Microsoft

How to end project failure for good with Project Online

"It's fine to celebrate success, but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure."

- Bill Gates

Every project manager (PM) will face project failure at some point in their career. While it may seem that the odds are stacked against you at times, these failures are often avoidable with careful planning. After all, you may not be able to control the weather, but you can be prepared for rain.

If you're an established PM, it's likely that you often juggle numerous, complex project simultaneously. On the other hand, if you find yourself thrown into the deep end of a project management role for the first time, you may struggle to get to grips with your newfound day-to-day responsibilities. Either way, there is plenty to go wrong, and numerous tasks to slip through the cracks. Luckily, Project Online offers tools and resources to guide even the most novice PM.

With all the technology you need to get the job done, Project Online helps you and your team plan, manage and complete projects more efficiently. Ultimately, this enables you to avoid common management pitfalls and prepare for any potential roadblocks.

In this guide, we look at six common causes of project failure and what Project Online does to combat them.

The state of project management in 2018

Unfortunately, project failure is a consistent problem in many industries. While many projects fail because of time and budgetary creep, some are so disastrous they actually threaten the survival of the company.

- The Standish group found that [fewer than a third](#) of all projects were successfully completed on time and to budget
- [75 percent](#) of IT executives believe their projects are "doomed from the start"
- [44 percent](#) of project managers use no software, even though PwC found that the use of commercially available PM software increases performance and satisfaction
- [17 percent](#) of IT projects go so badly, they threaten the existence of the company

So, where are project managers going wrong?

Common causes of project failure

There are hundreds of causes of project failure, from poor top management to the lack of correct resources. However, there are six common reasons that cause even the best projects to fail.

We explore how Project Online helps to combat these recurring issues and radically changes the way in which users plan, manage and analyse their projects.
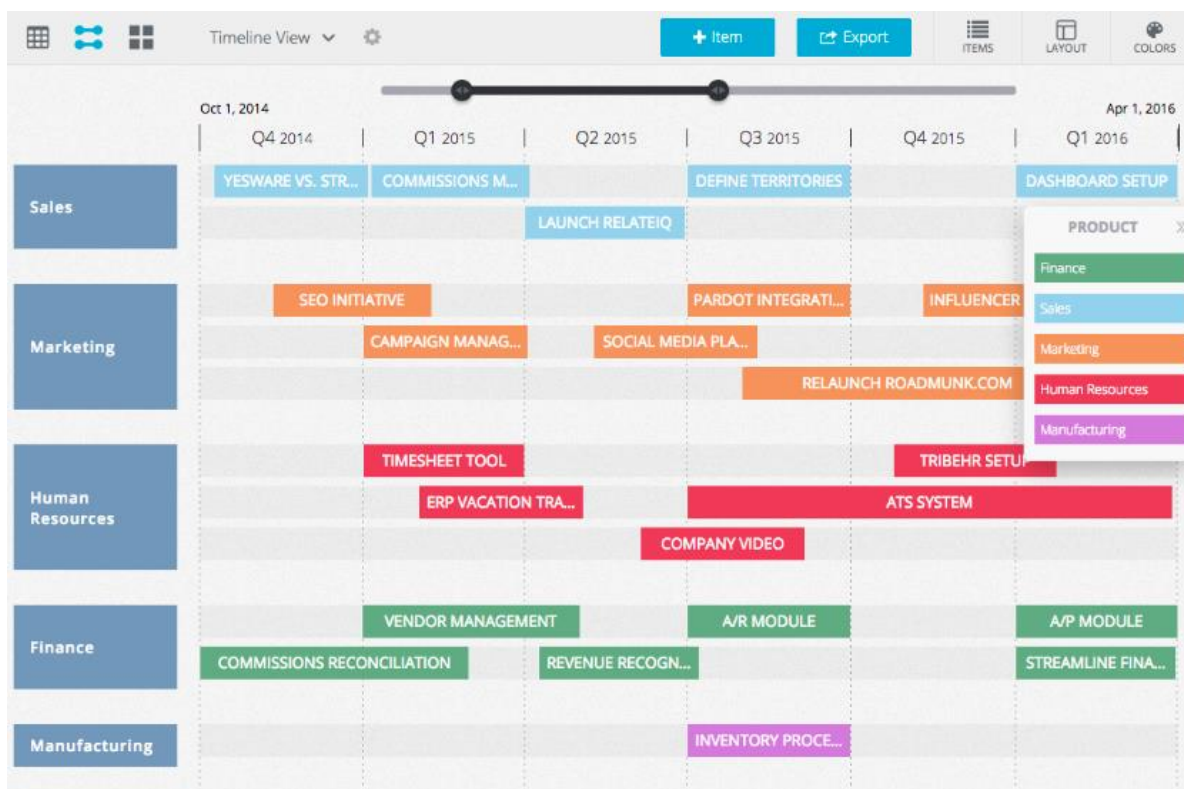
Lack of visibility

Failing to make a project's task list or timeline visible to your entire team or business is a sure-fire way to doom your project. Without a clear, regularly updated list of priorities, your team will be working in the dark and unable to manage their time or priorities effectively.

Shine a light on your projects

Project online helps to visualise tasks, deadlines and milestones in a simple, yet engaging way.

