

# Software project success checklist

Answer 11 questions to assess the chance your project will succeed.

How likely is it that you'll deliver quality software offering all and only the features needed to delight your customers and meet your strategic objectives, and do so on time and on budget?

## How to assess your project

We've listed a set of 11 practices that have been found to predict success in software development projects.

Note how well you follow each practice on a scale of 0–9, with 0 meaning you don't follow the practice at all, through to 9 meaning you totally nail it.

Add up your total. The maximum is 99. No project is 100% sure to succeed, but how close will yours come?

## Tried and tested practices

These practices are based on research into real projects, detailed below the checklist.

We've combined these studies with our own empirical research. For 14 years we've been following the Agile principle of reflecting on how to be more effective and adjusting our behaviour accordingly. We continually test new practices, adapting and retaining those that work. We've fed what we learnt into the project success predictors below.

You may notice that these are all Agile practices. That's because we've found that Agile works.

And we're not alone. The 2018 Standish Group project management report found that Agile projects enjoy a 60% greater chance of success than non-Agile projects.

<b>Eleven practices that predict success</b>	<b>Your rating</b>
	9 = totally 0 = not at all
Does your project team have a shared vision for the project outcomes: the positive impact you'll deliver your customers and your organisation?	
Will your project team include a product owner or manager who is responsible for setting priorities based on these project outcomes, and who has the time and authority to give feedback quickly and decisively?	
Will you complete top priority work first, and reprioritise as you learn more about your users' needs, solution options or changes in the marketplace?	
Will the team regularly check and improve their work, including through automated testing, code reviews, product owner acceptance checks and user testing, and through demos of working software at the end of each iteration that all stakeholders can attend?	
Will the team regularly check the way they are working — in a safe and open environment — and make any changes that are needed?	
Will your team work in short iterations of between 1 and 4 weeks, delivering working software at the end of each iteration?	
Will your team break work into the smallest and simplest batches they can?	
Will your team focus on fully completing each batch of work before starting the next, so they can limit work in progress? To do so, will they integrate and deploy code frequently, and do they have a shared, explicit understanding of the quality standards required for deployment, demo and user testing?	
Will the work of the team, including the amount of work in progress, be tracked on a prominent physical project board as well as any digital tool?	
Are the team empowered to deliver? Do they have the cross-functional capability to deliver working software themselves? Will they organise their own work, share joint responsibility, focus solely on the project, and be able to easily talk face-to-face or via video?	
Are you open to trade-offs between scope, time and budget, while being uncompromising on quality?	
<b>Your total score</b>	

# Research on software project success factors

## **Standish Group CHAOS project management report 2018**

Every two years, the Standish Group assesses the factors underlying software project performance by analysing the CHAOS database (Comprehensive Human Appraisal for Originating Software).

Top success factors:

- Decision latency (the faster your decisions the better)
- Minimum scope (keep the project small by focussing on top priorities)
- Project sponsors (the product owner or sponsor must be highly skilled).

[CHAOS Report: Decision Latency Theory: It is all about the Interval](#)

## **Success factors that influence Agile software development project success**

Research paper from the American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS).

Top success factors:

- Strong customer involvement
- Good Agile project management processes
- Product owner helps maximise business value delivered by team
- Good Agile engineering techniques or practices
- Good technologies and development tools

[Success Factors that Influence Agile Software Development Project Success](#)

## **An empirical study into social success factors for Agile software development**

Technical report that tests a conceptual model of success factors against 40 projects from 19 organisations.

Top success factors:

- Value congruence
- Degree of adoption of Agile practices
- Transformational leadership

[An Empirical Study into Social Success Factors for Agile Software Development](#)