

A Project Manager's Guide On- "How To Let A Project Fail!"

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How To Let A Project Fail!

Thinking to himself...

"Well, his way is WRONG, we missed the deadline 2 times and never talked about Risk Mitigation. But his title is above mine, so I better not question him.."



"I'm the 'Boss' we do it MY way!!! Call the Project Green!! And leave off the delivery dates!"

The Decision is yours... Do you want your Projects to fail, or succeed?

Angela Berga, Project Management Professional certified expert will guide you on this journey.

Ultimately the decision is up to you, the Project Manager. Do you want your projects to fail? Or would you like to learn these lessons and take proactive steps to ensure you do not allow these bad habits to fail your projects.

Angela has been collecting Lessons Learned and Case Studies, for over 20 years. We don't have all day to review all of them, but she will cover the top 5.

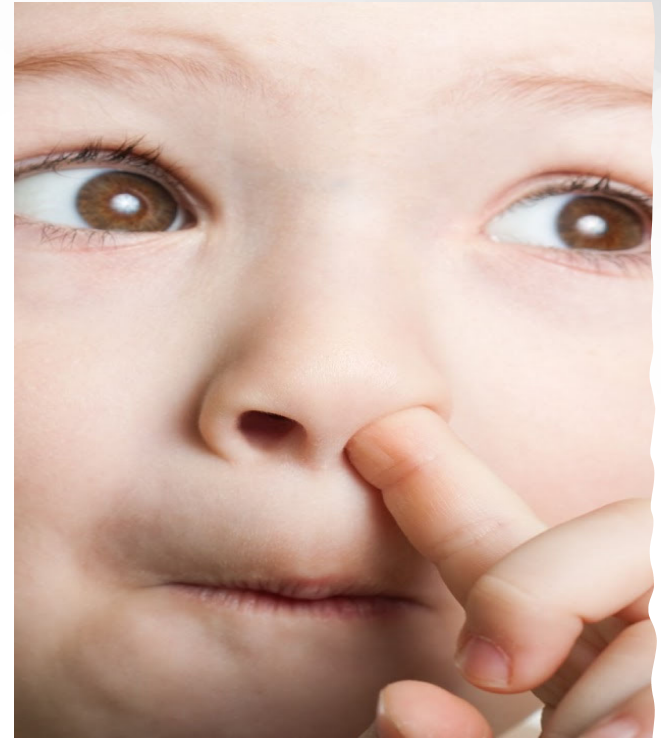
Allowing Bad Habits To Continue Will Guarantee A Project To Fail!

Just because someone has done it for years and got by with it- doesn't make it a best practice; it's a bad habit!

Some common bad habits in Project Management:

Allowing someone with a higher title to wrongfully influence the project status:

- Calling a Project green when it's clearly not.
- Saying because they are "Agile" they don't have to provide dates.
- Not using Project Management tools and processes: Risks/Mitigation Plans, Dependencies, Key Decisions, Next Steps/ Take Aways, Meeting Notes, Roles & Responsibilities.



Personal Case Study # 1- The “Keep It Green” Project- Because Her Bonus Was On The Line!

In a prior role, I was brought in to fix a Program that didn't deliver on time. This was a large program, well over \$20 million, and this company had a rule that a project couldn't go yellow or red without the VP's approval.

The Program was given a new delivery date but before we could call it green- I had to figure out what caused it to miss the prior delivery date. Here is what I uncovered:

- The blocker was a dependency to getting licensing and licensing couldn't be purchased until funding was received.
- The window for yearly funding had passed, so I did some research on how to submit a funding exception and provided this information to the VP.
- The VP refused to submit the funding exception, because she felt that would jeopardize her bonus. So, she insisted the project status remain “green” until her bonus was approved.
- The delay in requesting funding would result in another missed deadline. Since the Project couldn't meet the deadline, it should be moved to red status, but the VP refused to move the project out of green.
- Educating the VP wasn't working, she stated this is how she's always done it and flaunted her VP title.

The Solution: On my status updates, I showed we missed the Milestone dates and added a note- to ask the VP about the color status. If she wanted to allow the project to fail- she can take the accountability.



Personal Case Study # 2- “We Are Agile- We Don’t Give Dates!”

We’ve probably all had at least 1 Project where someone refuses to provide target dates- saying, “We don’t provide delivery dates- because we are Agile!” Sadly, I have seen this happen in 5 different fortune 100/500 companies. So, this must be a contagious bad habit. All these companies are hybrid and to manage their projects they must track delivery dates. Based on my observations, this is why some groups feel Agile means they don’t have to provide dates:

- They don’t know how to do the PM’s job; they just know they deliver work in Sprints.
- They don’t understand the impact to the Stakeholders and why the Stakeholders need to know a Timeline/Roadmap.
- They don’t understand how the dates drive the project health and budget.
- When a team learns “Bad Habits” they think that’s the way it’s supposed to happen and the longer they get by with it, the more right they think it is.

