



***Disaster Averted!***

**Avoiding Common  
Project Management Pitfalls -  
*A Guide for Super PMs***

PMIWDC - Reston Presentation

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# Overview

## ***This presentation will:***

- Identify common project management mistakes with the greatest impact to project success;
- Address root causes, indicators, and risks associated with these mistakes; and
- Identify multiple strategies to reduce project risk.

***In other words ...  
Will teach you how to be a  
Super PM!***

# #1: Scope Definition

## Mistake #1:

Failing to comprehensively define project scope early in the life cycle



## How to Save the Project!



- Develop a Project Scope Statement.
- Engage all stakeholders.
- Consider work products and activities.
- Don't forget a detailed WBS.
- Define SMART requirements for all scope components.

*"It's a Bird ... It's a Plane ... It's ... huh?"*

## #2: Acceptance Criteria Definition

### Mistake #2:

Failing to define unambiguous, comprehensive deliverable acceptance criteria.

Villain #2  
Ambiguous  
Expectations



*“I’ll know what I want when I see it.”*

## #2: Acceptance Criteria Definition

### Mistake #2:

Failing to define unambiguous, comprehensive deliverable acceptance criteria.



### How to Save the Project!

- Specify measurable criteria by which deliverable quality will be assessed and accepted.
- Do **NOT** assume that requirements = acceptance criteria.
- Consider the quality characteristics, quality metrics, and quality targets.
- Obtain consensus early.

# #3: Performance Planning, Monitoring, and Control

## Mistake #3:

Failing to explicitly define metrics to evaluate, report, and control project performance.

**Villain #3**  
Poor Project  
Performance  
Management

## How to Save the Project!

- Elicit feedback from senior executives.
- Define metrics for cost performance, schedule performance, and quality performance, at minimum.
- Specify metrics to ensure visibility into emerging project issues.
- Take corrective action as issues emerge.



## #4: PM Process Definition and Execution

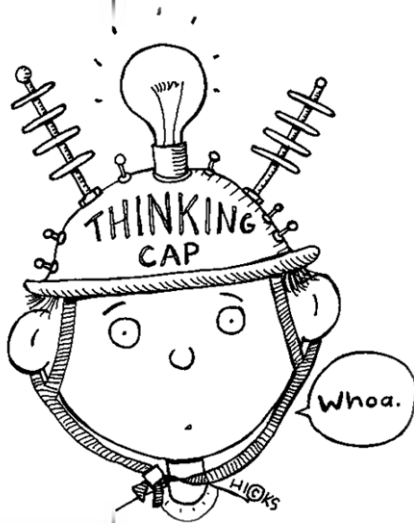
### Mistake #4:

Failing to define and execute value-added project management processes.

Villain #4  
Weak PM  
Processes

### How to Save the Project!

- THINK THROUGH the PM processes necessary to effectively execute, monitor, and control the project you're working on.
- Don't mindlessly copy project management plans or boilerplate template language.
- Avoid unnecessarily lengthy documentation. It's the DEFINITION that's most important.
- Institutionalize process execution.



## #5: Business Process Definition

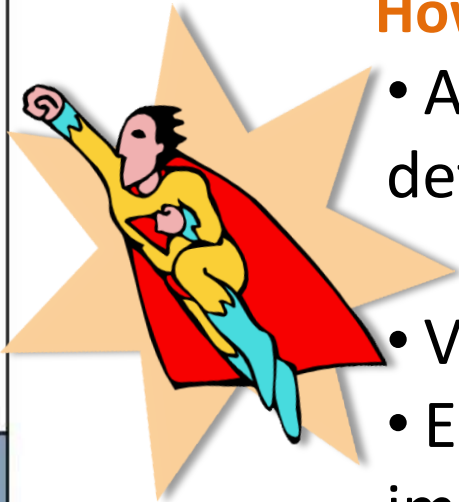
### Mistake #5:

Failing to thoroughly define current business processes as an input to requirements definition.

Villain #5  
Undefined  
Business  
Processes

### How to Save the Project!

- Assign experienced personnel to develop detailed and comprehensive business process diagrams and narratives.
- Verify business process definition.
- Ensure that requirements consider the implications of all business processes.



# #6: Schedule Definition

## Mistake #6:

Failing to develop comprehensive and feasible schedules.

## How to Save the Project!

- Face REALITY as early as possible!
- Include all project activities in schedule.
- Decompose, decompose, decompose!!
- Elicit input from all team members.
- Consider historical metrics in estimation.
- Adhere to schedule development best practices to properly identify and manage the CRITICAL PATH.



Villain #6  
Bad  
Schedules

# #7: Risk and Issue Management

## Mistake #7:

Failing to proactively and openly manage project risks and issues.



## How to Save the Project!

- Identify ALL known risks.
- Openly embrace risk and issue communication. Don't hide stuff!
- Involve all team members throughout the life cycle.
- Understand the difference between risks and issues.
- Routinely monitor the status of risk responses and corrective actions.

# #8: Stakeholder Engagement

## Mistake #8:

Failing to engage stakeholders throughout the life cycle.



# #8: Stakeholder Engagement

## Mistake #8:

Failing to engage stakeholders throughout the project.



Villain #8  
Insufficient  
Stakeholder  
Involvement

## How to Save the Project!

- Involve all critical stakeholders from the start.
- Identify and verify their needs.
- Show them work products as early as possible.
- Engage them in every phase.
- Involve them in final verification and acceptance.

# #9: Integrated Change Control

## Mistake #9:

Failing to define and execute integrated change control processes.



## How to Save the Project!

- Comprehensively identify change configuration items.
- Institutionalize strict control of project baselines.
- Engage all team members in change control.
- Thoroughly evaluate and communicate impacts of proposed changes before making decisions and enacting change.

# #10: Status Reporting

## Mistake #10:

Failing to provide senior executives with meaningful status reporting based on predefined project performance metrics.



Villain #10  
Unclear and  
Incomplete  
Reporting

# #10: Status Reporting

## **Mistake #10:**

**Failing to provide senior executives with meaningful status reporting based on predefined project performance metrics.**

## **How to Save the Project!**

- Provide summary-level project performance indicators for cost, schedule, and quality, at minimum.
- Ensure that performance indicators are based on clearly defined and understood metrics.
- Provide planned versus actual data. Anecdotal reporting is useless.
- Include risk and issue information.
- Be comprehensive. Don't hide stuff!

# Wrap Up

1. Clearly and comprehensively define project scope.
2. Define unambiguous and comprehensive deliverable acceptance criteria.
3. Define metrics to evaluate, report, and control project performance.
4. Define and execute value-added project management processes.
5. Define current business processes as an input to requirements definition.
6. Develop comprehensive and feasible schedules.
7. Proactively and openly manage project risks and issues.
8. Engage stakeholders throughout the project.
9. Define and execute change control processes.
10. Provide senior executives with meaningful status reporting based on predefined project performance metrics.

# Wrap Up

If you do all these things,  
together we will ....

***SAVE THE WORLD!!!***