PLANTA

Whitepaper

13 Common Mistakes in Project Management

And How to Avoid Them – a Guide for Project Managers

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Here you will find more for your projects:

Hybrid project management

More flexible than purely agile or traditional methods: hybrid systems let you respond to any project situation. Learn everything about this topic.

To the whitepaper

Resource management

What are the time wasters in project management, and how can you achieve savings with efficient resource management? We show you using concrete examples from our customers.

To the whitepaper

Multi-project management

Managing many projects at the same time is challenging. We have summarized the most important basics for good framework conditions.

To the whitepaper

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01

CHAPTER

Project Management at a Glance

Project management is the entirety of tasks and techniques used to successfully control projects from initiation to completion.

Basic Principles of Successful Project Management

Project management covers the planning, execution, control and completion of projects. A project is limited in time and pursues unique objectives that must be achieved within defined constraints such as **time, budget and resources**. Successful project management is based on five principles:



Defining objectives

Clear, measurable objectives that all stakeholders understand and accept



Resource management

Efficient planning of people, departments, machines, rooms and funds



Time management

A structured schedule so that all phases are completed on time



Risk management

Identify risks early and develop measures to minimize them



Communication

Regular, transparent flow of information between team and stakeholders – with all project data centrally visible to everyone involved

Despite these principles, mistakes that jeopardize project success keep occurring. Below we show the 13 most common mistakes – and how to avoid them.

02

CHAPTER

The 13 Most Common Mistakes

Even with sound planning and a committed team, mistakes can blow the budget, push back deadlines or impair quality. Here you will find the most common ones – with practical solutions.

The mistakes at a glance

1. Unclear objectives and requirements
2. Poor communication and stakeholder management
3. Insufficient risk management
4. Unrealistic schedules and deadlines
5. Lack of resource planning and unclear roles
6. Failure to identify the right projects
7. Lack of documentation and tracking
8. Ignoring lessons learned
9. Inefficient use of PM tools and methods
10. Ignoring team dynamics and motivation
11. Insufficient monitoring and controlling
12. Inadequate change management
13. Lack of management support

Take a look

Webinars

Project management know-how for everyone

Go to the webinars

1 Unclear objectives and requirements

If precise, measurable objectives are missing at the start of a project, misunderstandings and differing expectations arise – resulting in a project that neither satisfies stakeholders nor serves corporate objectives.

Why this mistake occurs

- Poor coordination between project management and stakeholders
- Time pressure during project planning
- Missing or incomplete documentation of requirements
- Requirements change during the project (scope creep)

How to avoid it

- Record objectives and requirements in detail with all stakeholders at the start
- Define objectives using the **SMART** method (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound)
- Document requirements thoroughly and review them regularly
- Establish a software-supported process for controlled changes

2 Poor communication and stakeholder management

If important information is not passed on or is misunderstood, bottlenecks, delays and errors occur. In addition, stakeholder expectations are often not met.

Why this mistake occurs

- Missing or unclear communication plans
- Differing stakeholder expectations
- Information silos within the team
- Different communication styles

How to avoid it

- Define a **communication plan** with frequency, type and manner of communication
- Use regular status meetings and PM tools for transparency
- Promote an open feedback culture and involve remote employees
- Capture expectations and interests with a **stakeholder analysis**

3 Insufficient risk management

Many projects fail because of risks that are not identified early or managed appropriately. Without structured risk management, a single problem can jeopardize the entire project.

Why this mistake occurs

- Risk management is considered secondary or neglected due to lack of time
- Lack of experience in dealing with risks
- Overly optimistic planning assumptions

How to avoid it

- Create a **risk matrix** at the start of the project and assess risks
- Define preventive measures and response strategies
- Carry out regular risk reviews
- Train the team so that risks are reported early

4 Unrealistic schedules and deadlines

Schedules that are too tight – often due to optimism or external pressure – impair quality, overload the team and lead to constant delays.