The Solution: This is an opportunity to use our skills and educate these teams. Develop kick off decks and overviews to help them understand the formal hybrid processes and what the right way looks like. In some cases, we will need to pull in our training teams and support them with additional training. The key to having a successful project is to know your team’s weaknesses and turn them into strengths! **You’ve GOT THIS and YOU ARE AMAZING!**



Personal Case Study #3- The “Don’t Waste Your Time” Program

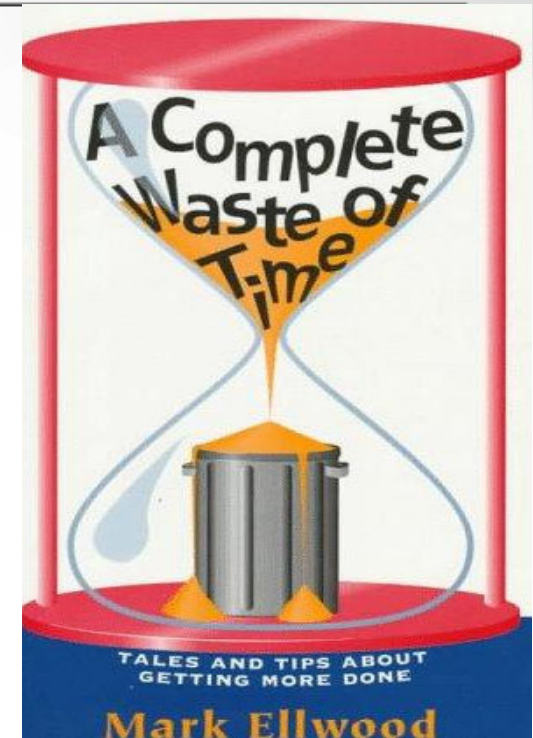
In a prior role, as a consultant, I was brought in to fix a \$25 Million Program that had failed two times and wasted 2 years without delivering what was asked.

Here is what went wrong:

- No central repository (SharePoint or Teams Page).
- No project planning documents: Project Charter, Project Plan, RACI, Status Updates, Key Decision Log, Mitigation Plan, Kick Off Deck, Timeline/Roadmap.
- No weekly status updates to inform the Stakeholders of the progress (or lack of progress), they just sent an email claiming to be green.

The Root Cause: Someone with a VP title, who didn’t understand Project Management, told them not to waste their time creating any of those documents.

The Solution: By following the Project Management Processes, I got the Project completed in 6 months



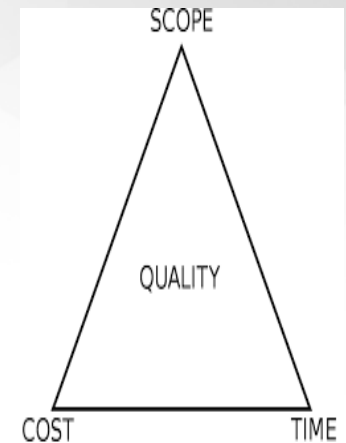
Personal Case Study # 5- “No Scope but call it Green”

Every certified Project Manager knows what drives the project status- the “Triangle: **Scope, Cost, Time/Schedule**. In this case study, there were numerous customer complaints that tied back to a specific functional area. This area was responsible for 90% of the post-production issues/ lessons learned. The operations management team asked for the scope, on several occasions, and were told, “We reviewed the scope with executive leadership, and they know what we are developing; it’s too complicated to share with everyone.” This project team reported out green and Operations assumed that meant all issues (fall out from the prior year’s implementation) would be resolved.

The Root Cause: The executives running this effort did not have formal project management training and they didn’t realize the importance of transparency on tracking the scope. They didn’t realize the scope was a critical step on measuring the project success. But, because they were reporting the status and calling it Green/ On Track, there was an assumption that all the issues would be resolved. After a deep dive, it was determined these developments would not resolve most of the issues and that transparency was not shared with the Operations management team-tracking the issues.

Solution:

1. Review the Issues/ Lessons Learned and document which issues will be resolved by this development work and which issues will not be resolved (during this project effort).
2. Build out a Roadmap showing when the other issues will be resolved (even if it’s a high-level target Roadmap).
3. Leave the project management (including the status updates) to the certified experts; or get certified- so your teams trust that you know the basics and follow best practices. If you are not implementing these formal best practices, you could be teaching bad habits; that will carry on to other projects.



If You Don't Want Your Projects To Fail- Just Remember...

- You are the Project/ Program Manager- that means “YOU” have the “Title” to run the show!
- As the Project/Program Manager, it is your responsibility to call out “bad habits” and introduce training and processes to teach the “best practices”!
- Just because someone has a fancy title, that doesn't mean they know how to do your job- so don't let them “un-do” everything you know!
- Be assertive and speak up and educate the “Title”! The “Title” may not openly say it, but they will respect you and if they don't- others will!
- If you are PMP certified; you took an oath of ethics and you don't want to risk losing your certification!
- **Keep Being AWESOME!!**

