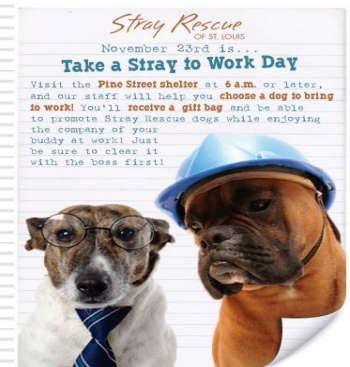# Projects: Stray Rescue

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Just the facts…

Many projects get in trouble and ultimately fail to provide the value for which they were initiated.

Bull Survey

- ☐ Bad Communications – 57%
- ☐ Lack of Planning – 39%
- ☐ Poor Quality Control – 35%
- ☐ Missing Interim Deliverables – 34%
- ☐ Poor Budget Management – 29%
- ☐ Poor Project Management – 20%

Facts about failure...
...or only statistics?

- **The Standish Group - The CHAOS Report**
- Incomplete Requirements 13.1%
- Lack of User Involvement 12.4%
- Lack of Resources 10.6%
- Unrealistic Expectations 9.9%
- Lack of Executive Support 9.3%
- Changing Requirements & Specifications 8.7%
- Lack of Planning 8.1%
- Didn't Need It Any Longer 7.5%
- Lack of IT Management 6.2%
- Technology Illiteracy 4.3%
- Other 9.9%

You only get one chance…

…to <u>rescue</u> a project

…and keep stakeholder buy-in….

The CHAOS Report also states the following:

- ☐ 31.1% of projects canceled before completion.

- ☐ 52.7% of projects cost 189% of their original estimates.

Steering clear of failure…
…and managing stray rescue

- ☐ How do you read the signs of a project heading for trouble?
- ☐ What is the first thing a PM should do?
- ☐ How do you rescue the project that is already on the slippery slope of trouble?

  - ■ Diagnose
  - ■ Plan or strategy
  - ■ Execution

- ☐ How does the PM continue to evaluate the success of the remedy choice?

Rescuing…

…the strays!

Four kinds of strays:

1. Those that need training.
   [Fix]
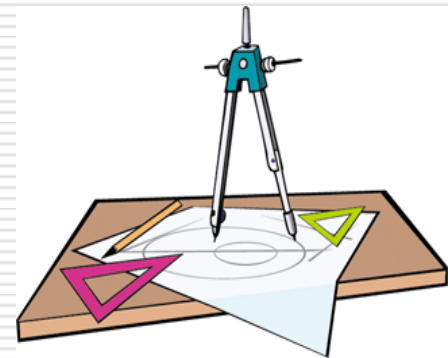2. Those that want it all, but need patience!
   [Divide]
3. Those that need to learn delayed gratification.
   [Defer, put on hold]
4. Those that need the "lay down" command.
   [End]

Rescuing the stray that needs training.
Fixing Failing Projects

Per the Executive Director, The Major Projects Association (MPA, UK)

Key Reasons Why Projects Fail

- ☐ Lack of clarity about what is to be achieved
- ☐ Too much complexity, too many interfaces
- ☐ Too much technological innovation
- ☐ Poor relationships and using the wrong kinds of contracts between those who contribute to the project

Practices Designed To Fix Failing Projects

□ Practice #1 – Guiding Vision:
- ■ Ensure a guiding vision for all team members

□ Practice #2 – Small, Dynamic Teams:
- ■ Enable interactions and adaptation through close relations and clear responsibilities

□ Practice #3 – Light Touch:
- ■ Loosen stifling control

Fixing Failing Projects…

Practices Designed To Fix Failing Projects

- ☐ Practice #4 – Simple Rules:
  - ■ Establish and refine the team's set of practices
- ☐ Practice #5 – Open Information:
  - ■ Enable interactions and adaptation through close relations and clear responsibilities
- ☐ Practice #6 – Vigilance:
  - ■ Continuously monitor and tune process structure

