

by Trevor Lindars CMC PMP CPEng

Much scholarly research exists that quantifies the general levels of success observed for projects, programs and change initiatives (Standish, McKinsey, Prosci et al). Whilst the sample set and definitions vary across these studies, failure rates exceeding 50% are often cited; a statistic that, I believe, warrants serious attention.

Of the many potential causes of failure, there is a broad consensus about those factors that are the primary drivers. By integrating this commentary with peer debate and direct first-hand experience, I have compiled my view of the most important factors and reframed them (below) to produce a checklist for success:

Do you have...

- active and visible executive support (a sponsorship coalition)?
- clear and consistent communication of vision, goals and objectives?
- clear, unambiguous and measureable success factors defined?
- regular, open and effective communication that targets stakeholder needs?
- mechanisms to promote realistic stakeholder expectations?
- active management of scope (incl. a change control process)?
- Business Case reviews for currency, legitimacy and project alignment?
- active management of risk?
- regular assessment and validation of assumptions?
- end-user engagement and forward-thinking participation?
- strategies that are appropriate and aligned with the bigger picture?
- a phased, evolutionary approach that minimises risk and complexity?
- governance and controls tailored to fit the scope, risk and expectations?
- accountabilities that are understood, owned and delivered upon?
- effective leadership?
- a simple and effective escalation process to quickly remove obstacles?
- a useful and achievable plan; validated with key stakeholders?
- a plan that facilitates discovery, learning and adaptation?
- realistic and validated time, effort and cost estimates?
- the right resources dedicated and available in sufficient numbers?
- mechanisms to address cultural differences (esp. in global teams)?
- an integrated and structured approach to change management?
- a strategy for managing resistance to change?
- transition plans for adoption of new capabilities?
- plans for realising sustainable benefits (embedding and measurement)?
- adequate capture and management of emerging knowledge?
- regular reviews of progress, financials, issues, risks and direction?

Simple tracking with 'Harvey Balls':

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Backlog / Captured     | <input type="radio"/> Done / Implemented           |
| <input type="radio"/> Prioritised / Assessed | <input type="radio"/> Verified / Reviewed / Closed |
| <input type="radio"/> In Progress / Assigned |  |