



Project Roundtable

**“What Keeps Project Managers
Awake at Night?”**

**Presented by:
Graduate Students,
CMIS 540
Project Management Fundamentals
and Best Practices**

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Survey Research

Quantitative, closed-ended questions
 Qualitative, open-ended question
 217 survey respondents (49% response rate)

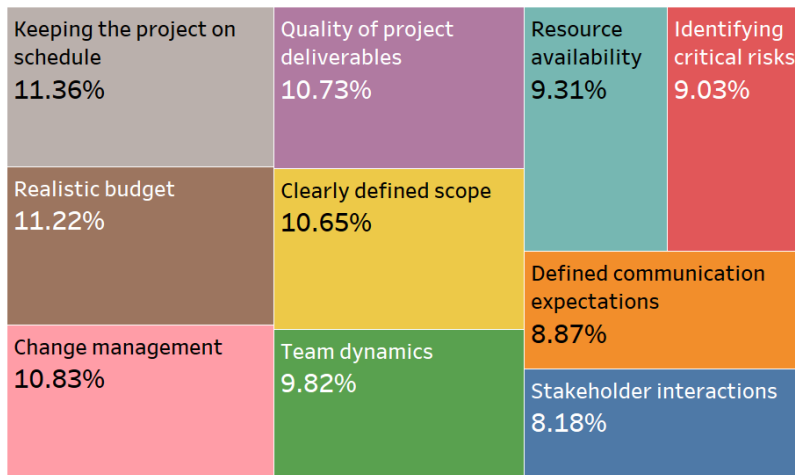


Survey results

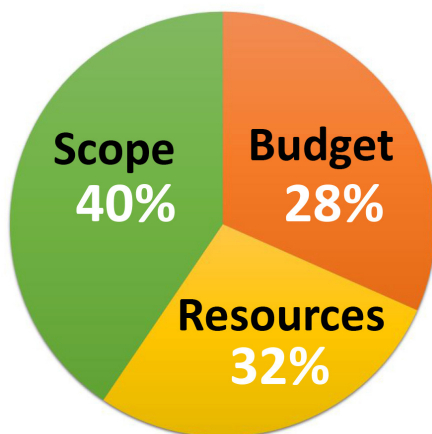
Closed-ended question: What is the most critical challenge?

Ranking 10 possible challenges

Each challenge was identified as the most critical by a meaningful percentage of the respondents

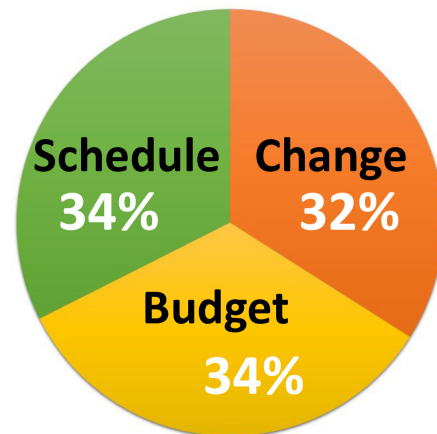


Top 3 critical challenges (overall)



Overall, respondents were focused on setting up the project, from a tactical perspective

Top 3 critical challenges (most experienced PMs)



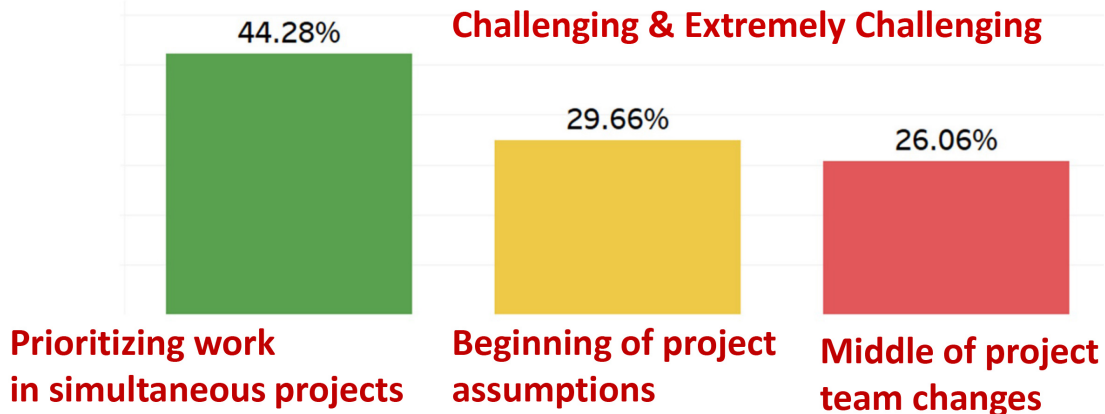
The most experienced among respondents were concerned with the triple constraint of the project, from a strategic perspective

Closed-ended question: What is hardest to manage?

