

Reports note that stakeholders were engaged too late, causing rework and delays.



Recommendation:

Add a stakeholder discovery step before planning.



No adoption:

The updated kickoff checklist does not include this step, so the issue happens again.



Result:

The same problem reoccurs, showing the lesson was not turned into action.

5 THE SOLUTION

Turn lessons into practical changes and verify that they improve the relevant outcome.



Capture complete lessons:

Record the observation, evidence, context, recommended action, owner and intended application.



Integrate into practice:

Update methods, templates, decision points or training so the change is used.



Assign and track:

Give each action an owner and target for implementation.



Review effectiveness:

After adoption, check whether the change improved the relevant outcome.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Make it routine to apply useful lessons and confirm that they work.



BUILD INTO PROCESS:

Include a lessons review in planning and method updates.



ASSIGN OWNERSHIP:

Name an owner for each recommended action and set a follow-up checkpoint.



CHECK IMPACT:

Compare the outcome before and after the change to see if it helped.



STAY REALISTIC:

Not all lessons will apply in every context. Consider project differences before adopting.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 24 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions





KEEPING TOO MANY TASKS IN PROGRESS



Starting work faster than it can finish increases waiting, context switching and blocked work.

1 THE MISTAKE

Taking on too many tasks at the same time instead of finishing or pausing current work. This creates queues, more handoffs and blocked inventory, which slows delivery.



TOO MUCH WIP:

More tasks started than the team can complete.



LONGER WAITING:

Work sits in queues instead of moving forward.



CONTEXT SWITCHING:

Attention keeps changing, reducing focus and quality.



BLOCKED INVENTORY:

Partially done work waits for reviews, information or other teams.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams often interpret busyness as throughput. They start new work before capacity exists to finish current tasks.



PRESSURE TO START:

New requests feel urgent and visible.



HIDDEN CONSTRAINTS:

Dependencies, approvals and reviews are not visible.



NO CLEAR LIMITS:

There is no agreed work-in-progress (WIP) limit for the team.



MIXED PRIORITIES:

Everything looks important so people say yes to more.



CAUTION:

There is no universal WIP limit suitable for every team. Limits depend on context and constraints.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Evidence that too much work is in progress and not completing.



AGING TASKS:

Many tasks have been in progress for a long time.



FREQUENT RESTARTS:

Work is stopped and restarted often.



BLOCKERS LIST:

A growing list of items waiting for information, approvals or other teams.



EVIDENCE NEEDED:

Task lists with start dates, aging work, blocker logs and handoff points.



OWNERS NEEDED:

Team manager, process owner and each task owner to review the evidence and act.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: An analyst alternates among eight unfinished reports while the highest-priority report waits for a short review.



EIGHT REPORTS:

Analyst starts and makes small updates across many reports each day.



KEY REPORT WAITS:

The highest-priority report is ready but waits for a short review, while attention goes to other reports.



OUTCOME:

All reports take longer to finish because of constant switching and delays.

5 THE SOLUTION

Finish or deliberately pause work, resolve bottlenecks and manage concurrent work according to actual capacity and constraints.



MAKE IT VISIBLE:

Use a single task board to show work in progress, queues and blockers.



SET WIP LIMITS:

Agree context-appropriate limits based on capacity, skill constraints and handoffs.



RESOLVE BOTTLENECKS:

Unblock approvals, provide information and remove constraint delays.



FOCUS ON FLOW:

Finish work before starting new tasks, or deliberately pause lower-priority work.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



AGREE A POLICY:

Set clear rules for when new work can start and who can approve exceptions.



MANAGE INTAKE:

Use a simple intake process to prioritize and throttle new requests.



TRACK AND REVIEW:

Review WIP regularly, check aging tasks and confirm blockers are being resolved.



VERIFY IMPROVEMENT:

Look for fewer blocked items, shorter queue times and more completed work. Adjust limits as needed.



KEEP ITERATING:

Refine limits and policies as team capacity and constraints change over time.





