



What **NOT** to look for in ICT Project Managers...

Over the years we have seen many project managers succeed and many fail. Here are 10 characteristics of Project Managers that, when you observe them, should get you worried.

- **Own interpretation of Assignment:** Some PM's boldly state "they want me to...but I will...". As if they are above the principal who apparently sees it all wrong. Good PM's constantly verify their assignment with their principal and stakeholders and check if all parties are still aligned.
- **Lack of Content Focus:** Projects are about content AND process. Both need attention but the process becomes irrelevant if the content is not understood and challenged.
- **Putting Efficiency above the Objective:** First we should meet the agreed objective, secondly we should seek ways to reach the objective with minimal effort. Some PM's switch these priorities around which seems to indicate that they do not understand that missing the target makes efficiency irrelevant.
- **Quoting Popular Terms:** "Lean", "Six Sigma", "Prince2" etc are all good and useful concepts. But some people quote them all the time without it adding any value or making any sense. This indicates that the person in question probably did not grasp the clue of these concepts and when to apply them. This way of thinking can cloud common sense and logical thinking which are the basis of any sound endeavor.
- **Lack of visibility:** PM's should be physically visible at the front line among the troops. That's where they add the most value. Working at home is common practice these days but should only be allowed when it does not jeopardize the project. In complex environments with many dependencies there is much communication and alignment required. This is best achieved face to face on location.
- **Not meeting agreements:** any project is a huge set of agreements between people. Strategies and tactics are based on people working together along agreed lines. If anyone in the project should be a role model for committing to and meeting agreements then it is the person in charge.
- **"Hope" as a management tool:** PM's that "hope" that problems will be overcome in the future use wishful thinking instead of concrete measures and risk mitigation.
- **Avoiding Conflicts and Escalations:** Conflicts and escalations, when used constructively, are powerful project management tools. One should be suspicious if in a complex, multi-party, time-pressed project everyone is constantly in full consensus. Better results are obtained if content-driven discussions are conducted fiercely and opinions are challenged openly. The PM should take the lead in this.
- **Doesn't know the numbers:** a good PM knows key numbers of a project constantly by heart: this is our budget, this our actual this week, this is our ETC etc. Knowing the numbers is the first step in being in control.
- **Poor writing skills:** Communication is key and requires the ability to write simple and clear messages in short text. Readers should immediately understand what is meant, how severe it is and what actions would be required. Being unable to write and speak like that indicates lack of common sense and lack of understanding of where the project is at.