Is My Next Project STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED

THE RED PILL EXECUTIVE WORKBOOK

CHAPTER 2

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.

IS MY NEXT PROJECT STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED?

To learn more about these concepts, review Chapter 2: Strategic Alignment and Executive Alignment.

*Too often, the project succeeds, but it fails against
the bigger mission of the business.*
-The Red Pill Executive

Introduction

When looking at the type of projects you want to take on within the organization, you need to ask yourself what the purpose and result of the project should be. Is your project more internally focused to enhance your existing infrastructure and process so that you can do more things effectively and efficiently? Or is your project more externally focused to bring in revenue or better position the organization within the industry? Internal and external focused projects both need to be strategically aligned, but the questions and criteria being used to evaluate the projects can be very different and it will be up to your organization to figure out which projects take priority.

In this exercise, you'll explore ways on how you can create your own scorecard to help evaluate your project, determine the impact the outcome will have, the risk involved in doing the project, and the cost and effort it will take to accomplish the project. This method will include both objective and subjective criteria to help simplify the process in getting a general sense of the alignment of the project and whether or not your company should take it on without spending too much investigative hours on it. You will need to customize this workbook to best match your organization's mission, strategic plan, and risk thresholds.

Investigating a project can take a long time to do, but if you are able to make high level and accurate examples, it can save a lot of time in determining if you should pursue the project or not. If it looks promising, you can invest more time in the investigation. If not, then you have only lost the minimal time you have put in so far. This scorecard method allows you to make that high-level determination if you should proceed with the project or end it there.

CONSIDER THE PROJECT

1

Is this project needed to meet regulatory requirements?

Yes	No

If the answer is yes, then you must do the project regardless of its strategic alignment. However, continue to see how you can keep efforts strategically aligned.

2

What is the project name?

3

What are the project's desired outcomes?

4

How will those outcomes be achieved? **(Provide a high-level description of how the project will be executed.)**

CALCULATE COST AND EFFORT LEVEL

5

What is a rough range of staffing hours required to complete the project from start to finish? Circle the appropriate point value.

NOTE: These values are what we find as being typical of mid-market efforts. To adjust the ranges to meet your needs, simply define small medium and large efforts from your organization's past and build a new scale. Once the measures are scaled to your environment, this exercise will help guide you.

Hours	Hour Point Value
0 - 5	0
51 - 200	25
201 - 800	50
801 - 3200	75
3201+	100

6

What is a rough range of additional costs for the project? (Consider contractors, consultants, equipment, software, training, etc.) Circle the appropriate point value.

NOTE: Adjust the ranges as needed to meet your needs.

Costs	Costs Point Value
$0 - $5000	0
$5000 - $20,000	25
$20,000 - $80,000	50
$80,000 - $320,000	75
$320,000+	100

7

Transfer the point values circled in steps 1 and 2 into the table below and complete the calculation.

Costs & Effort Point Total	
Hours Point Value	from step 5
Costs Point Value	from step 6
Sum Total	

8

Circle the Cost & Effort Level that applies to your project based on the green sum total above.

NOTE: Your value in the Cost & Effort Level column will be used in Step 13.

Point Sum Total	Project Size	Cost Effort
0 - 25	Tiny	Negligent
26 - 50	Small	Low
51 - 100	Medium	High
101 - 150	Large	High
151+	Enterprise	High

CALCULATE IMPACT LEVEL

9

Recalling your company's mission, enter three critical areas of the mission in the table on the left (e.g., key market/target audience, contribution/product or service, distinction, etc.). Enter + (positive), - (Negative), or None to estimate the impact of doing the project on that area of the mission. Complete the calculations in the table on the right to determine Mission Impact.

Critical Mission Area	Project Impact (+,-, None)
1.	
2.	
3.	

(Maximum available points = 30)

# of Positives	X 10 =	
# of Negatives	X -10 =	
Company Mission Sum Total		

10

Recalling your company's **strategic plan**, enter three initiatives that are most critical to the plan in the table on the left. Enter **Positive**, **Negative**, or **None** to best estimate the impact of doing this project on each strategic plan initiative. Complete the calculations in the table on the right to determine **Strategic Plan Impact**.