TREATING A PLAN AS UNTOUCHABLE



Refusing to adapt a forecast or method after new evidence can weaken delivery decisions.

1 THE MISTAKE

The team treats the plan, forecast or method as fixed, even when new evidence shows that key assumptions no longer hold. This keeps the document looking stable, but can lead to poor decisions and missed outcomes.



FIXED PLAN:

Refusing to update forecasts or methods after learning new information.



OUTDATED ASSUMPTIONS:

Continuing to rely on assumptions that are no longer valid.



WEAKER DECISIONS:

Allocating resources and setting dates based on old information.



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

Failing to respond to changing risks, priorities or constraints.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

People can confuse control with rigidity and worry that changes mean failure. They may prefer a stable document over an accurate one, or fear extra approvals.



CONTROL VS RIGIDITY:

A fixed plan feels safer than a flexible approach.



EFFORT BIAS:

Sunk effort makes people resist change.



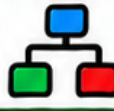
FEAR OF CRITICISM:

Changes can be seen as admitting a mistake.



LIMITED REVIEW:

Assumptions, remaining work, risks and priorities are not revisited often enough.



POOR COMMUNICATION:

New information is not shared or discussed across stakeholders.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for these signs and the evidence and owners needed to apply this card.



PLAN NEVER CHANGES:

Plans and forecasts remain unchanged despite new information.



EVIDENCE IGNORED:

Actual progress, test results, issue logs or stakeholder feedback do not influence the plan.



KEY OWNERS:

Project manager, planning team, technical leads and sponsor must review and approve updates.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Revised estimates, test or trial results, risk and issue records, changing requirements and resource availability.



BOTH EXTREMES HARMFUL:

Plans that never change are risky, but frequent uncontrolled changes are also harmful.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: During trial integration, a performance issue reveals a new constraint. The team continues using the original effort assumption in every forecast, without updating the plan or the schedule.



NEW INFORMATION:

Trial results show a dependency that will take longer than expected.



ORIGINAL PLAN:

Forecast and dates remain unchanged, still using the original effort assumption.



CONSEQUENCE:

Resources are not adjusted and downstream work is at risk.



ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY:

Example shows how ignoring new evidence can lead to unrealistic forecasts.

5 THE SOLUTION

Update forecasts and working plans responsibly, using evidence, and follow the agreed change process.



REVIEW ASSUMPTIONS:

Revisit remaining work, risks, priorities and the method in light of new evidence.



UPDATE FORECASTS:

Adjust estimates, sequence or approach where needed.



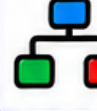
SEEK APPROVALS:

Follow the required change process for baseline updates and explain the evidence.



COMMUNICATE CLEARLY:

Share the reasons for changes and the expected impacts.



PRESERVE HISTORY:

Keep a clear record of what changed, why, who approved it and when.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



BUILD FLEXIBILITY:

Use rolling-wave planning and regular reviews to incorporate new evidence.



SET REVIEW POINTS:

Schedule periodic plan and assumption reviews, especially after major milestones or tests.



INVOLVE KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

Include sponsor, technical leads and key owners in change decisions.



USE A CHANGE PROCESS:

Evaluate the evidence, assess impacts and obtain required approvals before updating baselines.



VERIFY AFTER UPDATES:

Check that the new plan is realistic, communicated and being used in day-to-day decisions.



MONITOR ONGOING:

Continue to compare actual progress to the updated plan and revisit assumptions as needed.



AVOIDING CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT



Surface and address different views early to make better decisions.



1 THE MISTAKE

Unspoken disagreements about requirements or trade-offs are avoided, often to keep harmony or move faster. The issue later reappears as rework, resistance or inconsistent decisions.



SILENT DISSENT:

Concerns are not raised during discussions.



SURFACE AGREEMENT:

People agree outwardly to avoid discomfort.



HIDDEN TRADE-OFFS:

Different priorities and assumptions are not explored.