Fixing Failing Projects…

Mini-Case Study

☐ Practices Designed By A Project Manager Who:

- ■ Worked for a technology company in Virginia
- ■ Faced recovery of a large project of over 120 people spanning multiple locations and was behind schedule
- ■ Faced frustrated customers and dispirited developers
- ■ Implemented the practices to successfully fix his project
- ■ Firmly believes that the practices are equally applicable to all areas of project management in multiple industries; not just IT

Those strays that want it all, but need patience.
Dividing the project

Case Study 1

☐ Situation
- ■ Introduction to a new system tied to vendor product
- ■ $1.5 million for 14 months
- ■ Integration to core internal systems, multiple service providers & core vendor product

☐ Issues
- ■ Initial Budget and Timeline estimates were cut by management
- ■ Project approved with no final vendor contract
- ■ Business environment shifted causing changes that affected cost/timeline
- ■ Project team not fully staffed for four months – primarily with outside contractors

Dividing the project…

Case Study 1…continuation

☐ **Outcome**
- ■ Effort was divided in two key phases ($2.0 million & 21 months)
- ■ Required to track cost as two different buckets
- ■ Reporting on a multiphase project approach was implemented

☐ **Lessons Learned**
- ■ Risk of change increases with increase in duration of a project
- ■ Cutting budget and timeline requires reduction in scope
- ■ Define clear project metrics to track "divided" efforts

Case 1 – Tracking labor/cost burn rate by phases

Project Labor Cost Burn Rate
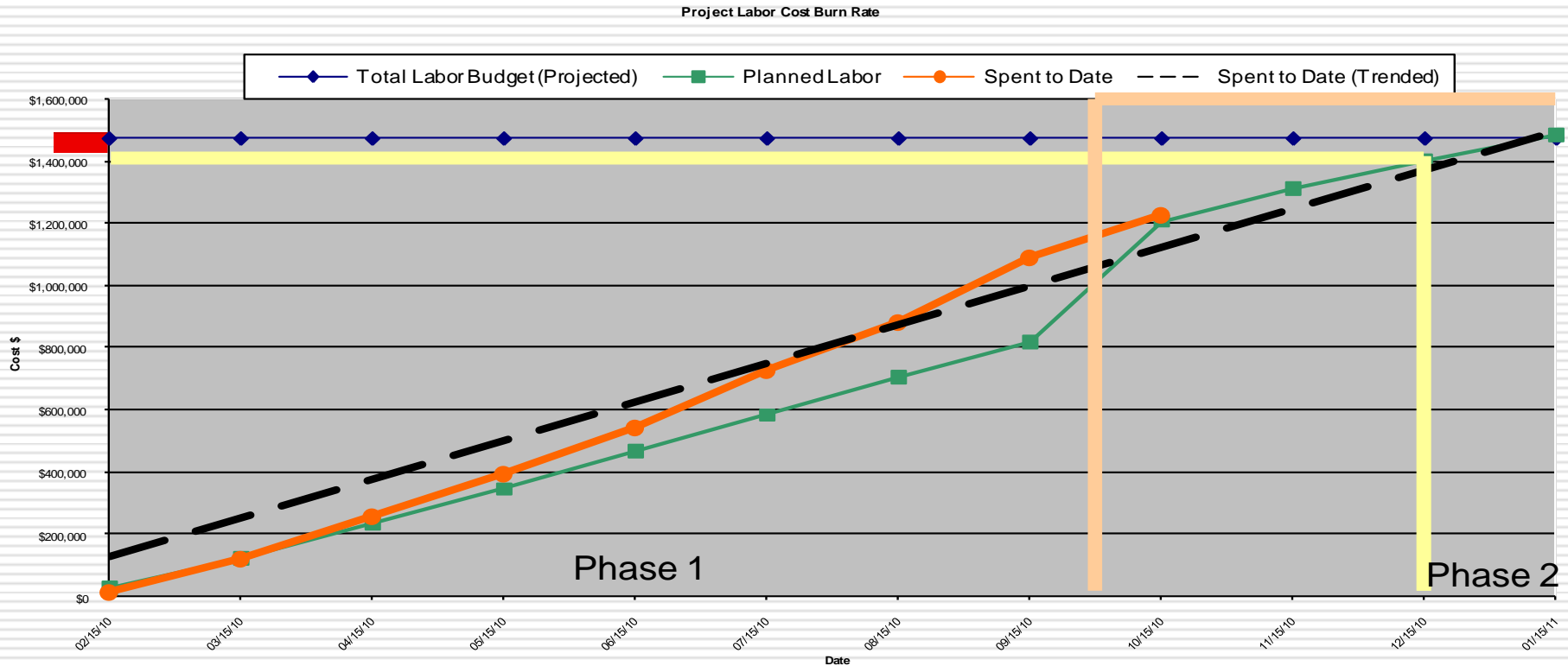
Project Phase Information

