

White Paper on the Road to Improving Effectiveness by Overcoming Overload



Overcoming Failing Project.

When leading projects I have model. The only project leader I know of who finished a major project in 90 days, on time on budget while being attacked by many enemies from many fronts. You can read his story in the book of Nehemiah. Yes this visionary, passionate leader is model to all of us who lead or take part in today's project oriented world. Reading this historical record challenge us to ask:

- ***Why is it that as much as 75% of projects do not successes in delivering their expected results?***
- ***Why is it that the rest are not completed on time and/or on budget?***

Some one said all projects would be fine if it was not for people. Yes, I guess we are all imperfect people so we should not expect perfect projects. At the same time most of us are given adequate intelligence to avoid most of the obvious pitfalls that lead to failing projects. This paper is written to help individuals understand the key elements that lead to project success. In so doing we hope it will help you see how you can make positive contributions and avoid some of the frustrations, conflicts and disappointments that lead to project failures.

Being successful in projects require a different mind set from that we exercise in the daily routine of life and our day to day operational roles. Unlike the operational roles where we leverage routine and predictability, change is the driving force on the project stage. Those of us on the project stage look for change and anticipate the impact it brings. Change is inevitable and those who thrive on the project stage see beyond its conflicts and the stress it brings. On the project stage we play specific roles based on **project plans and expected deliverables**. Those who play the role of project managers or leaders have a great responsibility to use project resources in a manner that brings maximum expected benefits.

Note:

* This whitepaper is extracted from our book Overloaded? From overload to balanced living. See inside the book at www.amazon.com and search by author's name.



[Baha & Margaret
Habashy](#)

Integrity⁺
consulting[®]

When invited to join a project team most of us make the first fatal mistake. We ignore defining our roles. This is the biggest mistake project leaders make and you should not fall into it. Being part of a well runs project is like being on a stage performing a drama or a play. Ensuring your ability to deliver maximum value on the project stage hinges on clearly defining your roles and fitting them into the project process. Delivering maximum value on the project stage is directly impacted by your ability to negotiate the role that best suits you as a member of the project team.

Some of the roles you play on the project stage include that of:

- **Project Authority** who is able to arbitrate conflicting priorities and ensure the availability of needed funds and resources
- **Resource** who contributes knowledge, competencies, or experience to the project team
- **Advisor** who provides answers to critical questions
- **Champion** who is able to rally for the support of, or to sell new ideas needed for project success
- **Planner** who has the skills needed to articulate realistic tasks and milestones
- **Manager** who ensures the proper execution of needed tasks at the appropriate time

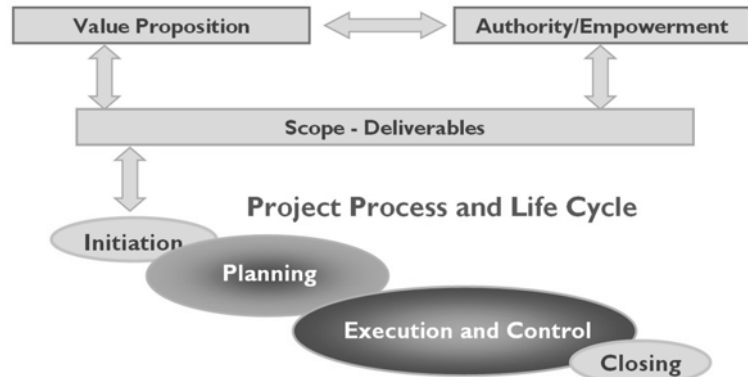
A key contributor to project failures is the assignment of the project roles. For project teams to fulfill their high value roles those leading the project must ensure the optimum mix of:

- **Soft skills** to envision alternatives or sell tough ideas
- **Technical competencies** or experience or academic credentials
- **Decision-making** with reasonable measures of **authority**
- **Time** to fulfill the expected role.

One very common mistake project leaders make is to define project roles based on titles or organizational structures. We believe that the only impact organizational structures should play in selecting a project team is in the point of providing the authority needed to make tough choices. Even this should be kept to the minimum.

