
Rescuing Troubled Projects

Course Length: 2 Days (14 PDUs)

Course Description

This seminar is designed as a graduate-level course for experienced project managers. It is designed to reinforce many of the project management “Best Practices” taught in other project management classes. It focuses specifically on how to recognize that a project is in “trouble”, and concentrates on the actions that project managers need to take to assess, and ultimately plan to recover or terminate a project that has experienced significant difficulties. Tools and templates will be presented and put into context through various exercises and scenarios and case studies.

Target Student: Students enrolling in this course should be PMPs®, Program Managers, Senior Project Managers and or have significant project management experience.

Prerequisites: To ensure your success, we recommend you have significant working knowledge or experience in working in a project environment.

Delivery Method: Instructor-led, group-paced, classroom-delivery learning model with structured minds-on and hands-on activities.

Homework Assignment: Each participant will be required to read a white paper and provide a 5-minute report summarizing the key points made in the report, along with any recommended best practices contained in the report.

Benefits: Students will learn how to use project management techniques to plan, organize, control, document, and close out their projects successfully and with minimum risk.

Performance-Based Objectives

- Develop working definitions of project success, failure and trouble.
- Discuss how and why projects get in trouble.
- List and discuss the root causes of project failure.
- Discuss techniques for performing project reviews.
- Determine the type of project review required
- Develop the Intervention Plan for fixing a troubled project.
- Discuss techniques and strategies for recovering a troubled project.
- Discuss techniques and strategies for terminating a troubled project.
- Discuss project closure activities

Course Content

Day One

1. Introduction

- Session Overview
- Class Norms
- Resource Table – Homework
- Key Questions

2. Project Success and Failure

Exercise – Define Success and Failure

- Successful Outcomes
- Failed Project Objectives
- What About Casualties?
- Zones of Success/Failure
- Project Outcomes

Exercise – Identifying Trouble Indicators

- Labels for Projects in trouble
 - Runaway Projects
 - Crunch Mode
 - Death March
 - Project Disasters
 - Troubled Project

Exercise – Root Causes of Troubled Projects

- Questions – Root Causes
- Acceptable ranges for Variance
- Range of Problem Projects

Team Exercise - develop a working definition of a “Troubled Project”

3. Project Reviews - Diagnosing Project Problems

- Project Status Meetings
- When do you want to find out about problems?
- Project Audits or Delivery Review
- Objectives of Audit
- Project Delivery Report
- Planning for the Project Audit

Exercise – Review an Assessment Report

- Project Health Check
- Project Health Check Template

Troubleshooting Review
Troubleshooting Process
Troubleshooting Review Ground Rules

Team Exercise - Develop a template for conducting a Troubleshooting Review.

Review Focus Areas

Discussion - How are Quality Issues addressed on troubled projects?

Day Two

Student presentations of white papers read

4. Project Rescue - Recovering from problems

Project Rescue Effort
Types of Project Rescue
Runaway Project Remedies

Exercise – Project Rescue Process

Rescue Project Charter

Turnaround Strategy

1. Analyze Current Position
2. Define Target Position

Exercise - Ideal Solution Element

3. Evaluate Strategic Options
4. Generate Plans & Endorse Strategy

Outcomes for Project Rescue

Other Ramifications

Checkpoints

Discussion - Why is it a challenge to terminate a project?

5. Terminating a Troubled Project - Planning and Executing a Project Termination

Project Termination needs to be planned

Why terminate a project?

Making the termination decision

Guidelines for project termination

Lessons Learned

Team Discussion – Project Closure

Final Exercise

6. Class Closure

Course Summary

Course Review