Setting Your Project Up For Success

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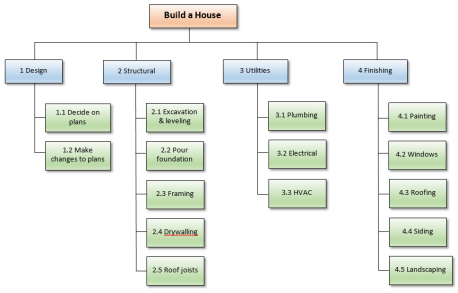
Setting your project up for success

1. **Know what you are supposed to achieve**
   - If you don't understand your project scope you cannot deliver it
   - If your client doesn't understand your project scope they will cause problems!
   - This is surprisingly difficult to achieve:
     - No one understands IT except IT professionals
     - Functionality can be hard to define
     - System boundaries are always hard to define
     - Complexity causes unforeseeable issues to emerge
   - Processes and communication are the key starting with a good WBS
     - Focus on 'what' is to be delivered not the technology being used



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2. Risk is an inevitable certainty – live with it

- Understand the difference between uncertainty (events) and variability
- Find out where similar projects have failed in the past
  - Reference class risk assessment helps
- Design for risk (eg, modular development)
- If its 'bleeding edge' expect to be 'cut' – allow time for repairs
- Allow people to talk about risk
  - *I'm not sure about xxxx* – Remember the Dunning-Kruger effect!
  - Every estimate is wrong!
- Constant vigilance – pick emerging problems early
- Hope for a sensible customer – they are a scarce commodity…

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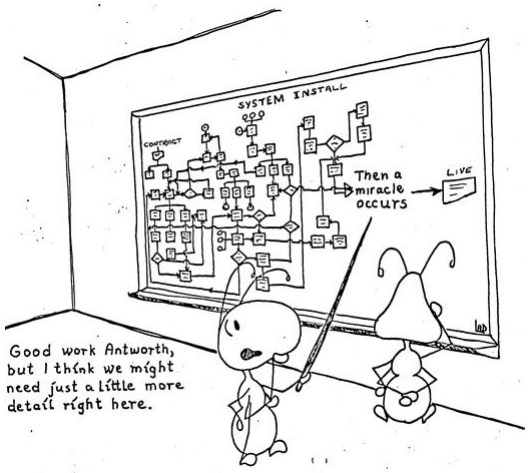
3. Plan sensibly (cost & time)

- The scope is a fixed constant that defines the work to be done
- You can only use the resources you have – miracles rarely happen
- Resources drive the cost of the project
- Resources and ***how well they are used*** determine the duration of the project
- You need contingencies
- Don't add detail you don't know
- Focus on realistic and achievable plans



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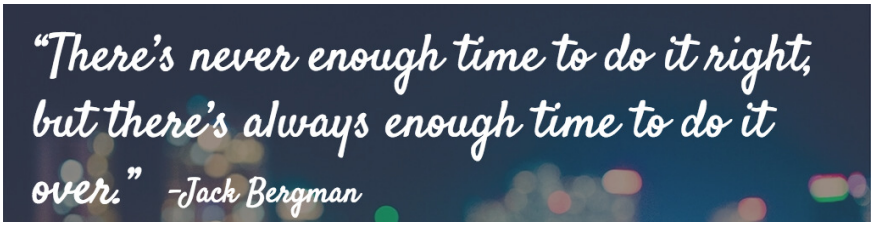
4. Do the work right the first time

- Stress kills quality – focus on results not deadlines
- Tired people make mistakes – look after your team
- Take the time needed to set up the job properly – it saves time in the long run
- Everyone makes mistakes – help people learn and recover
- Your project is only successful at the end – cutting corners to stay 'on-time & on-budget' in the early stages leads to the next 'Crossrail'



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5. Testing is supposed to find problems

- Cutting down on testing leads to disasters – allow the time needed
  - Most IT development this is 25% to 30% of the project time
- Organize to do the work perfectly – it's the cheapest option
- Plan to deal with reality:
  - Design testing into the development
  - Design the testing thoroughly
  - Test for the 'worst case' – remember the last Australian census
- Don't just fix problems – they are rarely a one-off unique problem
- Look for causes (root cause) and implement preventative actions

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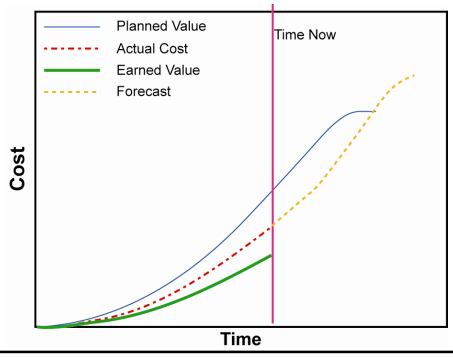
6. Manage for success