The Project Effectiveness Framework™

Projects require the participation of committed individuals with clearly defined roles. Your ability to fulfill such a role on the project stage depends on the presence of **key project success factors** illustrated in what we call **The Project Effectiveness Framework™**:



Project Effectiveness Framework™

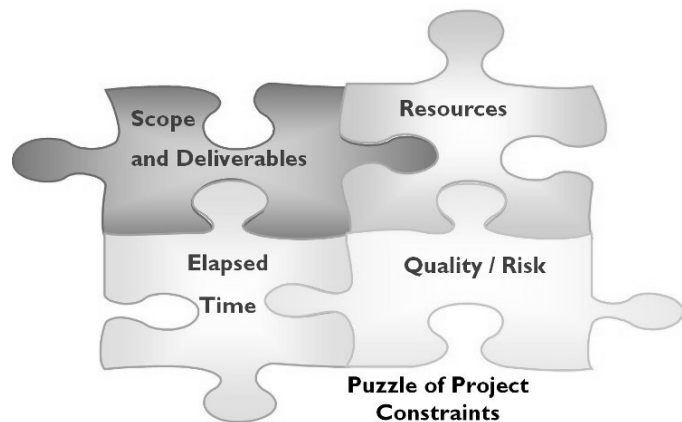
- **High project value:** Too many projects are started without clearly articulated benefit statements. A benefit statement responds to one simple question, **“Why should we do this?”** Benefit statements clearly define the expected changes and outcome of a project. Benefit statements reflect the tangible and non-tangible benefits that will result from investing efforts and resources in the stated project. Benefit statements serve to mobilize and recruit appropriate players and project participants.
- **Responsible Project Authority:** The Project Authority is the person who has the responsibility of funding the project. Very often it is the person who has the vision to see the high level benefits of the project or who is most likely to receive most of the project benefits.
- **Project scope and deliverables:** Regretfully, far too often we see clients starting a project without a clear definition or agreement on scope, deliverables, or expected outcomes. A clearly articulated scope should highlight what is included and what is excluded from the project considerations. A list of key deliverables must be documented and have the approval of the Project Authority. Any changes to the project scope must be well controlled.
- **Initiation:** The project process starts with the project initiation. The initiation is the clear documentation and communication of the **project value, authority, scope, and deliverables**. Some leading project thinkers suggest that a project does not exist until the initiation is completed or almost concluded with release of what is called the project charter. **The project charter** is a high level document that answers key questions:
 1. What do you call this project and who are its key sponsors?
 2. What is this project all about?
 3. What are the project business drivers and how do they impact key stakeholders?
 4. What is the project’s scope and what does it cover?

5. What are the key project deliverables?
6. What are the major tangible and non-tangible benefits?
7. What are the major initial and recurring costs?
8. What are the critical success factors and what risks could be encountered?
9. What are the key project roles and who will play them?
10. What, who, and when? What is the high-level action plan?
11. Space for leadership comments, approval, or rejection.

Note: for a project charter template go to <http://www.nomoreoverload.com/templates.html>

- **Planning:** A project plan is a clear list of projected tasks. Such a plan defines the interrelationship between the project players. It provides reasonable estimates of costs and efforts. It sets the stage for rational expectations and timelines. It helps in avoiding disappointments and frustrations. The project plan often has multiple overlaying phases that may be dependent or independent of each other.
- **Execution and controls:** In the absence of control and accountability we are all tempted to unacceptable compromises. During the execution phase, control manages unrealistic assumptions and expectations and ensures adherence to proper communication principles and agreed upon protocols and plans.

In this project phase the project leader and key team members control what we like to call “**The Puzzle of Project Constraints.**” Project constraints are the interdependence of project scope, committed resources, elapsed time and related quality expectations, and reasonable risks. As illustrated, like a well fitted jigsaw puzzle any change to one part will require an adjustment to the other part. Nothing comes from nothing.



- **Closing:** Proper closing is almost as critical as project initiation. Whether in successful celebration or regretful disappointment all projects must be closed. It is in this phase that all the documentations are concluded, evaluation of the participants’ roles and contributions are clearly acknowledged, and lessons learned are documented and communicated.