Considering items on a scale from 1 to 5

(1: Not a challenge, 5: Extremely challenging)

Almost half of respondents view prioritizing work within and across projects as hardest to manage



Open-ended question: If you were queen/king for the day, what would you do or change in your organization to improve the life of projects and project managers?

Only one respondent would get the winning lottery ticket and head for the beach...

All other respondents want to stay in the game to fix the critical challenges of their projects

Ongoing revisions needed to:

- ✓ standard procedures
- ✓ mechanisms of communication

Increases needed in:

- ✓ resource availability
- ✓ stakeholder engagement

Realism needed for:

- ✓ setting deadlines
- ✓ handling budgets



Roundtable Discussion

Scenario 1

Tim has been managing a project for about a year.

He lobbied hard to get Stellar Stella to ensure an on-time, quality delivery. Now management is replacing Stellar Stella with Joe Junior. This is the third time Tim has had a key resource pulled on a project.

What can Tim do?

Twitter solutions

In regards to **resources**, Tim should:

- ✓ show grit and move on with the resources available
- ✓ understand the organization's resource priorities
- ✓ review impact, cost, and possible solutions
- ✓ identify transferrable skills and best practices
- ✓ facilitate knowledge transfer between resources
- ✓ assess if Stella could split time between projects

In regards to **risk**, Tim should:

- ✓ accept risk
- ✓ record resources as risk in projects in this organization
- ✓ stay on top/in front of risk
- ✓ communicate risk properly
- ✓ escalate to make business case for risk in losing resource
- ✓ use sponsor for pressure against change

Most innovative solutions:

In future projects, if someone of Stella's ability is needed, make it contractual

Start marketing campaign #hellawithoutStella

They moved Stella to Jenna's project which caused savings

Scenario 2

Jenna's team is six months into a multi-year, big dollar project.

With a better understanding of the next part of the project, the team has revised its estimates. Management does not entertain revisions to the budget and delivery date.

What can Jenna do?



Twitter solutions

In regards to the triple constraint, Jenna should:

- ✓ find out business reason for not entertaining scope change
- ✓ clearly communicate scope change to management
- ✓ adjust scope to meet original budget
- ✓ prioritize scope items
- ✓ shift or add resources
- ✓ modify project timeline

Most innovative solutions:

Be prepared to ask tough questions. Give honest feedback

Request Stella to provide mentorship

Scenario 3

“**Everyone** says we need **better** communication.

What does ‘better’ really mean?

As project manager, what can I do?”



Twitter solutions

To **identify communication needs and preferred channels**, you should:

- ✓ survey your team
- ✓ use agile and co-located project teams
- ✓ ask management and sponsors
- ✓ interview the stakeholders

To **improve communication**, you should:

- ✓ produce formal communication plan and be willing to adjust it
- ✓ know your audience
- ✓ get involved in active listening
- ✓ put together key messages and focus on proactive messages
- ✓ disseminate the same message across different mediums
- ✓ use creative means (group chat, yammer)
- ✓ have frequent short meetings
- ✓ have transparency

Most innovative solutions:

Quality, frequency, timeliness, medium, and audience matter for communication

Right content in the right format targeted to the right audience

Attend more PM training at SIUE!

Project Summary

For our CMIS 540 course, we sought to find out what keeps regional project managers awake at night.

Prior to the SIUE Project Management Symposium, we administered an online survey to registered participants (N=217, 49% response rate).

By asking participants to rank possible challenges, we found that:

- ✓ previously identified key concerns are also regional project managers' current concerns
- ✓ a realistic budget is a top concerns for everyone
- ✓ a change in concerns from a tactical to a strategic perspective comes with experience

By asking participants to scale issues from not challenging to extremely challenging, we found that project managers are most worried when:

- ✓ they juggle too many responsibilities
- ✓ they don't control circumstances related to projects

From participants' responses to an open ended question, we found that:

- ✓ regional project managers are serious about identifying tactics and strategies to fix project challenges
- ✓ for them, successful projects entail ongoing revisions, effective human engagement, and realism

During the SIUE Project Management Symposium, we showcased the survey data through a visual presentation, then we engaged participants in a connected social media activity. This crowdsourcing exercise allowed for real-world, practical solutions for dealing with project management challenges.

The Twitter activity reinforced survey results and also provided some additional insights. We found that regional project managers are preoccupied by:

- ✓ using resources wisely
- ✓ managing risk appropriately
- ✓ prioritizing project aspects effectively
- ✓ finding honest and innovative communication forms and means