SIGNS YOUR PROJECT TEAM ARE OVERLOADED

The change agenda for most organisations, particularly those in highly regulated sectors has been at increasingly high levels for the last few years with requirements like Solvency II, MiFID II, FATCA, EGRIPRA, Dodd Franks, GDPR and the London Market Target Operating Model (TOM) to name some of the larger regulatory requirements and market initiatives, all of which must be done alongside the organisation's own changes and improvements. It's really no wonder that project teams are overloaded and in many cases under resourced to implement the changes required.

*"The challenge is that **many** organisations are **not recognising** the signs that their project teams are overloaded and are not recognising the **potential** for **breaching budgets**."*

SO WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS THAT YOUR PROJECT TEAM ARE OVERLOADED?

1. THE PROJECT WILL DELIVER TOMORROW

Of course projects sometimes miss deadlines or milestones, but if this is happening more than once it indicates projects that it is certainly a sign that your project team may be overloaded and are potentially unable to handle their current workload. This is one of the easiest signs to spot, but unfortunately is often the one that is 'ignored' or explained away as a 'one off'.

2. IMPORTANT PROJECTS ARE WAITING TO GET STARTED

When organisations have important projects sitting at a red signal after they were supposed to have started (in some of the worst cases they may even have supposed to have finished), this is a potentially business impacting sign that your project team are unable to cope with the pace of change that your business is demanding of them.

3. I'M NO.1 PRIORITY, NO REALLY, I AM!

The phrase "when everything is top priority then nothing is top priority" sums up this sign. It can manifest itself by purely having top many but more commonly it appears by projects being nominated as the top priority project and then having their resources reallocated to another project. In extreme cases, project priorities can change on a weekly basis (sometimes more frequently!) leading to fractured project progress and confused project teams. This is most definitely a sign that your change agenda is overwhelming your project team.

4. REDUCED PROJECT PROGRESS REPORTING

When project managers reduce or even stop providing regular status updates, it typically means one of a few things:

1. The project has stalled and isn't making progress
2. The project is slipping and the PM is trying to buy time
3. The project has been de-prioritised and isn't making progress
4. There is other bad news that the team is hesitant in reporting

Whatever the reason, this can be a sign of an overwhelmed project team, and certainly suggests that the project isn't going to deliver the anticipated project benefits in the timeframe, or to the planned budget.

5. THERE'S ALWAYS THE WEEKEND

Project teams that are **overwhelmed** will very often try to **"make up time"** by **working late** and **working weekends**. There are certainly cases where project teams need to go 'above and beyond' to make a **milestone** or **deliverable**. Where this starts to become the norm, the project team is likely **overwhelmed** and on an **unsustainable path to project failure** and quite **possibly burnout**.

6. THE MARKET KNOWS YOU'RE NOT DELIVERING

There are some projects that are **high profile**, that are **known** about by **others** within the market. Some may even be **joint initiatives** or, per projects, that your peers have an interest in. A sign that your project team is **overwhelmed** is when these high profile projects are **not delivering** and the market is talking about it. Some of the **signs** of this are when people from your **competitors** are saying things like **"I hear your Project X isn't going as well"**. Comments like this are definitely a sign that your project team is **overwhelmed**, and can impact your organisation's **reputation**, and ability to hire **good** project people who might be able to help **resolve the challenges**.

7. I'M SEEING SOME SIGNS

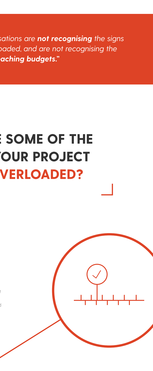
If you're **not sure** if your project team are **overwhelmed** or if your projects are going in the **right direction** the best thing to do is to **perform a project assessment**. This can be done by an **internal team**, but is better **performed by an external third party**, who can see the wood for the trees, and **isn't** connected or part of the local politics.

8. TURNING SIGNS INTO SOLUTIONS

It's all very well **recognising the signs**, but turning those **signs into solutions** is what your organisation needs to be doing to deliver the business **benefits** needed to meet its goals and targets.

9. FLEXIBLE AND FRACTIONAL PROJECT RESOURCES

Recognising that your project team needs additional resourcing but knowing that this resource isn't just more people on the ground but the right kind of people, who can be flexed up and flexed down in accordance with the business and project needs means that your project budgets are controlled in a way that isn't possible with interim contract or full-time resources.



10. INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Finding the right people with the right experience to provide that vital insight and direction can ensure that your project team are not spending time digging themselves out of a sand trap but are avoiding the sand trap in the first place. Working with a trusted partner with market knowledge and experience can save time and ensure that your organisation reaps the benefits from the project within the timeframe expected.

11. PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Maintaining project governance helps organisations recognise projects that are going to provide the biggest bang for the buck, and those that should be a priority but also those that should not be the current priority. A mechanism and process to help the organisation and the project teams know what the organisation's priorities are, and importantly to have a process to change and communicate any changes in those priorities in an approved way.

12. MAGNIFY YOUR RESOURCES

It is amazing that many project teams still have their highly paid, time constrained industry experienced project and programme managers performing tasks that are better suited to more junior resources or better still a Project Management Office (PMO). A PMO when well implemented helps magnify the resources within your existing project teams, allowing them to focus on the issues that demand their attention, and allowing the PMO team to help the whole team feel less overwhelmed and to increase the pace of change.

ABOUT FIFTH STEP

Fifth Step provides flexible services across the technology landscape to executive and senior management to enhance, extend and magnify existing capabilities. We do this by taking a collaborative approach using standard methodologies with a structured body of knowledge.

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