LATER IMPACT:

Issues return as rework, resistance or conflicting instructions.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams prioritize surface agreement or personal comfort. People may fear tension, delay or criticism. Roles and interests are unclear, so trade-offs between scope, time, cost, quality and risk are not openly discussed.



AVOIDING TENSION:

Keeping the conversation easy feels safer.



PERSONAL COMFORT:

People stay silent to maintain good relationships.



UNCLEAR ROLES:

Decision authority and responsibilities are not clear.



COMPLEX TRADE-OFFS:

Real constraints and options are not examined together.



CONTROL:

Create a respectful discussion of evidence, interests, constraints and available options.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for signs that conflict is being avoided and will likely reappear.



PRIVATE OBJECTIONS:

People raise concerns after apparent consensus.



INCONSISTENT DECISIONS:

Different instructions are given to team members.



REPEATED TENSION:

The same issues resurface without resolution.



KEY EVIDENCE NEEDED:

Requirements, constraints, risks, options and impacts on scope, time, cost, quality.



OWNERS TO INVOLVE:

Affected roles such as sponsors, product, engineering, operations, finance and customers.



AGREE BOUNDARIES:

Keep discussion focused on issues and evidence, not personal blame.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: engineering and operations disagree about release readiness but remain silent in the review to keep the meeting smooth. Afterward, engineering issues a "go ahead" while operations sends instructions to hold the release. The conflict resurfaces, causing delay, rework and frustration.



RESULT:

Mixed messages, loss of trust and extra work to realign plans.



INTERPRETATION:

Avoiding the discussion did not remove the conflict. It only delayed it and increased the impact on the project.

5 THE SOLUTION

Surface the decision clearly, hear affected roles and use the appropriate authority to resolve trade-offs and record the rationale.



Facilitate a structured discussion:

Present the decision, evidence, interests and constraints.



Explore options:

Discuss alternative solutions and their impacts on scope, time, cost, quality and risk.



Use decision authority:

Escalate to the right person or forum when needed.



Record the rationale:

Document the decision, options considered, key arguments and any conditions or follow-up actions.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



SET EXPECTATIONS:

Make it clear that different views are welcome and expected on important decisions.



USE A DECISION PROCESS:

Define who decides, how inputs are gathered, and when the decision will be made.



INVOLVE KEY ROLES EARLY:

Include all affected functions before the decision point.



CHECK AGREEMENT:

Verify that people understand and support the decision or escalate outstanding concerns.



FOLLOW UP:

Review outcomes and confirm that actions are implemented.



LOOK FOR RECURRING ISSUES:

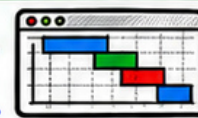
If the same conflict returns, address the root causes.



Created by WikiFree.com

CARD 27 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



IGNORING DATA DEFINITIONS



The same metric name can mean different things, leading to misleading conclusions.

1 THE MISTAKE

Teams use the same metric label but different scopes, periods or calculation rules, so reports are combined even though they are not comparable.



SAME NAME:

One label, different meanings across teams or projects.



DIFFERENT RULES:

Different numerators, denominators, inclusion rules or time periods.



UNRELIABLE DECISIONS:

Misleading trends and wrong conclusions when unlike data is mixed.



FALSE CONFIDENCE:

Totals and comparisons look complete but do not represent the same measurement.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Reports are combined without a shared measurement definition. A clear definition should specify:

Metric = Numerator / Denominator
with inclusion rules, unit, timing, data source and owner.

1



Different teams set their own rules and documentation is missing or unclear.

2



Historical practices continue without review.

3



Tools are configured differently, using different data sources or logic.

4



Changes to rules or scope are not communicated.



CAUTION:

A denominator of zero requires N/A rather than an invented percentage.

3 WARNING SIGNS



IRRECONCILABLE TOTALS:

The same metric shows different totals across reports, teams or tools.



UNSTABLE TRENDS:

Sudden changes that coincide with rule or scope changes, not real performance shifts.



RELEVANT EVIDENCE:

Metric definitions, calculation rules, data extracts, change logs and version history.



