

Fifty years IT experience – Why do so many projects still fail?

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Abstract

“What we learn from lessons learned is that we don't learn from lessons learned”

- Block T. (1998) -

This report tries to argue that this statement will no longer be true for software related projects. Admittedly, the software industry has become one of the most troublesome technologies in the world, although it has already had about fifty years to mature. Unfortunately this shortcoming is nowadays effecting more and more people, because software is part of nearly every technical device such as video recorders, mobile handsets, dishwashers and so on. Our technological society is more and more dependent on that intangible asset – could you possibly imagine booking flights or executing stock exchange transactions without computerised systems?

To fulfil the above mentioned, admittedly ambitious goal, this report investigates the most frequent reasons of failure and success, using related surveys, academic research by key people in this field as well as information sources, which are focused on practical daily business issues - such as the Internet and press articles. These different view points are discussed, compared, structured and coupled with my own experience. One of the most interesting findings at this point is, that failed and successful projects seem to follow a similar pattern.

Based on that observed phenomenon, an important outcome of this research will be a compilation of the most important factors that contribute to either project failure or success. The report concludes with the inclusion of some established models to maximise the probability of successful projects from a long term and strategic point of view.

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Target Audience
The main purpose of this report is to fulfil the requirements of my studies at the University of Derby. However, the emphasis was to create a workable collection of recommendations, which could be used as a “survival guide” for project managers and other persons, who have to deal with software related projects. No special problem domain knowledge is required to read this report.

How to read this report

This report is divided into 5 chapters including three main chapters and two surrounding chapters. Each chapter starts with the issues, which will be addressed and ends with a list of key points and further recommended reading. Special acronyms are highlighted using angular brackets, blue colour text and small caps (e.g. [GLOSSARY ITEM]) and are explained in the glossary section at the end of this report. Citation and referencing is performed in full compliance with the *Harvard Citation Guide (1998)*. Directly used and referenced material is listed in the bibliography section at the end of the report; additional supporting background material is listed in the section “further reading” at the end of each chapter.

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