Phase Status		Cost Projected	Start Date	End Date	Requirements Gathered	PLC Phase	Notes
	Phase 1	$1,300,000	2/1/2008	12/30/2008	Level 3	Implementation	
	Phase 2	$700,000	10/1/2008	10/31/2008	Level 2	Design	
	Total	$2,000,000					

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Dividing the project…

Case 2

☐ Situation

- ■ Internal change of a complex system tied to 12 core business systems
- ■ Highly dependent on a large effort being executed at the same time
- ■ $1,200.000 for 8 months

☐ Issues

- ■ Project was not fully staffed for four months. Resources constantly re-shuffle
- ■ Changes of dependent core systems constantly moving on scope, dates and technological platform
- ■ Pressure to provide new timelines without full understanding of the requirements

Dividing the project…

Case 2..continuation

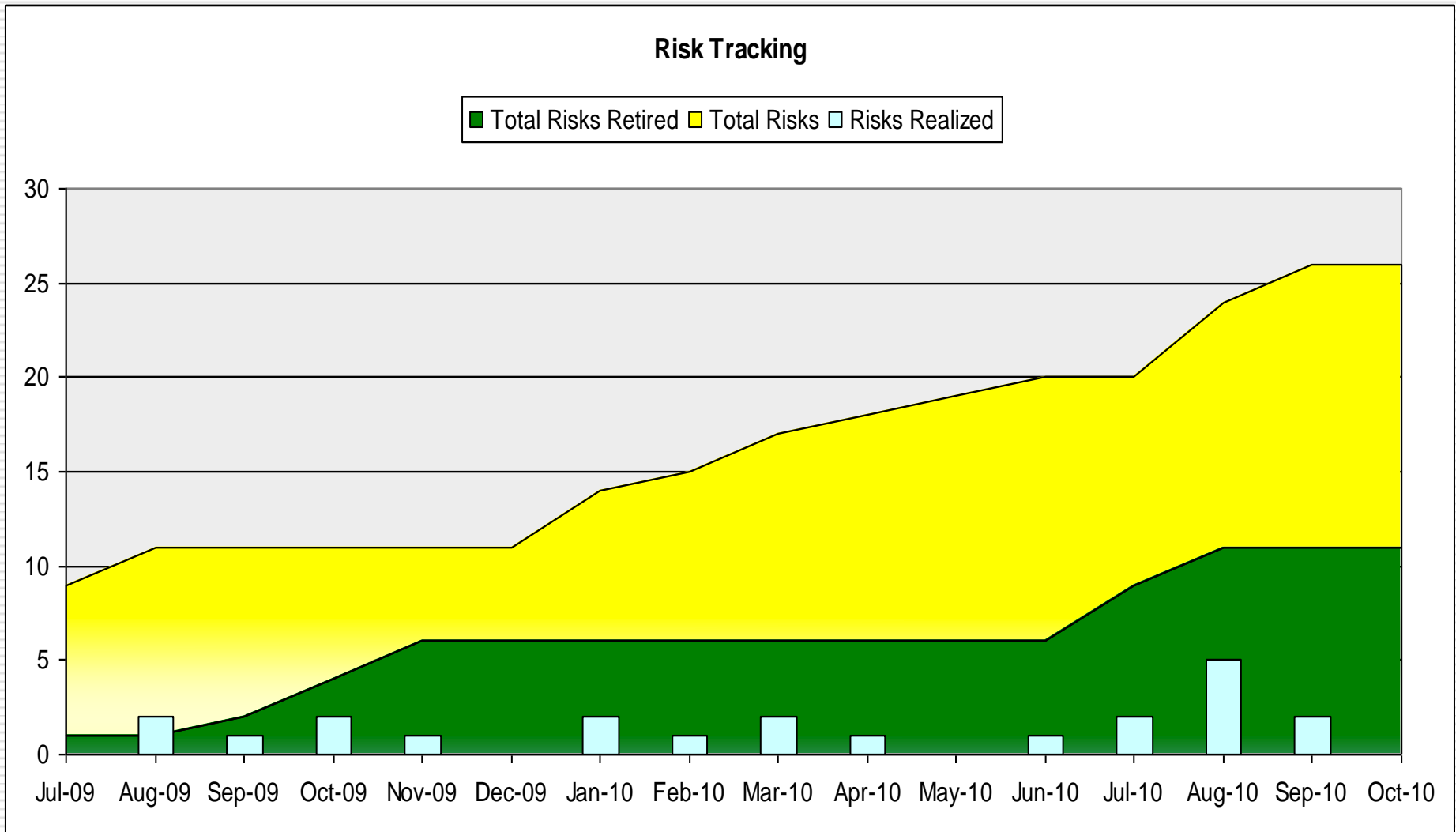- ☐ Outcome
  - Effort was divided in two key phases ($900,00 and $300,00)
  - Redesign on core architecture component
  - Clear escalation process for resources changes
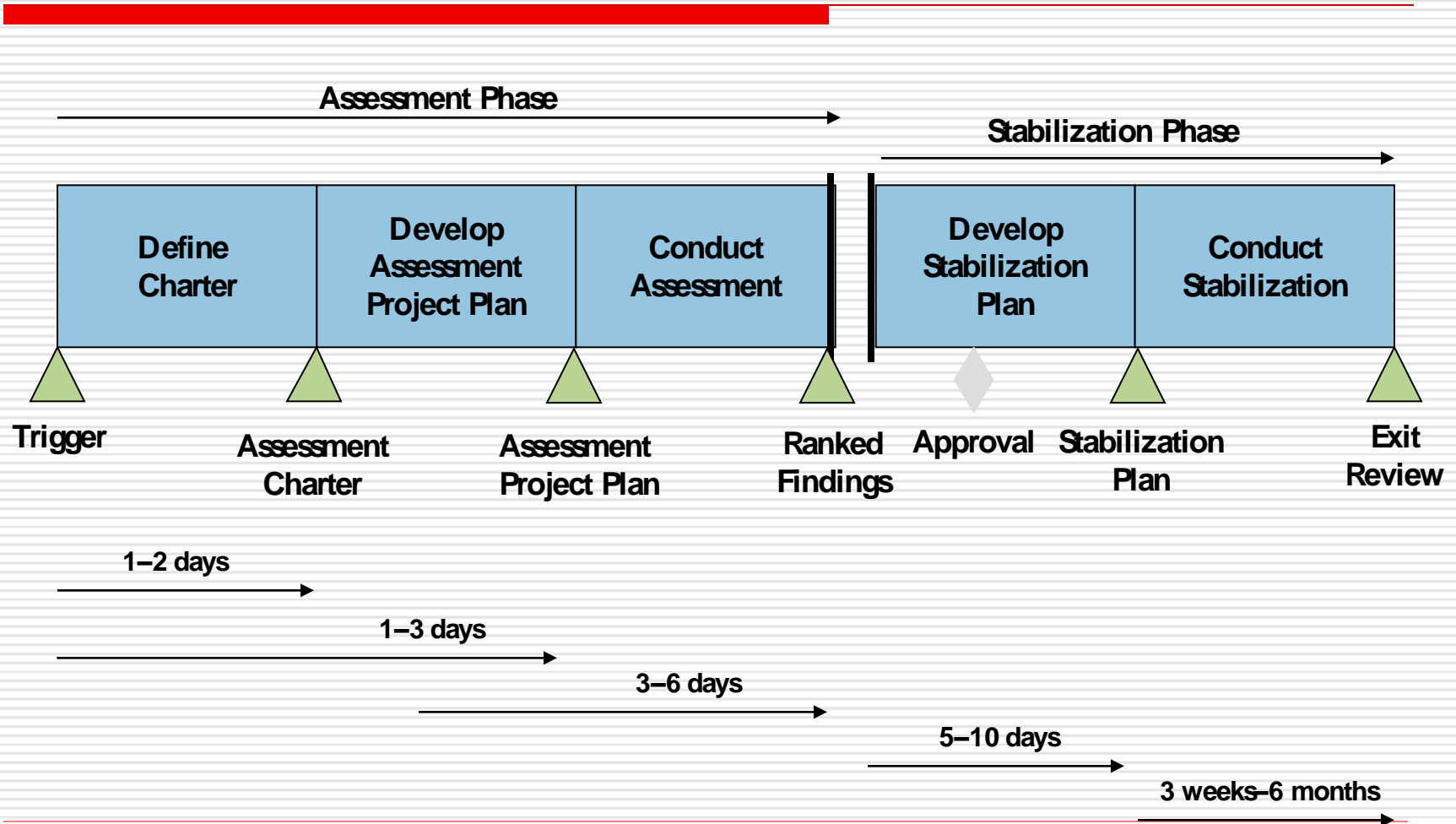 - Inventory of cost & timeline by single components

