

# Conventional Project Management: A Dozen Dumb Ideas...

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**PROGRAM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

# Dumbness..

- If a million people have a stupid idea, it's still a stupid idea
- Stupid is as stupid does
- It takes a wonderful brain and exquisite senses to produce a few stupid ideas.
  - George Santayana (1863 - 1952)
- Never attribute to malice what can be adequately explained by stupidity.
  - Unknown, *Hanlon's Razor Napoleon*

Conventional Thinking - why  
they don't understand us...

# A Dozen Dumb Ideas

- Disclaimer: OK, not so much dumb ideas...
- ...as good intentions, badly applied

# Dumb Idea 1: Doing the Wrong Projects

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# Dumb Idea 1: Doing the Wrong Projects

- Good question, dumb timing: “How will we measure success?”
- Answer: Why was the project selected in the first place?

## Dumb Idea 2: Most project Names (including PMO)

- Do your project names speak to desired result, or
- Do they talk about process and technology?
- What would that mean in your life?

# While We're on the Subject of PMOs...

- Why 2/3 ar failing
- Starting from the wrong place
- Support the project teams, do not enforce standards and consistency (that'll come later)



# What a PMO Can Do

- Project Close out history
- Shared Risk Schedules
- Managaing inbound and outbound deliverables across a program

# Dumb Idea 3: Starting with PM Tools

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# A Gantt Chart is not a Proxy for a Project Under Control

- Don't know measures of success...
- Don't understand stakeholders
- Haven't identified/categorized/mitigated risk, but we DO have a schedule...

# Dumb Idea 4: Starting at the Beginning of a project

- The outrageous optimism of forward-based planning
- Shouldn't you know what the end looks like before you start?

# Dumb Idea 4: Starting with the Schedule

- The outrageous optimism of forward-based planning
- Shouldn't you know exactly what you're doing first?

# Dumb Idea 5: Starting Anywhere Else other than Stakeholder Expectations...

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# Dumb Idea 6: Number fixation....

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# Sub-Dumb Idea 6.1: Precision when it doesn't exist

- "It is the mark of an instructed mind to rest satisfied with the degree of precision which the nature of the subject permits and not seek an exactness where only an approximation of the truth is possible."

Aristotle

- Using estimate classes instead - 77 cents means...



# Sub-Dumb Idea 6.2: Percentage Complete

- Are you pouring concrete?
- What does 70% of 'requirements complete' look like?
- How fast do we get to 95%
- ...and then how slowly to 100%?

# Dumb Idea 7: Contingency

- Everyone thinks they own it: “Take it out of your contingency...”
- If you *always* use it, is it really contingency?
- When was the last time you gave money back?
- ....and if you're adding scope with contingency funds, your plan was inaccurate at best, and dishonest at worst

# Dumb Idea 8: Most Project Tracking, and Project Dashboards in General

- Lack forecasting ability
- Like driving by the rear view mirrors

# Dumb Idea 9: Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light

- The project is “yellowish green”
- Does everyone understand what red means? What about yellow?
- For budget? For schedule? For performance?

# Dumb Idea 10: Steering Committees

- “A committee is a *cul de sac* down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled”
  - Sir Barnett Cocks
- Do you really want a committee steering anything?
- Do they all get a vote? Really?

# Dumb Idea 11: the Wrong Sponsor