# *How Do I*

# MEASURE SUCCESS?

## THE RED PILL EXCUTIVE WORKBOOK

### CHAPTER 1

**think**

# WORKBOOK INTRODUCTION

Now you know our secret… You know that there is a Red Pill way and a blue pill way. You might have had a feeling all along that something like this was true. Maybe you've butted up against blue pill thinking and wondered why it was so hard to drive projects that succeed by the "Iron Triangle" measures. Perhaps knowing that a Red Pill approach exists was novel and inspiring to you. Either way, after reading the book, the next question becomes, How do I navigate my own Red Pill journey? This workbook can serve as a guide, prompt valuable reflection, support your own and your team's Red Pill development, and drive Red Pill conversations and practices.

You'll find exercises and tools to help you think through Red Pill operations in relation to:

- Yourself
- Your Team
- Your Organization

## Leverage the Workbook

**Roll up your sleeves** and dive into this work. This exercise will do very little if you skim over it. Think deeply, write down your thoughts, be brutally honest in your assessments, make Red Pill choices and learn from the results.

**Make the workbook work for you**. This chapter is part of a larger series, you can download the full workbook here: https://www.thinkconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Red-Pill-Full-Workbook.pdf. The work is not meant to be completed sequentially. Use the tools in the order that makes sense for you, your starting point, and your journey.

**Re-use the tools and exercises**. This exercise can and should be used more than once. Assess and reassess over time. Use the completed exercise as a reference point to measure growth and adoption or as justification for making new choices.

**Enlist others**. Gain valuable insights by having colleagues, peers or subordinates complete part or all of a tool/exercise. Use the workbook to develop Red Pill thinking in others.

# HOW DO I MEASURE SUCCESS?

To learn more about these concepts, review Chapter 1: Why Project Management Fails a Whopping 70% of the Time.

*No plan of operations reaches with any certainty beyond
the first encounter with the enemy's main force.
- Helmuth von Moltke 1800–91, Prussian military commander*

## Introduction

You've read about how the industry views success and failure. Let's examine it through your own perspective, as well as from a project manager's point-of-view. The two views are typically very different and that's part of the problem.

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## 1

**Let's start by identifying a recent project where you were personally vested in its execution.**

Project Name:

It doesn't matter if the project was a success or a failure in your eyes, but it would be nice to select one where the measure is complicated or somewhat subjective.

**Examples:**

- Customer project implementing our services or technology
- Sales and Marketing initiative
- On-prem transition to cloud
- Security audit
- Regulatory compliance implementation
- CRM implementation
- Salesforce modification
- Service Now module implementation

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## 2

**Consider the project from your executive point-of-view. How would you rate the project's success? Why?**

4 – splendid, love it when a plan comes together
3 – with a few exceptions, that's what I wanted
2 – that was rough but probably worth it
1 – little value and a lot of disruption
0 – utter and complete failure

We often see that executives view success through a longer-term and strategic perspective. They have room to maneuver, in fact they plan in order to maintain that maneuverability (hold funding in reserve, plan for inevitable delays).

**Examples:**

- 4 – I've setup the business to work more efficiently and now have access to capabilities we desperately needed to grow.
- 3 – The effort delivered most of what I wanted and I didn't mind that it took a little longer than planned. The way things go around here, that's a success, but there always room for improvement.
- 2 – I got some of what I wanted, but the cost and disruption was difficult to justify.  My reputation took a hit on that one.
- 1 – Just one problem after another. I had to compromise on features to the point that I wonder if is was worth doing at all. The only thing that didn't come down was the cost to get this far.
- 0 – This effort has wasted time and resources. The business is hardly better off and I'll probably need to launch a different effort to try and reach the capabilities I was looking for.

# 3

**Identify additional value you would have liked this project to deliver to the business.**

Capture Additional Value By:

It doesn't matter if this is a missing capability or something far less tangible, like organizational retention of the knowledge to execute similar efforts even better in the future. Perhaps this was an opportunity to enhance your DevOps capabilities or while the project was completed, you now have a series of work-arounds that are going to cost time and effort downstream.