- ☐ Lessons Learned
  - Think outside the box to accommodate changes
  - Risk of change increases with increase in duration of a project
  - Establish a clear path of escalation
  - Help leaders understand the discipline of project management

Case 2 – Risk tracking

Risk Tracking

Legend: Total Risks Retired, Total Risks, Risks Realized

Some projects need a complete overhaul instead of being divided.
Example:

Assessment Phase

Stabilization Phase

Define Charter	Develop Assessment Project Plan	Conduct Assessment	Develop Stabilization Plan	Conduct Stabilization

Trigger

Assessment Charter

Assessment Project Plan

Ranked Findings

Approval

Stabilization Plan

Exit Review

1–2 days

1–3 days

3–6 days

5–10 days

3 weeks–6 months

Those strays that need to learn delayed gratification.
Putting a project on hold, or delaying a project

- ☐ Situation
  - ■ Systems integration of a global acquisition with similar business
  - ■ $10M IT integration project over 12 month period
  - ■ Company restructuring and significant business process change during project
- ☐ Issues
  - ■ Initial budget and timeline not realistic
  - ■ Business changes caused distraction that affected timeline
  - ■ Lack of role clarity in the organization contributed to delay
  - ■ Agreement on common business processes difficult
- ☐ Outcome
  - ■ Implementation deferred by several months
  - ■ Non-critical scope deferred to post implementation
- ☐ Lessons Learned
  - ■ Measure twice, cut once (planning)
  - ■ Do not underestimate cultural differences

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Putting a project on hold, or delaying a project sometimes are not options.
You have to rescue the stray...literally!

- ☐ Situation
  - ■ Hurricane Katrina hits near key manufacturing facility
  - ■ Backup systems exist, city infrastructure out
  - ■ Transportation and communication as we know it - GONE
- ☐ Actions
  - ■ We have a project - NOW
  - ■ Communication methods re-established
  - ■ All business functions come together, focus on people
- ☐ Outcome
  - ■ Solutions for recovery of business and tracking of people that can be re-used
- ☐ Lessons Learned
  - ■ People ARE our most important asset
  - ■ Creativity during a crisis
  - ■ Manage what you can't control

Those that need the "lay down" command!
Ending a project, or delaying indefinitely.