Why this mistake occurs

- Underestimating the actual effort
- Pressure from stakeholders or management
- No buffer times for the unexpected
- Little experience in estimating time

How to avoid it

- Plan realistic **buffer times**, e.g. for sick leave
- Determine durations with methods such as the **Critical Path Method** (CPM) or **PERT**
- Estimate efforts together with the teams involved
- Use agile principles to adjust schedules regularly

5 Lack of resource planning and unclear roles

Unevenly distributed or misjudged workloads lead to frustration, declining productivity and delays. Unclear roles and missing priorities across parallel projects make collaboration even more difficult.

Why this mistake occurs

- Missing or outdated information on resource availability
- Unrealistic expectations of the team's capacity
- No clear priorities, vacation and sick leave not planned
- Unclear responsibilities – tasks are done twice or not at all

How to avoid it

- Map availability and capacities realistically in **resource planning** and check them regularly
- Clarify roles with a **RACI matrix** (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed)
- Monitor workloads with resource management tools
- Talk openly about workload and adjust planning flexibly

6 Failure to identify the right projects

If projects are started without being aligned with long-term corporate objectives, they waste resources and jeopardize growth and competitiveness.

Why this mistake occurs

- Projects are not aligned with corporate objectives
- Subjective decisions without objective criteria
- Focus on short-term benefits
- No view of the entire project portfolio

How to avoid it

- Align every project with medium- and long-term **corporate objectives**
- Decide based on **objective criteria** such as ROI, strategic importance, capacity and risk
- Review the entire **project portfolio** regularly
- Focus on the long-term horizon when prioritizing

7 Lack of documentation and tracking

Without clear documentation, progress and decisions cannot be traced. The consequences: loss of information, little transparency and bumpy handovers to other teams or phases.

Why this mistake occurs

- Lack of time and priority for operational tasks
- No documentation standards
- Missing or ineffective PM tools
- Little appreciation of documentation within the team

How to avoid it

- Define binding **documentation standards** for the entire team
- Use tools with automatic tracking of tasks and progress
- Create and distribute status reports regularly
- Train the team in using the tools

8 Ignoring lessons learned

Valuable experience from completed projects is often not evaluated systematically – and similar mistakes are repeated.

Why this mistake occurs

- Time pressure after project completion
- No formalized lessons learned process
- Little willingness to analyze mistakes openly
- No project standards and templates

How to avoid it

- Hold a **lessons learned session** after every project
- Document findings and transfer them to new projects
- Establish a **continuous improvement process** (CIP)
- Make lessons learned accessible to everyone in the PM tool

9 Inefficient use of PM tools and methods

Every project is unique. Rigidly sticking to one method or tool without adapting it to the project environment creates inefficiencies and suboptimal results.

Why this mistake occurs

- Sticking to just one method (purely traditional or purely agile)
- Insufficient training on the tools' functions
- Tools are not integrated into existing workflows
- Management requirements regarding method or software

How to avoid it

- Analyze requirements, complexity and environment and choose the right method – a **hybrid approach** is often ideal
- Train the team regularly in using the tools
- Adapt the software flexibly to the project and integrate it seamlessly into workflows

10 Ignoring team dynamics and motivation

Interpersonal dynamics are often decisive for project success. If team culture and motivation are neglected, tensions arise and productivity declines.

Why this mistake occurs

- Focus solely on technical and operational aspects
- Lack of leadership skills in project management
- Too little attention to the team's needs
- No regular team-building measures

How to avoid it

- Hold regular team meetings and feedback rounds
- Promote a supportive, appreciative culture
- Enable further training and professional development
- Communicate openly and resolve conflicts early

11 Insufficient monitoring and controlling

Many project managers focus on planning but do not monitor progress systematically. Problems are therefore identified too late – resulting in delays and higher costs.

Why this mistake occurs

- Trusting that planning is sufficient
- Missing monitoring tools or methods
- Excessive workload of the project manager
- Lack of a reporting culture within the team

How to avoid it

- Establish ongoing **monitoring and controlling** of milestones, deadlines and resources
- Use tools with **real-time data**
- Hold regular status meetings
- Create project reports as a basis for decisions for all stakeholders

12 Inadequate change management

New requirements, changing market conditions or internal restructuring: if changes are not managed in a structured way, they jeopardize the project.