Strategic Plan Initiative	Project Impact (+,-, None)
1.	
2.	
3.	

(Maximum available points = 30)

# of Positives	X 10 =	
# of Negatives	X -10 =	
Strategic Plan Sum Total		

11

Consider the **administrative effectiveness** associated with this project. Read each statement below and enter **Positive**, **Negative**, or **None** to best estimate the impact of doing this project. Complete the calculations in the table on the right to determine **Admin Effectiveness Impact**. Note: These statements can be edited to fit your organization.

Administrative Impact	Project Impact (+,-, None)
Fulfills a need considered critical and stated by one or more departments or groups	
Improves organizational processes or services	
Transforms the organization in a highly significant way	
Improves organizational communication	
Avoids a major operational breakdown	

(Maximum available points = 50)

# of Positives	X 5 =	
# of Negatives	X -5 =	
Admin Effectiveness Sum Total		

12

Complete the calculations in the tables below to determine the *Project Impact Level* of this project.

Company Mission Total	from step 9
Strategic Plan Total	from step 10
Administrative Effectiveness Total	from step 11
Impact Sum Total	

Impact Sum (Transfer the totals from the prior page.)

Impact Sum Total	from step 12	/ 110 =	%

Impact Magnitude
(Impact sum total divided by the maximum points available for all three areas.)

Impact Magnitude Percentage	Impact Level
Impact %: 0 - 26%	Low
Impact %: 27 - 100%	High

Project Impact Level
Convert the Impact Magnitude number to a percentage and circle the level of impact for your project using this table.

SUMMARIZE COST & EFFORT AND IMPACT LEVELS

13

Transfer the levels you determined for Cost & Effort and Impact Levels to the table:

- Cost & Effort Level (Step 8) (Negligent, Low, High)
- Impact Level (Step 12) (Low, High)

Section	Level
Project Cost & Effort Level	from step 8
Project Impact Level	from step 12

NOTE: Your values in the Level column will be used in Step 18.

CALCULATE RISK

14

Answer the questions about your solution below to assess the project's technical risk. Note: These statements can be edited to fit your organization.

Technical Risk	Answer (Yes or No)
Is it immature (brand new) or custom (not off the shelf)?	
Is it new, or have we used/implemented a similar solution before? (Yes = new, No = used before)	
Will it require external assistance with implementation?	
Does it require integration with the other systems?	
Does it require significant custom coding?	
Does it require high security measures to be taken?	
Does implementing it require new skill sets?	
Will it be hosted internally?	
Does it require Disaster Recovery set-up?	
Does it require significant network re/design work?	

Technical Risk Total
Enter the number of yes responses from above. Complete the calculation.

(Maximum available points = 50)

# of Yes Reponses:	X 5 =	

15

Circle the option that best answers each question below to assess the project's non-technical risk. *Note: These statements can be edited, and answer ranges can be adjusted to fit your organization.*

Size of the project team:

Option	Point Value
1 - 5	0
6 -10	5
11 - 15	10
16+	15

Organization level affected:

Option	Point Value
Single department	0
Multiple departments	5
Enterprise-wide	10

Degree to which existing workflow is modified:

Option	Point Value
Low	0
Medium	5
High	10
Severe	15

Level of cultural change required:

Option	Point Value
Low	0
Medium	5
High	10
Severe	15

Deployment schedule required:

Option	Point Value
1 - 6 months	15
7 - 11 months	10
1 year	5
2+ years	0

Complexity of internal political implications:

Option	Point Value
Low	0
Medium	5
High	10
Severe	15

Sum the non-technical risk point values by entering your selections above into the table below.

Non-Technical Risk Total

(Maximum available points = 85)

Team Size Point Value	
Organization Level Point Value	
Workflow Modified Point Value	
Cultural Change Point Value	
Deployment Schedule Point Value	
Political Complexity Point Value	
Sum Total	

16

Complete the calculations below to determine the *full risk level* of this project.

