

Six Steps to Successful Projects aka PM101

People seem to assume that the work *IN* the project is the totality of the project when in fact the work *ON* the project is critical to its success. We're talking *Project Management*.

The fact is that most people are not naturally good at project management. This is a skill set like any other. It is learned and mastered eventually only if you put in the effort and learn from your mistakes. Having been a team leader on major IT projects and led major business process re-engineering projects, I have learned that it is the simple stuff that makes or breaks the project and all the fancy charts and reports are no replacement for the basic "blocking and tackling" that moves the ball down field and over the goal line. With that, we introduce our fail-safe approach to Project Mgmt:

1. List the tasks. Do not concern yourself with who will do them or when they'll do them
2. Estimate the duration of the task if performed by one person - target 4 hours - if the task is much longer, break it down - if it is an hour or less - clump it with similar tasks - you're being too granular and wasting time managing vs. doing
3. Discuss any dependencies between tasks and record those - which tasks must be done prior to starting which other tasks.
4. Chunk the list of tasks such that logically connected ones are together, then sequence them logically to a reasonable extent but don't over-think it. Make sure the ones with dependencies are together and in order though.
5. NOW discuss WHO will do each task.
6. THEN look at the demands on each person by day by week etc and confirm that it is possible for them to do all that they volunteered to do.

Key thing to keep in mind at all times:

You have *three* levers in a project: Deadline, Scope and Resourcing. You can only adjust these three things. Towards the end of a project, you really only have Scope and Deadline since you can't meaningfully add resources at the last minute. So if you've under-resourced your project for too long, you will have to confront being late or abandoning promised elements of the scope.

Good planning is therefore good resource planning. Scope and Deadline come from above you in the Org Chart. It is the Project Manager's job to identify the resources needed and then manage them effectively.

Sounds simple and it is but it is not easy. It takes practice and experience to do reliably.

Sigma Done Simply has extensive experience in this arena and we can definitely raise your game if you give us a call!