**Examples:**

- If I could have accelerated completion, I would been able to capture additional customers or sales sooner.
- There is a parallel effort that really should have overlapped with this one, but it was too risky to put it into motion too.
- This was a golden opportunity to increase our delivery cadence through automated testing, but we'll need to try to accomplish that on some other effort.
- In hindsight, I would have been happy with half of the capability twice as fast. Should have broken this up into two efforts

# 4

**Now, rate the project using these 3 measures (the triple constraints).**

**Time** expectations were met:
(no) 0  1  2  3  4  (yes)

**Cost** expectations were met:
(no) 0  1  2  3  4  (yes)

**Scope** expectations were met:
(no) 0  1  2  3  4  (yes)

**Examples:**

- **Time** expectations were met:
  4 – the project completed exactly when the plan said it would. It was a perfect pace.

  1 – slip after slip. This thing ran on for much longer than anyone expected

- **Cost** expectations were met:
  3 – There were a few unexpected costs, but I had reserve to cover them. Actually ended up better than I had anticipated.

  0 – The project exceeded budget significantly. I had to request additional funding and my reason for it was that we couldn't afford to waste the investment we had already poured in it .

- **Scope** expectations were met:
  3 – The most critical capabilities were delivered, but we did have to remove some of them that we originally desired in order to maintain schedule.

  2 – We replaced a few critical capabilities with short-term workarounds in order to complete the effort. Now I'm going to need to deal that later, which is going to impact other things I need to get done.

# 5

According to the industry, anything less than a 4 in all three ratings in the previous step (time, cost, scope) represents some sort of project failure. How would the industry rate your project? (Select all that apply.)

- [ ] Late
- [ ] Over Budget
- [ ] Compromised Features

You can see in this pie chart, failures in these three areas account for 44% of failed projects. There's a new category here that also involves failure: *Cancelled or delivered* but never used. Some projects are killed before they ever have a chance to be completed. Hopefully, that happens fast so business resources aren't wasted. Then there are others still that are essentially completed but never used.

Cancelled or delivered but never used **24%**

On time, on budget, to spec **32%**

Late, over budget, or compromised features! **44%**

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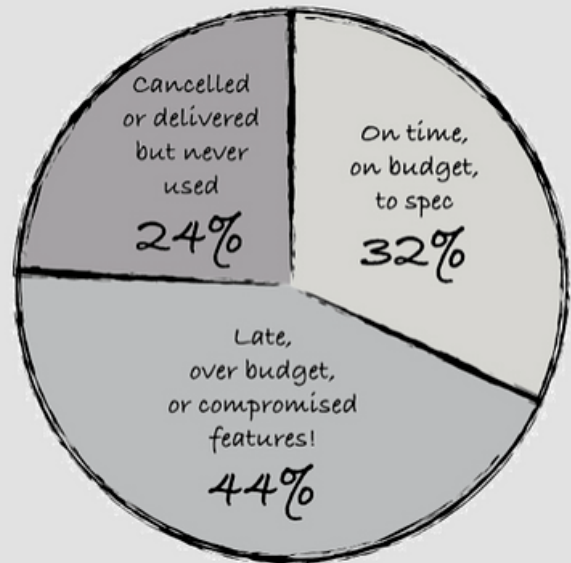
## Key Takeaway

Compare how the industry would rate your project to how you assess success or failure. Executives work in the gray areas of business, where things aren't quite so black and white, so your assessment is probably far more nuanced.

Take a look back at your item 3. Would it have been better to capture that value even it cost a little bit more or took just a little bit longer? Perhaps, every situation is different.

Now consider how the industry has trained Project Managers to view things. There is no room to maneuver outside of the triple constraints, even if it means capturing more value for the business. Changing a plan is equated with taking a step closer to failure, but we know that we learn things along the way. This is one of the reasons that agile practices have become so prevalent.

As an executive, you look for business value and capturing it is part of a complex algorithm. Don't allow those managing your projects to take the simplistic view represented in the triple constraints. It's a tool, not a success measure. Communicate where you see opportunities to capture additional value and train your directs to bring you options to do so. Teach them to think like you!

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## EXERCISE CREATED BY:

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Jeff Welch is a technical executive, specializing in the use of technology to deploy training, simulations, and performance-enhancing information systems. Jeff is an engineer by trade, an Agile Transformation Coach, and he has worked as a lead Learning Solution Architect for Pearson Performance, Vangent, and later PDRI. His first co-authored book, Bare Knuckled Project Management (BKPM): How to Succeed at Every Project, by Tony Gruebl and Jeff Welch, has more than 15,000 copies in circulation. Jeff is also a co-author of The Red Pill Executive, Morgan James Publishing, 2020, to which this workbook is a companion.