OWNERS:

Data owner, metric owner and report owner to confirm definitions, data quality and any changes.



CHECK BEFORE CONCLUDING:

Verify that the compared data uses the same definition, period, source and inclusion rules.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: Two teams report a defect rate, but one counts reopened defects as new defects while the other does not.

Team A (includes reopened):

New defects (numerator): 10
Tested items (denominator): 100

Defect rate = 10 / 100 = 10%

Team B (excludes reopened):

New defects (numerator): 10
Tested items (denominator): 120

Defect rate = 10 / 120 = 8.3%



INTERPRETATION:

Both use the same label but different inclusion rules, so the rates are not directly comparable.

5 THE SOLUTION



AGREE A METRIC DICTIONARY:

Define numerator, denominator, inclusion rules, unit, timing, data source and owner for each metric.



ALIGN AND DOCUMENT:

Get agreement across teams and update reports and dashboards to use the same definition.



VALIDATE DATA QUALITY:

Check data sources, calculations and samples to confirm the rules are applied consistently.



DISCLOSE CHANGES:

Communicate any changes to definitions, scope or time periods before sharing or comparing results.



DRAW CONCLUSIONS CAREFULLY:

Only compare data that uses the same definition and period.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY



CREATE A METRIC DICTIONARY:

Keep a single, accessible list of metrics with clear definitions and owners.



REVIEW REGULARLY:

Check that definitions are still fit for purpose and consistent across teams and tools.



TEST DATA INTEGRITY:

Run periodic checks and sample reviews to confirm calculations and inclusion rules.



MONITOR CHANGES:

Track and communicate any rule, scope or source changes that affect comparability.



VERIFY BEFORE USE:

Ensure the data matches the defined metric, time period and source. If the denominator is zero, show N/A and explain why.



Created by [WikiFree.com](https://www.wiki-free.com)

CARD 28 OF 30

30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions



CLOSING WITHOUT BENEFITS OWNERSHIP



A project may deliver outputs while no business owner remains accountable for adoption and later benefit measurement.



1 THE MISTAKE

The project is closed after delivering the planned outputs, but no business owner is responsible for adopting the change and measuring the targeted benefits.



OUTPUTS DELIVERED:

Solution is built and handed over, but benefits are not realized automatically.



NO OWNER:

No accountable business role to drive adoption and measure outcomes after closure.



BENEFITS AT RISK:

Expected value may not be captured, even though the project is completed.



CLOSURE CONFUSION:

Project completion is mistaken for benefit realization.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Teams focus on delivering outputs and meeting project scope, while longer-term adoption and benefits management are not planned or assigned.



OUTPUTS VS BENEFITS:

Deliverables are seen as success, but benefits require ongoing use and change.



OWNER NOT IDENTIFIED:

The receiving business owner is unclear or not confirmed before closure.



SHORT-TERM FOCUS:

Project teams close once outputs are accepted, without planning for later measurement.



BENEFITS TAKE TIME:

Value often emerges after implementation, beyond the project timescale.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Check for evidence that a business owner is in place and able to track adoption and benefits after project closure.



BENEFITS PLAN:

Clear list of expected benefits with baseline, measures and target dates.



NAMED OWNER:

A specific business role accountable for adoption and ongoing measurement.



FOLLOW-UP SCHEDULE:

Planned review dates and reporting arrangements after project closure.



SUPPORTING EVIDENCE:

Data sources and method for measuring adoption and benefits, with access and responsibilities.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A new workflow system goes live, and the project is closed after delivering the software and training. No one is assigned to check whether processing time actually falls once users adopt the new process.



OUTPUT DELIVERED:

System is implemented and handed over to operations.



MISSING OWNERSHIP:

No business owner is assigned to measure if the workflow improves after adoption.



RESULT:

The expected improvement is not tracked, and the benefit may not be realized.

5 THE SOLUTION

Assign benefits ownership and put in place a simple plan before closing the project.



IDENTIFY THE OWNER:

Confirm the business role that will drive adoption and measure benefits.



