

Strategies for Successful Projects – An IT Executive View:

In late 2004 and early 2005, Glenn Briskin met with over 30 senior IT and business executives from state government and the vendor community to learn their views on what makes IT projects successful. This table presents the results. Each executive's success factors are noted and grouped to show both the common concepts and individual perspectives.

Key Concepts	Success Factors
Committed Effective Sponsorship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get a sponsor with commitment and a good understanding of her role to strongly and consistently convey focused, clear, and reasonable expectations. 2. Executive support can overcome resistance to change, resolve problems, balance the constraints, allow flexibility, and maintain focus on quality results. A sponsor with credibility and strength can work through roadblocks to keep the project moving. The sponsor can move the definition of success within reach. 3. Get and maintain visible and positive executive support. 4. Get executive sponsorship from a project resource provider who understands resource needs and gives full support. 5. Seek to span administrations if a change is likely by getting appropriate and broad executive support. 6. Get executive sponsorship to create a sense of agency ownership of the project and to clarify the roles of top management. 7. Assure executive sponsors understand how they can help the project.
Users and Stakeholders Who Own the Outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an extended team of users and help them understand how they are part of and important to the project 2. Involve the business by getting their attention, time, and support. Understand who all the stakeholders are, their interests and needs, and their turf. 3. The business needs to champion the project, its reason, and the change it represents. 4. The business needs to understand and believe in the project's benefits to give real support. 5. Get the business to view IT as part of service delivery, not as just a service to delivery. 6. Think deeply with users to understand the impacts of the project on the business. 7. IT should first learn from the users, not try to educate them.

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Clear Vision, Business Case, Objectives and Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a strong business case and secure stakeholder support 2. Scope control comes from clarity of vision. 3. Set expectations in a balanced way – set them too high and you will miss them; too low and you won't get support. 4. Understand why before how – vision before details. 5. State and confirm assumptions early and often. 6. Develop a clear definition of the problem to be solved. 7. Be deliberate and realistic in planning – avoid the rush to details and delivery. 8. Balance priorities by understanding the realistic level of effort available to the project from the agency. 9. Try to get good estimates. Define the details on what you are doing and apply the experience needed to get realistic estimates. 10. Define a successful outcome in terms of clear prioritized objectives and levels of achievement. 11. Develop a good feasibility study and estimate; include the cost of organizational change. 12. Define success up front through clear business objectives and priorities. 13. Identify the components of success.
Actively Managed Scope, Schedule, and Budget	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create the foundation for tight scope management with well defined scope and requirements 2. Develop requirements incrementally but quickly 3. Don't shortcut requirements as an excuse to get going. 4. Formalize agreements (sign-off) on scope, design, and quality once agreements are truly reached. 5. Plan small but real steps early to bring out a vision and build momentum. 6. Balance quick wins with creation of a sustainable infrastructure. 7. Establish milestones and go/no go points. 8. Set realistic and well defined milestones to confirm progress and full completion of deliverables.
Flexibility to Deal with Reality and Learn as you Go	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide for at least a 25% schedule and budget contingency 2. Define success in a way that allows the flexibility to adapt to reality. 3. Accept that not every step will go well, and find success in what you have learned. 4. Plan on new insights along the way and allow for time to deal with/use them. 5. Build in capability to learn, adjust, and innovate to meet business objectives. 6. Include adequate budget contingency.

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Be more flexible on time than on budget – take the time to find a way to deliver on budget. 8. Get results and feedback early and often. 9. Keep your approach as simple as possible and add only as much complexity as you learn you need.
<p>Strong Project Managers, PM Practices, and PM Culture</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strong project management culture through good tools, processes, and a supportive environment. 2. Use appropriately qualified and experienced project managers. 3. Adopt key concepts like Plan – Do – Review and other easy to remember guidance to establish a common language and encourage team discipline. 4. Promote best practices and tools – but stay flexible enough for people to adapt them to what works for them. 5. Good management is the most important thing. 6. Establish clear roles and responsibilities. 7. Projects require execution discipline – the ability to stay focused on what has to be done and drive to completion. 8. The PM must have confidence and provide leadership. 9. Build a strong team based on collaboration. 10. Skilled project management with a willingness to be hands on. 11. Have a PM with strong interpersonal skills. 12. Seek objective information to measure status, progress, probability of risks. 13. Use automated tools for risk, issue, and change management. 14. Use standard PM tools to get good information on the project. 15. Establish good PM discipline – routine communications, meetings, and culture of information sharing. 16. Create project structure, guidance to team, avoid surprises, develop solid plans, and define clear roles and responsibilities. 17. Get the agency to recognize the importance of project management. 18. Create a Project Management Office 19. Get everyone on the team to see their role in PM. 20. Capture lessons learned and apply them to subsequent projects. 21. Gather and use lessons learned as you go. 22. Detailed, deliverables based work breakdown structure.
<p>Proactive Risk Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anticipate what can go wrong early and often 2. Identify show stoppers up front. 3. Be proactive in risk management. 4. Surface constraints and skepticism early in the project. 5. Do effective risk management by encouraging input from all. 6. Build risk mitigation plans and think of both positive and

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	<p>negative risks and how to take advantage of both.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Avoid assumptions, or, once stated, turn them into facts. 8. Get all involved in honest and thoughtful risk management. 9. Apply technology appropriately – use proven solutions vs. leading edge. 10. Consider the complexity of new systems – they are more complex than they used to be.
<p>Open, Trusted, And Regular Communications With All Parties</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning together and communicating openly builds trusted relationships 2. Promote strong informal communications through good relationships, caring, listening, and fun. 3. Drive out fear. 4. Understand the communications required to support effective change management. 5. Move information to all through regular meetings, communications, and honest updates. 6. Communications – develop a good communications plan to openly surface and address issues and keep everyone appropriately informed. 7. Establish good PM discipline through routine communications, meetings, and a culture of information sharing. 8. Make decisions based truth. Communicate the truth. Make a safe environment for people to speak what they truly see and feel. 9. Balance expression of concerns with positive outlook on results. The PM must be a positive influence. 10. Communicate and collaborate among all stakeholder groups affected to understand how everyone sees and supports the project. Expose turf. Be sure you have understanding and support. 11. Develop a team with problem solving skills.
<p>Procuring Help - Build A Trusted Vendor Relationship</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a trusted, Win-Win relationship with your vendor 2. Have the vendor work on site to create a real team. 3. When using vendors, develop an integrated project plan. 4. Create a win-win contract. 5. Apply due diligence as some vendors will bid on anything. 6. Build flexible and clear relationships with vendor partners. 7. Don't create a situation where your vendor can only make a profit via change orders. 8. Build a trusted relationship to form a basis for innovation and flexibility.

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