Why this mistake occurs

- No defined change management process
- Resistance from the team or stakeholders
- Fear of additional costs or delays
- Lack of capacity for changes in the ongoing project

How to avoid it

- Establish a process in which every change is **assessed, approved and implemented**
- Train the team in dealing with change
- Schedule regular reviews to identify changes early
- Document changes transparently with tools

13 Lack of management support

Without the active commitment of senior management, projects are often not prioritized sufficiently – leading to resource bottlenecks, delays and even failure. However, management is crucial for resources, decisions and a supportive environment.

Why this mistake occurs

- The project is not considered strategically important
- Objectives and added value are not communicated sufficiently
- Missing escalation paths for critical decisions
- Management priorities shift

How to avoid it

- **Involve management early** and clearly convey the strategic relevance
- Set up fixed communication channels and reports to senior management
- Define clear **escalation paths**
- Demonstrate the concrete **added value** of the project

One Software for Everything

PLANTA Project

Project Management Software

PM Methods

Plan your projects agile, traditional or hybrid – just as you need

PPM

Take no risks – with project portfolio management

Integrations

Adapt the software to your needs and extend it with our interfaces

Single and Multi-Project Management

Comprehensive project management software for every project.

Learn more

03

CHAPTER

The Role of Software in Project Management

Complex projects require precise planning, constant monitoring and flexible adjustments – modern software solutions make all of this much easier.

What modern PM software delivers

Professional project management software such as the PLANTA software suite supports planning, monitoring and control. It promotes collaboration, improves transparency and reduces administrative effort – so that project managers can focus on what really matters: project success.



Real-time monitoring

Tasks, dates and resources always in view



Risk assessment

Identify, assess and control risks early



Reporting

Comprehensive reports for team, management and stakeholders



Collaboration

More transparency and a shared database for everyone



Traditional and agile

Combine both methods seamlessly in one system



Automation

Resource management, time recording and reporting relieve the team

Many of the mistakes described – from a lack of transparency and insufficient monitoring to unclear resource planning – can be avoided in a targeted way with the right software.

04

CHAPTER

Testimonials

The ideal solution for multi-project management is a hybrid system: traditional reporting with milestones and schedules for management – agile task planning and fast time recording for the teams.

Thyssenkrupp AG

“The PLANTA software has replaced all MS Project schedules and Excel tools. Linking all projects in multi-project management enables better planning quality and significantly optimizes the effort required to manage the projects.”



Ketek GmbH

“Our greatest success is that we now have a well-organized multi-project management. All projects are stored centrally in PLANTA. Our colleagues now have a better overview of the projects and can plan dependencies between them.”



Losan Pharma GmbH

“The benefit of the new tool is not limited to the fact that it enables all employees to manage their tasks in boards, but it also improves communication and collaboration significantly.”



Read how our customers have improved their projects: **planta.de/en/references**

05 CHAPTER

FAQs and Conclusion

How do I monitor project progress in real time – without constant manual reports?

The best way to monitor project progress is with project management tools that automatically track tasks, schedules and resources and generate reports automatically. In PLANTA Project, progress is transparent at all times without the need for manual reports.

How do I involve external service providers and partners effectively?

External service providers and partners should be involved in planning at an early stage. Agree on communication channels, coordination meetings and reporting obligations together and give them access to a central platform with all relevant information.

How do I improve collaboration in distributed teams?

Collaboration in distributed teams can be improved with cloud-based tools, regular virtual meetings and functions for jointly editing tasks and documents. Learn more in our whitepaper **"Successful Working in Dispersed Teams"**.

How do I keep track of several parallel projects?

Multi-project management tools help keep track of several parallel projects. They coordinate resources, schedules and priorities across projects and show progress and risks in central dashboards.

Conclusion

Project management is a complex task with numerous pitfalls. Anyone who **knows the most common mistakes** and **consistently applies the solutions** described will make their projects much more successful.

Modern **project management tools** such as PLANTA provide optimal support: they accompany the entire project workflow, create transparency and facilitate collaboration.

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