AGREE THE PLAN:

Set baseline, measures, review dates and ongoing actions before closure.



TRANSFER & SCHEDULE:

Handover the benefits plan to the owner and set follow-up reviews after project closure.



KEEP IT LIVE:

Ensure the plan is part of business as usual management, not just a project document.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Build benefits ownership into project close-out and check it is working.



MAKE IT A CLOSURE ITEM:

Do not close the project until the benefits plan and owner are agreed and documented.



CONFIRM CAPABILITY:

Ensure the owner has the resources, authority and information needed.



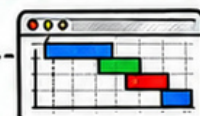
CHECK PROGRESS:

Review adoption and benefit measures at the agreed dates, using actual evidence.



KEEP WATCHING:

Benefits may take time to emerge. Continue to monitor and support, even after closure.





TREATING CLOSURE AS A CELEBRATION ONLY

Celebrating delivery without resolving administrative and operational obligations leaves avoidable uncertainty behind.



1 THE MISTAKE

The project team celebrates delivery and disperses without completing all closure activities. Administrative and operational obligations remain unresolved, creating uncertainty, disputes and avoidable rework.



FOCUS ON THE EVENT:

Success is seen as the launch or handover party, not formal closure.



UNFINISHED ITEMS:

Residual work, open claims and support obligations are left outstanding.



TEAM DISPERSAL:

Key people move to new projects before responsibilities are transferred.



ONGOING RISK:

Contractual, operational and reputational risks continue after the celebration.

2 WHY IT HAPPENS

Excitement after delivery, pressure to release the team and shifting priorities lead to an early finish without a proportionate closure review.



ATTENTION SHIFTS:

Focus moves to the next opportunity or new priority.



PERCEIVED COMPLETION:

Outputs are delivered but follow-up obligations are underestimated.



RESOURCE PRESSURE:

Team members are reassigned quickly, leaving little time to close properly.



ASSUMED OWNERSHIP:

It is unclear who will own remaining work or manage ongoing obligations.



LACK OF PROCESS:

No structured closure review or checklist is used.

3 WARNING SIGNS

Look for indicators that closure activities, evidence and ownership are incomplete.



MISSING EVIDENCE:

Final acceptance records, test results, user sign-off, training records and handover documents are not available or are incomplete.



UNRESOLVED COMMITMENTS:

Open supplier claims, pending payments, unresolved defects or outstanding change requests.



UNCLEAR OWNERSHIP:

No named owner for ongoing support, maintenance or operational responsibilities.



INACCESSIBLE RECORDS:

Project files, lessons learned and key decisions are not archived or cannot be found.



ONGOING OBLIGATIONS:

Contractual duties, warranties and support periods continue after delivery and are not acknowledged.

4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Illustrative: A project delivers a new system and the team celebrates the launch. Team members then move to new projects, while an open supplier claim, a support obligation and one unresolved defect have no accountable receiving owner.



SUPPLIER CLAIM:

A claim is still under review but no one is tracking it.



SUPPORT OBLIGATION:

The help desk transition to operations has not been confirmed.



UNRESOLVED DEFECT:

A known issue remains open without an owner.



RESULT:

Later, the issues resurface and require time and cost to resolve after the team has moved on.

5 THE SOLUTION

Carry out a proportionate closure review and complete all required administrative and operational steps before the team disperses.



OBTAIN AUTHORIZED CLOSURE:

Confirm that agreed acceptance criteria are met and the project is formally closed.



TRANSFER OBLIGATIONS:

Explicitly assign any remaining work, support, maintenance and contractual duties to named owners.



ARCHIVE EVIDENCE:

Store key documents, records, decisions and lessons learned in an accessible repository.



COMMUNICATE THE TRANSITION:

Inform relevant stakeholders about what is closed, what continues, and who is responsible.

6 PREVENT & VERIFY

Make closure a planned and visible part of the project, not just a celebration.



PLAN EARLY:

Include closure activities, evidence and ownership transfer in the project plan and checklist.



