



How To Save A Failing Project

by Cogeian Systems

It is said that as many as 50% of all software projects fail. You may have such a project on your hands right now— a project that held great promise, but veered off course along the way. Cogeian Systems helps organizations to put these projects back on track. In our experience, there are 3 high-leverage actions to take when attempting to save a project.

1. Reduce the size of the project.

Size matters! The #1 cause of project failure is attempting to accomplish far too much in far too short a span of time. Would you prefer to successfully deliver most of the project, or fail to deliver any of it? When faced with an at-risk project, the stakeholders must rally together and make hard decisions about what absolutely, positively must be included in the project, and what can be left for later. Cut deep and wide, and trust your development team - only they can tell you how long it will really take to develop any given feature.

2. Re-examine the original project plan.

Every project plan has some assumptions built in; that each team member will only take x sick days and holidays, that the client will deliver critical data on time, that the server will have 99% uptime, etc. Scour the project plan for assumptions and test them. Are any of them wrong? If so, they are a contributing factor to the project being at-risk. Re-examine, then change or eliminate the problematic assumptions, then see what form the plan takes.

3. Get buy-in from the top levels of management.

You can cut features, add budget, slip the delivery date, and re-write all the assumptions in the plan, but if management is not behind the project, odds are it will fail. When dealing with an at-risk project, management needs to be an advocate for the people on the project team, not a commander of them. The removal of obstacles to success should be the #1 priority for any manager of a project team in trouble. Once the management team is bought in, their influence and protection can make for an environment that is highly conducive to project recovery.

Many perfectly competent organizations find themselves with a failing software project on their hands. Choosing to see it through can be difficult but tremendously rewarding. Cogeian Systems helps organizations who have at-risk, failed, or broken software projects that need to be saved. For more information, contact Cogeian Systems at (559) 687-7591 or on the web at www.cogeian.com