- Your carefully prepared plans are **not right!**
- You need to know how wrong – measure progress rigorously and regularly
- Use predictive techniques such as Earned Value to understand the likely outcome
- Believe the Earned Value results
- Two of the 'big lies':
  - The cheque is in the mail….
  - *We will catch up next month….*
- Recovery always needs a planned set of actions, more organization, more money, and more resources



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7. Communicate, communicate & then do some more communication

- People are 100% of the problem and 100% of the solution
- Projects are done by people for people (*stakeholders* are people)
- But lots of people will be frightened or threatened by their perceptions of your project
- The key to success is communicating to influence behavior – this requires credibility
- Remember: ***Bad news does not get better with keeping***
- But how you communicate the bad news will change people's reaction

Good managers are great communicators!

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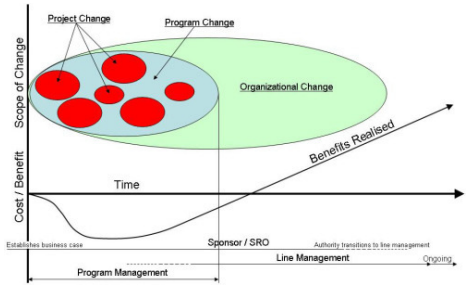
8. Expect change

- There will be changes to your project scope and project plans – have systems and resource to deal with them
- There is no such thing as a 'small change' in IT – be realistic
  - Remember your customers rarely understand IT
  - Take the time needed to explain the consequences
- Change is not bad, it just need to be managed and the consequences need to be understood (particularly by the client)
- There's no point in implementing a change that destroys value



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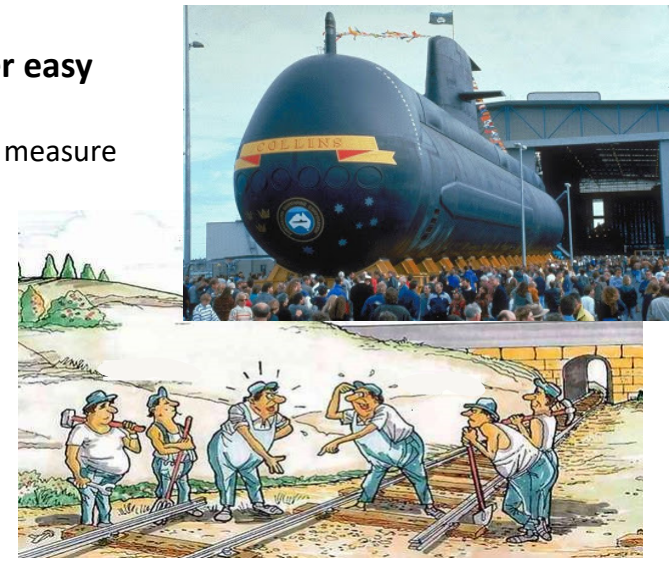
8. Systems integration is never easy

- It is always a major risk
- Progress is nearly impossible to measure
- Testing is incredibly complex
- Initial failure is more common than success
- Many projects ignore this 'small task'



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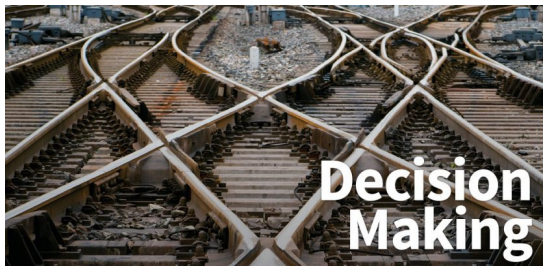
Conclusions

- Good project management processes provide reasonably useful information on:
  - Time and cost
  - Scope definition and accomplishment
  - The effect of risk
  - The achievement of quality
  - Predictions on the future performance of the work
- Good project managers use this information:
  - They make decisions and are proactive
  - They communicate for effect



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Conclusions

- Success is ephemeral:
  - On-time and on-budget is less important than useful and wanted
  - Quality is vital – it will be experienced long after the other factors are forgotten
- You **can** define what success looks like with your client – have the conversation
  - Prioritize different aspects of success
  - Measure performance against these criteria
  - When issues arise use these to communicate with your stakeholders and to inform decisions

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Conclusions

- Unfortunately most benefits realization and value creation occur after the project is finished
- Good project managers keep focused on these outcomes and manage to maximize value
- But they need the support of good senior managers and sensible clients – both are very rare commodities

Sydney Opera House,
Australia's most successful failure!

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Questions??

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