Risk Sum

Technical Risk Total	from step 14
Non-Technical Risk Total	from step 15
Risk Sum Total	

Risk Magnitude
Complete the calculations below. (Risk sum total divided by the maximum points available for both areas.)

Risk Sum Total		/ 135 =	%

Project Risk Level
Convert the Impact Magnitude number to a percentage and circle the level of impact for your project using the table below.

Risk Magnitude Percentage	Risk Level
Risk Magnitude %: 0 - 24%	Low
Risk Magnitude %: 27 - 100%	High

NOTE: Your value in the Cost & Effort Level column will be used in Step 17.

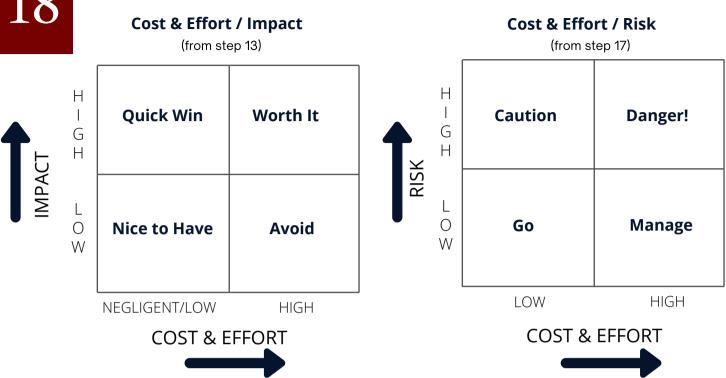## SUMMARIZE COST & EFFORT AND RISK LEVELS

17

Transfer the levels you determined for Cost & Effort and Impact Levels to the table:

- Cost & Effort Level (Step 8) (Negligent, Low, High)
- Impact Level (Step 16) (Low, High)

Section	Level
Project Cost & Effort Level	from step 8
Project Risk Level	from step 16

NOTE: Your values in the Level column will be used in Step 18.

18

Plot the two sets of summary data on the charts below.

Cost & Effort / Impact
(from step 13)

	NEGLIGENT/LOW	HIGH
IMPACT HIGH	Quick Win	Worth It
IMPACT LOW	Nice to Have	Avoid

COST & EFFORT

Cost & Effort / Risk
(from step 17)

	LOW	HIGH
RISK HIGH	Caution	Danger!
RISK LOW	Go	Manage

COST & EFFORT

Key Takeaway

By the time you have worked through this worksheet, you will have asked yourself critical questions that help you understand your project or initiative. Some will not require such a through understanding and some could require much more.

Becoming intimate with such details is a sure way to begin the ownership development process, whether you decide to perform this analysis yourself or ask a direct report to do it and come back and brief you, the familiarity you develop with it will help you plan and communicate accordingly.

Now that you have this information, how do you use it? Are you going to hand someone a project that is a Nice to Have and Dangerously risky? You absolutely might, but make sure you have also provided commensurate support and top cover. Demonstrate how Red Pill you are and how Red Pill you expect others to be. You may be pressured to start it, but if you know that you may need to kill it quick, you'll be ready for it. Other combinations of quadrants, like Worth it and Manage might provide real opportunities to capture unseen value for the company. Learn to maneuver and make decisions that are always strategically aligned and have considered both opportunities and risks.

EXERCISE CREATED BY:

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Scott Sax is a senior level project manager with 14+ years of experience in technology and marketing, specializing in leading and motivating teams, setting team vision, organizing and maintaining schedules, and getting things done. Avid presenter, communicator, project manager, scrum master, creative problem solver, and mentor. Scott is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), Agile Certified Practioner (PMI-ACP), Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP), and Certified Scrum Master (CSM). Scott holds an Executive MBA from Loyola University Maryland, a Bachelor's Degree in English Writing and History from the University of Pittsburgh, and an Associate's Degree in Specialized Technology in Computer Animation from the Art Institute in Philadelphia.