

It's a known fact that only **2.5% of companies** successfully complete all of the projects they begin. Let's just sit with that fact for a minute, because it's pretty shocking, don't you think? So many people, teams and companies failing to meet their goals, get where they want (or need) to go, and potentially letting down their people and their customers.

Yes, it's a grim illustration of just how very difficult it is to see big projects through to completion – but it could also be an opportunity.

What are the opportunities, then, for you to offer something different to the market, or to streamline your processes and boost your profitability, or develop a new and impactful organisational structure? Because if you, your team, and your company can nail getting projects done – and done well – you're automatically in the top 3% of companies performing at their peak.

There are some constants that show up time and time again in project teams that work. We'll look at some of them here and help you assess how close you are to becoming that project team that never fails to meet the mark.

Set the right goal

Sure, shoot for the moon if you've done your homework and assessed, with eyes wide open, that you can get there. But if your due diligence is lacking, you've doomed the project to failure from the beginning. Some might say it's critical to shoot for the biggest goal possible, and that if you even get halfway there that's a win. Well, it might be – but consider what that sort of thinking might do to the morale of the people in your team who are constantly being asked to pull off the impossible.

Some people will be motivated by the almost-impossible, their heart set racing by the feeling of always being just one step away from glory. But others will see the impossibility of your goal from the start, and feel increasingly demotivated as the weeks go by. And that's human nature – some of us love the feeling of stepping into the unknown, others need to track their progress in tangible and definable ways.

So, be realistic. Ambitious, of course, but ground your goals in reality for the biggest chance of success.

Play total football

Learning some lessons from the total football concept can be central to how great teams get projects over the finish line. Football experts describe total football as a way of playing in which any player can step into the role of any other player – basically, every single player should be good enough to step into any position on the pitch, at a moment's notice.

If we have the opposite ethos in a project team, where each individual firmly holds their own area of knowledge close to their chest, your chances of success are likely to remain limited.

Siloed knowledge can cause division in teams by promoting siloed working and allowing people or factions to hold more power than is healthy for the overall team.

By opening up individual knowledge to become team knowledge, you're allowing for the human factor that can so often kill good projects. Knowledge-holders leave, or get sick, or are reluctant to share and lose their power base. Or maybe they simply have an off day, and there's nobody who can quickly step into their extremely-qualified shoes.

You can fill the gaps in individual knowledge by allowing your team the time and space to gel and bond over shared experiences. When trust is established, people are much more likely to open up and share information with their colleagues, giving your project the boost that it needs.

Don't communicate by numbers

In every piece of corporate literature you'll ever read, communication will be called out as the key to good teamwork. And that's true – but at Insights we like to take comms and make it personal.

It's not enough to communicate regularly – for example, one person's regular is another person's cluttered inbox. What you need to do is assess what works for the various members of your project team, making it a one size fits one deal, not one size fits all.

It might be that huddles work for your team – as a rule – but some people might benefit from a quick catch up over coffee, where they feel comfortable asking more probing questions in relative privacy. Or your team could benefit from the enhanced knowledge they'll get if you tailor those short and snappy emails to something with a little more depth.

Whatever change, or changes, you make, remember that communication is never a bad thing – but how you deliver it might make it so. Get your comms right for your team, and you're onto a winner.

The bottom line

There are other elements of teamwork that are key if projects are to be successfully completed, for example how decisions are made, how (and if) progress is measured, defining success, and creating clarity of role and purpose. These elements should all weave together to create a project team that is focused, aligned, trusting, and effective.

If you want to learn more about what great teamwork looks like, come and talk to Insights. High impact teams are our bread and butter, and we can work with you to deliver on the projects that are critical to your success.

“Trying to manage a project without project management is like trying to play a football game without a game plan.”

– Professor Katherine Tate

Brown University



Greig Johnston
Chief Technology
Officer

Greig joined Insights as Chief Technology Officer in 2011, armed with a clear determination to transform technology and inspire our customers with his vision for leading-edge technology.