The Project Situation:

- ☐ Requirements tend to remain vague
- ☐ Funding is tentative
- ☐ Sponsorship is weak, but ending the project is not an option
- ☐ Priority is relatively low
- ☐ Resources are in high demand/short supply

Ending a project…

So…

- ☐ It's not working
- ☐ You feel like you're trying to stick Jell-O on the wall
- ☐ Your team is unhappy
- ☐ Resources continue to be consumed with no tangible result

In reality this is about recognizing that not all projects can or should be rescued.

…or delaying indefinitely…

- ☐ Put it on ice

- ☐ Mothball it

- ☐ Put it on the shelf

- ☐ Lock it in the closet

- ☐ Delay it until it's achievable

Ending a project…

…or delaying indefinitely…

It Still Needs Attention!

- ☐ Capture all of the project artifacts
- ☐ Perform the lessons learned evaluation
- ☐ Develop a review cycle, criteria and a reactivation approach
- ☐ Set a termination date
- ☐ Get approval
- ☐ Release your team/assets

Back at the shelter...
...experience from the streets...

☐ A major cause of a stray is the failure of the PM to recognize the need for recovering from low morale, distrust, stress, and conflicts.

☐ The troubled project itself is recognized by the failure to meet business objectives and expectations.

☐ Get out the big net when you see:
- ■ No sponsor.
- ■ No link to the business strategy.
- ■ One size fits all methodology.
- ■ No solid requirements.
- ■ No metrics to measure project stability.
- ■ Too much or too little change control or issue management (including escalation procedures).
- ■ No risk planning.
- ■ Poor communication.
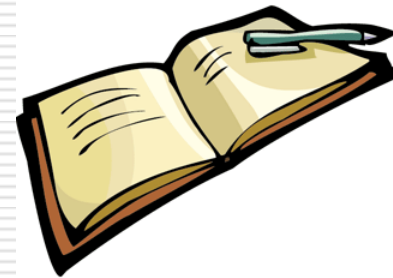
You see it…
…and take action!

To rescue a project that has gone wild, there are four basic measures to take:

- ☐ Investigate and diagnose the current situation (documentation reviews, interviews with stakeholders)
- ☐ Re-plan the project (check project objectives, priorities, and risks, and insure the team is focused)
- ☐ Reset everyone's expectations-team and stakeholders (be direct, honest, candid, and have 100% buy-in)
- ☐ Aim to deliver per the new plan! (walk the talk, be positive, and realistic)

Project recovery is very simply about managing the quadruple constraints of time, cost, scope, and the fourth constraint, quality.

Project Managers…
…and successful projects!

A Project is considered a success when one is completed ahead of schedule or on time, within budget, which has been executed safely and has met or exceeded the many project performance parameters in technical, safety, quality, plant capacity, features, product specification, and in commercial sense or parameters from major stakeholders; and where the client is happy with what he has been given to the extent one can expect repeat order from the client; and other stakeholders share the success to the extent the project team is looking forward to working together as a team in an upcoming project. [H. Hendarto]

Project Management Professional
Recovery Project Manager

- ☐ PMI has a rigorous process for the successful management of projects, but it does not guarantee success.

- ☐ No one wants association or to go on records for a project failure, but would be highly regarded as one who successfully rescues troubled projects!

- ☐ What works in one case may not work in another, but the solution is thinking outside the box, and the solution is an experienced PMP who can work with people and do just that!

Will you accept the challenge on the next stray rescue needed in your business?

Resources

1. http://www.projectsmart.co.uk/rescue-and-recovery.html
2. http://www.pmhut.com/project-failure-statistics-and-facts
3. http://www.maxwideman.com/musings/fixing.htm