10 tips for meeting IT project deadlines

This information is based on the article ["Take proactive measures with these ten tips for meeting IT project deadlines."*](...)*

Erratic and poorly estimated timelines, scope creep, unexpected staff illnesses, and supplier failures are just a few of the things that could (and probably will) go wrong with your project. And because time is today the most common metric to measure efficiency, the schedule delays caused by these events can end up costing you a fair amount of money (in addition to a possible damaged reputation). Here are some tips to help you plan your next project and ensure that it comes in on time, under budget, and at a high quality level.

1   Analyze the requirements in detail

Understand exactly what the project involves, down to the smallest details. Ask questions to clarify ambiguous areas. Finally, hire professionals to clearly document the business requirements, the functional specification, and the design requirements. Watch out for scope creep; it can single-handedly destroy all the work you've done. If the need arises, take aggressive steps to reduce the scope of the project or to avoid adding unplanned new features that require significant integration time.

2   Map available resources

Map available resources with requirements to ensure that there are enough personnel on site to complete the job. Identify all relevant infrastructure—hardware, software, human resources, tools, documents—required to execute the project well before the project development starts.

3   Perform training and knowledge transfer

Include training, if any, as part of the project timeline. Don't treat training as something team members do on their own time, but account for it in the project schedule and budget.

4   Identify risks

Identify the potential risks and create contingency plans to deal with them. Develop a backup plan to meet the project deadline in case of unexpected process or personnel failures. This "plan B" acts are your support system when things don't go as expected.

5   Estimate and allocate

Assign roles and responsibilities to team members and ensure that each task has a clear owner. Use project management tools and Gantt charts to record who does what and identify start and end dates for each activity. Failure to assign clear responsibilities for each task can lead to overlapping responsibilities, duplication of efforts, excessive time spent on activities, and inferior product quality.

6   Modularize work

Break down main activities into sub-activities, until each activity is complete on its own and independent of other activities. Arrange them in logical order and then start executing the smallest activity in the order of occurrence.

7   Avoid too many meetings

Plan meetings to discuss the status of the project or on an as-needed basis to address immediate problems. Long, unending meetings with no clear agenda and hence no clear outcome only waste time.

8   Write things down

Document the failures and successes of the project. This is important; it acts as historical information for similar activities in other projects. Use a project dashboard to obtain a visual, high-level overview of the project and to measure the progress of project activities. Take stock of the project at each milestone and update the project dashboard each time.

9   Beware of follow-the-sun development

If there is a follow-the-sun development model (a continuous engineering environment with development happening 24/7 across the globe), ensure clear communications to avoid misunderstanding between co-located or cross-country-located team members. Coordinate well and regularly so that nothing falls through the cracks.

10   Escalate issues

Escalate issues to management as they occur and brainstorm on solutions to problems. Trying to remedy problems after they've deteriorated beyond recovery is the last thing you need.

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