

# Why projects fail and what to do

Not a cheat sheet, but close

# Project failure top-10 list

1. **Poor Communication.** It usually starts with a half-done specifications document, and more time is needed to identify the pitfalls.
2. **Lack of Clear Objectives.** Project manager: Deliver top-12 tasks as fast as possible. Customer: Deliver whatever features, but roll out in 20 countries in three days.

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3. **Inadequate Planning.** GANTT: Everything is nicely linked to the next activity. Me: Endless planning shuffle.
4. **Lack of Stakeholder Involvement.** Manager: I don't have time to participate every second week. Me: Red flag

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5. **Insufficient Resources.** Customer: Please build this battleship. We have \$100.
6. **Ineffective Project Management.** Don't try to be service-minded. It may create the opposite of what you strive for. Be the grumpy project realist.

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7. **Scope Creep and Feature Creep.** Some people think their job is to add seven new ideas in every meeting.
8. **Technical Challenges.** Innovation is risky, and sometimes the risk wins. Prepare for it.

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9. **Poor Quality Assurance.** You may need 1 in QA for every 3 developers. There's a limit to how fast a person can do proper testing.
10. **Resistance to Change.** We all want change. Nobody wants to change. That's why you can't change people, but you can change people.

*A few tricks*

Ask five people in the project about what they see as easy tasks, difficult ones, and risk factors.

Ask them if they think it will be delivered on time and in quality.  
Ask them about success criteria.

There are three outcomes: They are all positive. They are negative.  
They have different opinions.



During the project, ask for a test report from a previous sprint (if you use agile).

Read it, try to backtrack test cases to requirements, and see if you can verify that a task is actually done and in expected quality.

This is often a scary exercise.

Ask the team for a great Friday evening to plan the release party.

Check if they buy into a release party or prefer a later day for the event.

Your turn. Share your tricks.