

Multiple Project Fantasy Land



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Summary: Comparison of the thinking that leads organizations to repeated project failure with the Achievement-driven AdPM™ thinking that leads to consistent project success.

As a higher and higher proportion of employees work on multiple projects, increasing the project density, weird fantasies take root.

- ❑ Organizations that require detailed data and alternatives before buying \$20,000 of equipment, spend \$500,000 on cross-functional projects, relying solely on the pagan chanting of due dates to ensure success.
- ❑ They carefully define and communicate the authority of a supervisor to assign work and reward performance to a unit with 9 data entry clerks. But they assume that a project manager with 20 people drawn from 6 different departments can get the project done by having everyone hold hands and sing Kum-by-yah.

Let's look at the stages of a project and examine the fantasy land ideas that cause projects to fail versus the enterprise project management thinking that leads to success.

Strategic Thinking and Conceiving Project Objectives

Fantasy Land Ideas

It's really best to leave project objectives a little vague, like "delight the customer", because then we can be flexible and adapt as we do the work. This allows us to:

- ❑ Start work on projects very quickly, sometimes even on the first day that the idea is mentioned.
- ❑ Plan the project as we go. Each week's status meeting is a good vehicle in which to plan the next week's work.
- ❑ There is great merit in leaving project team members somewhat uncertain about what result we really want from them on their assignments... this stimulates creativity and "thinking outside the box."

Achievement-driven Project Management Ideas

Before a project can start, a clear and unambiguous business result is identified in measurable terms. Thus, ill-conceived projects don't have a chance to start much less consume critical resources that we need on projects with strategic payoffs.

- We do the thinking about a project's strategic result before we start work and give strategic thinkers the tools to chart a project's course before the first Gantt chart is generated.
- People are held accountable for measured achievements not just "to do" lists.
- Executives control a portfolio of projects to which they allocate resources based on up-to-date performance data to hit strategic objectives.

Managing the Portfolio of Projects

Fantasy Land

We can have a new priority #1 each week and routinely move completion dates earlier because:

- Project managers can use their leadership skills to squeeze in a few more projects whenever we need them.
- Setting priorities creates too much conflict between executives. It's best cram as many project as possible so that everyone is always busy

Achievement-driven Project Management

The organization's protocol for project management forces everyone to play a "zero sum game."

- Project team members each have a schedule for each project assignment
- Project managers always present the trade-offs and consequences of every change based on hard data.
- Executives carefully allocate resources so that "litters of puppy projects" don't eat away at the resources needed to achieve strategic results.

Building Project Plans

Fantasy Land

- The quality of our control over a project is a function of the number of lines in the project plan. 1,900 is good but 2,500 tasks is better:
- People, regardless of technical knowledge or experience, need to be told everything they have to do.

Achievement-driven Project Management

Project plans are a pyramid of commitments to achieve measured results, by a date, within a resource budget (hours & dollars).

- Project plans are tools for managing a project and spotting problems early. Thus the smallest level of detail is an individual's assigned achievement and work estimate.

- Updating the plan each week takes minutes not hours and PMs and executives always have data on project status that is no more than 4 days old.
- Executives consider alternatives before approving projects and can select from a "menu" of quantified trade-offs between a project's measured results, cost, duration and level of risk.

Tracking Project Progress

Fantasy Land

The best way to ensure that projects finish on time is to shout the completion date loudly at every opportunity:

- It really is unprofessional to have people fill out a time sheet with completed work and estimates of the remaining work. Status is best measured with "smile faces," "frowns," or "red lights" and "green lights" which really tells us a lot about how things are going and are more nurturing.
- When someone does well we praise or reward them in private because we really can't explain to the others why they didn't earn the same reward.

Achievement-driven Project Management

Tracking is a data-driven process in which we measure where we should be "as of today" against where we actually are today.

- Project managers solve small problems early, rather than finding out about big problems too late to solve them.
- Executives track progress against specific checkpoints that match a measurable result with a budget and duration.
- We publicly praise and/or reward high achievement, not a lot of overtime. Everyone sees these rewards as legitimate and earned because the standards for achievement were publicized before we started work.
- Executives have the data to adjust the resource allocation in the portfolio each week to take advantage of opportunities and correct problems.

For additional information on transforming your Fantasy Land into an Achievement-driven Project Management performer, visit our [Enterprise Project Management pages](#).