Thanks to our latest tool, Roadmap, you and your team can easily view all your projects in one highly accessible, centralised portal. The simplicity of the layout limits confusion and aids task prioritisation for your team, while allowing you to keep track of project process.

One of our Microsoft partners, Wellingtone, used Project Online to improve JD Sports' PPM visibility. Using Project, the retailer was able to move all their projects into one central location. Ultimately, this improved visibility across all their pipelines and helped them gain a deeper understanding of how they could fulfill upcoming tasks. In their words:

"We needed Project Online to perform as a central hub where we could manage prioritisation, planning and resource allocation - we also needed to implement a consistent and transparent reporting format as efficiently as possible."

- Mark Yates, IT PMO, JD Sports

Unrealistic time frames

Did you know that only [37 percent](#) of teams in the UK report that they commonly complete projects on time? Unfortunately, setting overly-optimistic time frames is a common project management mistake for many businesses.

Not only does failure to deliver on time reflect badly on the client, but a ticking clock can also result in shoddy, rushed work and damaged team morale. This is detrimental to future project success and internal team relations.

Manage time effectively

With the use of Project Online, Project Managers can keep a bird's eye view of their team's capacity and plan realistic time frames accordingly.

By using the Home feature, you can view all of your current projects in one place. This allows you to see the tasks currently on your team's plate, so you can realistically estimate when upcoming projects will be completed.

Inadequate training

A project management team can often be diverse in regard to skill level and job description. As a result, it's essential that every member of your team receives proper training. In fact, [20 percent](#) of companies cited inexperienced project managers as the main cause of project failure.

Work with simple, intuitive tools

It comes to no surprise that 'ease of use' is one of the top three requirements PMs look for when shopping for software. After all, investing in complex software that is difficult to use doesn't help with your project's efficiency.

That's why we've worked to make Project Online the most user-friendly management tool on the market.

Thanks to its simple and familiar Microsoft interface, Project Online is an extremely intuitive tool, built with user experience and simplicity in mind. This means that the tool is suitable for users of all different skill levels.

Wellingtone helped the food manufacturer, [Samworth Brothers](#), with a company-wide Project Online roll-out. Now their team members use Project Online regularly, regardless of skill level, which has thoroughly simplified their processes. They say:

"Prior to implementing Project Online, controlling our projects and resources was a manual, cumbersome process. Now, it's three clicks of a mouse and we've got that information for a person, team, or skills set."

- Samantha Blunt, Head of PMO, Samworth Brothers

Underestimating costs

Managing project costs was the biggest problem faced by manufacturing project managers in 2017. The construction industry in particular commonly faces this problem, with just 31 percent of projects coming within 10 percent of the budget in the past three years.

Continuously underestimating costs reflects badly on everyone. Not only does it reveal a PM's inability to analyse past projects, but habitual project overspending can damage a company's longevity.

Forecast for the future

Not only does Project's centralised management system help you track expenses, but thanks to its seamless integration with Power BI, you can also use past project data to forecast an accurate budget for upcoming projects.

Poor communication

More than a third of executive leaders cite a lack of clear goals as their most common reason for project failure. Furthermore, 59 percent of workers say communication is their team's greatest obstacle.

Without crystal clear communication between your team members vital information is at risk of becoming muddled, deadlines missed and the success of your projects hangs by a thread.

Set clear goals

Project Online is a cloud-based project management tool, meaning no matter where your team is based you can communicate, share data and collaborate.

Project Online is the ideal place to set project goals and communicate with stakeholders from all over the globe. Not only does it have a highly accessible dashboard - perfect for uploading key project resources - but it also integrates with Skype. This allows teams to communicate instantly via video on any device.

One of our partners Program Framework used Project to help [Cardiff University](#) unify their project goals and simplify communication. In their words:

"The benefits have been both qualitative and quantitative. Having a standard set of project stages within the project lifecycle makes communication and transition between projects so much smoother. There has also been a big saving in the time taken for project reporting, and in the effort to consolidate the information."

- Elaine Randall, Head of PMO, Cardiff University

Lack of analysis

Failing to analyse the success or failures of past projects will only increase the likelihood of repeating mistakes. It's only through data-driven insight that we can learn how to improve processes and explore new, better methodologies for future workloads.

Drive your project with data

Project Online helps decision makers easily model different portfolio scenarios to determine the best strategic path. Users can weigh project proposals against strategic business drivers and consider the cost and resource constraints within their organisation.

By integrating with Power BI and Excel, users can gain insights across portfolios and then create highly visual reports. By sharing these reports with the rest of the company, your team can evaluate current and past projects and decide where to make changes.

Put your project on the right track

Whatever your obstacles, be it poor visibility, a lack of communication, or flawed time management, Project Online is an essential tool for combating project failure.

Let's review:

- Use the new centralised Roadmap feature to aid project visibility
- Improve time management with the Home feature
- Combat complexity with Project's intuitive, user focused design
- Makes poor communication a thing of the past with the accessible dashboard
- Forecast projects costs and outcomes with our data analysis integrations

Don't let simple issues turn into irreversible failures. Discover Project Online and radically improve the way your company manages projects.