

Early Warning Signs For Project Failure

Failure Category	Potential Early Warning	Assessment		Notes
		Warning Sign Exists	Warning Sign Does NOT Exist	
Poor Preparation	No clearly stated project goal			
	Varying goals within the project team and between stakeholders			
	No common definition of what success looks like			
	No defined steps on how the goal will be achieved			
Inadequate Documentation and Tracking	None or little project documentation – no: scope statement, identified deliverables, common definition of deliverable quality, timeline, role clarity, risk management, communication planning, stakeholder management, budget			
	None or little tracking of planned vs actual			
	None or little project change management or issue management			
Bad Leadership	Project Managers who manage and don't lead			
	Sponsor's and key stakeholders who are not actively supporting the project			
	Functional managers are not working closely with Project Managers for project staffing and skill assessments			
Failure to Define Parameters	Limited or no role clarity			
	No operating guidelines			
	Undefined or Inconsistent expectations on how work is assigned, reviewed and determined accepted			
	Low team moral			
	No or limited rewards to the project team members			
Inexperience	Project Managers with no formal training in project management			

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	Project Managers with limited history of success (or history of managing projects of similar size and complexity)			
	Project Managers that are qualified by their technical expertise (and not their project leadership ability)			
	Project Managers with no defined coach / mentor			
Inaccurate Estimations	Estimates completed without input of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) or team members			
	Projects running late			
	Projects over budget			
	Resources working longer hours to keep up with project expectations			
Little Communication at Every Level of Management	Limited scheduled communication between the team and stakeholders			
	No formal communication plan			
	Sponsor, key stakeholders and Project Managers that are not seen as ambassadors to the project			
	Low awareness of project approach or status by Sponsor and key stakeholders			
	Low awareness of project status within the team			
Culture Misalignment	Project not tied directly to department or organizational strategies			
	Project does not support corporate core values			
	Project leadership that does not promote corporate core values			
	Project that is not supported across the organization			
	Project approach that counter to corporate culture			
Competin g Priorities	Inconsistent priorities with in the project team			
	Inconsistent priorities between project work and other organizational work			

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	Inconsistent messaging from leadership (Project Manager, Sponsor and key stakeholders) on project and operational priorities			
Disregarding Project Warning Signs	Happy plans and happy status are the only acceptable conversations			
	Inability to say 'no'			
	Leadership is unwilling to cancel or stop projects			
	All the above is true and no action is taken			

What are the key take-aways for you in completing this Early Warning Signs of Project Failure audit?