



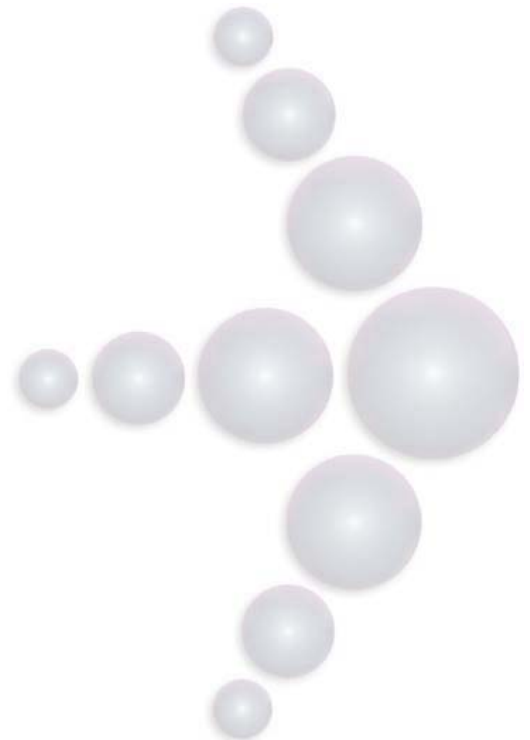
# Why Projects Fail

## Technical White Paper

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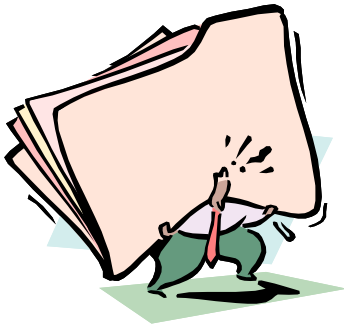


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## Why Projects Fail:

**“There does not seem to be enough time or enough budget to complete a software development project without reducing the scope and/or quality of the final product.”**

*Managing a project in most people's minds means to attend numerous meetings and pound away at the keyboard preparing Gant charts and project estimates*



### Overview of the issues

In today's high-tech society everyone wants things done faster and with the highest quality. Project managers are being given a handful of Popsicle sticks and told to build a bridge across the Grand Canyon in two weeks.

Managing a project in most people's minds means to attend numerous meetings and pound away at the keyboard preparing Gant charts and project estimates. Not to mention constantly explaining why they need more time, or more money in order to complete the project.

It is very common for a project to have about a 20% overrun and many IT managers account for this when they prepare their annual budgets. Why is it so difficult to estimate how long software development projects take? Are there really that many unknowns in the process that it is impossible to hit your goals?

### A dose of reality

Software development is a complex field. Programmers who are fast at cranking out code are generally lousy at testing what they wrote. Others are much more meticulous at what they do, but they take a greater amount of time to get their tasks done.

Often, one piece of code that is complicated and takes a while to complete becomes a bottleneck for the rest of the development team. Valuable time is lost unless the other team members can be used productively in the meantime.

It is very difficult to estimate how many bugs are going to be dealt with during development. What about those extra dialogs or screens that were not accounted for in the original project plan? Often during the development of the project, there are roadblocks and even large brick walls that get slammed into. It is impossible to account for all of this at the beginning of the project. Things like contingency and risk factors are often played with to try and account for such situations.



*Would it not be great if at the beginning of the project, the project team could help the project manager outline the entire scope of the project?*

What it comes down to is that the longer a project manager spends scoping out and “planning” a project, the less time can be spent by the developers actually building it. Mapping out the entire project in extreme detail so that the project manager always knows what needs to be done and who is working on what can be an arduous task. Not to mention a time-consuming one.

Would it not be great if at the beginning of the project, the project team could help the project manager outline the entire scope of the project? Each member could be given one aspect of the project and derive all the function points that are required for that piece of the puzzle. Because they are going to be performing the actual development, they have a great idea of where the potential roadblocks might arise. In hardly any time, the entire project is scoped out in detail and development can begin in the most efficient way possible. Estimates can be made with assistance from the developers, rather than the project manager simply guessing based on past experience.

### **A new era of project management tools**

In order for a plan like this to be successful, there needs to be a new class of tool that a project manager can use. This tool would allow for collaboration and communication at a level never realized before with the existing tools available.

*Although it sounds like a major shift in how project management is done, it is really not that bad.*



It must be simple to use and not overloaded with functionality that does not provide any benefit. It must be configurable to serve the specific purpose it is being used for and there must be varying levels of security to protect the information that is maintained by the tool.

To facilitate communication, the tool must allow the assignment of tasks to individuals and notify those individuals of the assignment.

The tool must allow for the association of an estimate value for each task so the developer can work within the limits and targets placed upon him/her. This allows each individual to report back to the project manager if they feel the estimate is unrealistic. It promotes discussion on how long the various tasks will take each developer.

Finally, the tool must provide flexible and dynamic reporting capability to allow for the organization and filtering of the list of work items.

### **The good news**

Although it sounds like a major shift in how project management is done, it is really not that bad. In fact, to some degree project managers are already trying to work in this way, but they are fighting because their tools will not allow it.

DKTek Software Corporation has developed a web-based application called **DKTrack**. This tool is most commonly used as an issue tracking system or a help desk application. What most people do not know is that it was designed to facilitate project management.



*Each member of the project team can be utilized to enter the original list of items before development starts and add an estimate for each one.*

The entire project team can be given access to the system. Items in the system can be function points, requirements, bugs or all of the above. It can be set up any way the project manager decides.

Each member of the project team can be utilized to enter the original list of items before development starts and add an estimate for each one. The project manager can categorize the items and assign items to individuals to begin work on. As work progresses on an item, any individual can amend information to the item to ensure that everyone is on the same page at all times.

The Quality Assurance team can be brought in right from the beginning and monitor the progress of the development. Since each item is a defined piece of work, it lends itself quite nicely to the QA team's testing process. They can test each item and amend their comments as well as their own QA Status code for each item.

Management can log in to the system at any time and view the outstanding items. They can see how many items are left to work on, which items are in QA and how many items have been returned to the developers and why they were returned. They can even view the progress of each developer to compare performance and quality.

Will using a project management tool like **DKTrack** guarantee the success of your project? The answer is no, but if a project does have a chance at being successful then

a product like **DKTrack** will ensure that a good project manager has all the capability he/she needs to keep the project team focused and on track. He/she will also be able to highlight any roadblocks or brick walls early in the development process so they do not cause havoc later on.

#### **One final word**

The most important factor that affects the success or failure of a project is communication. If the project manager is the only person who knows what is going on with the project, then there will be endless frustration with the perceptions that management and even the project team have regarding the status of the project. Keeping all interested parties on the same page will make the project run more smoothly and cause less stress for everyone.

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#### **Contact Us**

If you would like more information on DKTrack or any other product or service offered by DKTek Software Corporation, visit our website at [www.dktek.com](http://www.dktek.com) or call us at: (403) 703-9853.