CHECK COMPLETENESS:

Verify acceptance, all commitments, payments and residual work are resolved or assigned.



CONFIRM OWNERSHIP:

Record the named owner for ongoing support and any remaining obligations.



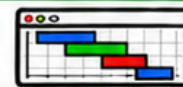
VALIDATE RECORDS:

Ensure project files, contracts, test results and lessons learned are complete and accessible.



REVIEW AFTER HANDOVER:

Confirm the receiving team has what they need and monitors outstanding items.



GUIDE



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE & SOURCES



Get the most value from the 30 cards and explore further learning resources.

1 START WITH A NEED

Select a card that matches a real project decision or challenge.



CONFIRM SCOPE:

Understand what is in and out of scope for your situation.



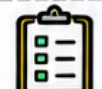
IDENTIFY LIFECYCLE:

Consider the project phase and current context.



ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS:

Identify who is affected and who needs to be involved.



CHECK CONSTRAINTS:

Consider time, budget, quality, resources and risk.



USE CONSISTENT TERMS:

Apply the definitions in each card.



READ THE EXAMPLE:

Use the worked example as an illustration, not a promise.



SELECT EVIDENCE:

Identify the data and evidence needed before you act.

2 APPLY & REVIEW

Turn the card content into practical action for your project.



ASSIGN AN OWNER:

Give a clear owner to apply the guidance and track actions.



AGREE INPUTS AND OUTPUT:

Confirm the data needed and the expected result or decision.



RECORD ASSUMPTIONS:

Note key assumptions, including any constraints or dependencies.



APPLY THE CARD:

Follow the steps, tools or checks in the card for your context.



REVIEW THE RESULT:

Check the outcome, discuss implications and agree next steps.



ADAPT TO YOUR PROJECT:

Set the review frequency and thresholds that fit your needs.



SPECIAL CASES:

If a denominator is zero, use N/A, not zero percent.



PROTECT & RECORD:

Keep sensitive information secure and maintain a version history.

3 ABOUT THIS EDITION

Key information about this guide and how to use it.



PART OF A COLLECTION:

Book 9 of the WikiFree Project Management Collection.



THIRTY ORIGINAL CARDS:

Practical learning cards covering real project management mistakes and solutions.



PRACTICAL SYNTHESIS:

Terminology and techniques are a practical synthesis, not an exhaustive standard or formal certification.



DEFINE LOCALLY:

Custom working metrics, thresholds and definitions must be defined for your project context.



EXAMPLES ARE ILLUSTRATIVE:

Worked examples show how the ideas can be applied. They are not guarantees or benchmarks.



FURTHER READING:

Authoritative resources for additional learning are listed in panels 4-6.

4 SOURCE 1

PMI - Work Breakdown Structure



The Project Management Institute (PMI) provides guidance on developing a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) to define and organize total project scope.



Helps break the project into manageable work packages.



Provides a foundation for planning, estimating and communication.



This is a foundation for further reading, not an endorsement of this publication.

Click this panel to open the source.

5 SOURCE 2

GAO - Schedule Assessment Guide



The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) provides a guide to assessing project schedules, including best practices and common risk indicators for schedule realism.



Explains characteristics of a reliable and credible project schedule.



Covers common issues and questions to improve schedule quality.



This is a foundation for further reading, not an endorsement of this publication.

Click this panel to open the source.

6 SOURCE 3

APM - Lessons Learned



The Association for Project Management (APM) provides guidance on capturing and using lessons learned to improve future project performance.



Explains how to identify, record and share lessons learned effectively.

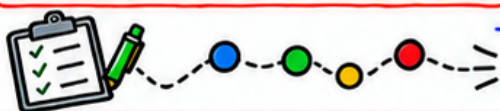


Covers good practice for embedding lessons into future projects.



This is a foundation for further reading, not an endorsement of this publication.

Click this panel to open the source.



Created by [WikiFree.com](https://www.wikifree.com)
REFERENCE & APPLICATION
30 Project Management Mistakes & Solutions

