IT PROJECTS & DISASTER AVOIDANCE

Deepak Garg, Shivani Goel and Khushil Saini

Abstract- Only 40% of the projects in computers & IT reach their completion & perform the work for which they were intended. The huge failure ratio is due to the negligence of the companies & Project teams in Disaster avoidance techniques. It is very similar to prevention is better than cure.

1. WHAT IS DISASTER AVOIDANCE

The Approach is completely different from the disaster management because the treatment in both the cases is always different. You go the Doctor before the disease & after the disease the recommendations will be different. So, Disaster avoidance is performing a checkup of the project at every phase of the development life cycle & sorting all the issues, which can creep in. Clear & timely decision-making is a key for disaster avoidance. The issues, which require the attention of the senior management should immediately be escalated. Every success factor of your project should be seen under microscopic eyes for any side effects.

The most common reasons of a project failure

1. You try to implement the project by the best strategies written in the books & don't mould those strategies for the organization you are doing the project. These strategies were never invented for your project. So those should only act as a guideline. Here you have to make your strategy keeping in mind the policy, culture, people of the organization.
2. The project team can very easily modify or make the software needed due to the high expertise of the people but still it has to satisfy the people & the end user who has to work on that project. The liking & adaptivity of the users should be one of the top priorities.
3. The software is ready, but it fails to work because integration with the existing system was not kept in mind.
4. One plant or location where top management sits is always given more importance, resulting in the problems & tardy progress at other locations.
5. Project team can unknowingly divide the workers by communication with only selected few, thus creating hatred in others towards the new system to be implemented.
6. The plan should be flexible enough to accommodate the changes up to some stage. The strict plans often break up because of their inability to bend.

HOW TO AVOID DISASTER

Forward Learning Mechanism

This mechanism works in reference to the mistakes in the ongoing projects & in reference to the previous projects handled by that Project Team. The previous mistakes should not be repeated & the lessons learnt should be reminded again & again to the team members. Share the success points as well with the team.

Collective Responsibility

All are working together in the project. The mistake done by an individual should not be highlighted. Otherwise he will lose interest in the project.

Distribution of Power

Decision making process should be simple. The team members should not be running after for every small thing to the manager.

Simple but satisfying

The emphasis should be on to make the project simple which satisfies the needs of the user. A good & complex project, which is not accepted by the user is of no use.

Measurement Criteria

There should be some milestones in the project so that it can be said that project is complete up to this step.

Process Reengineering

Some Business processes will require to be changed due to the new process those needs to be listed & chalked out in detail.

Training

Proper training to the user at every level about the project is necessary. It should also include the objectives & usefulness of the project.

Change Management

Proper change management procedure should be in place. A very good project can go to the ruins without the institutionalization of the project with in the company.

Choice of Project Team

You should not expect best results from the best people. It generally happens that a particular person does not have much workload. So, put him in the project. This will surely bring the disaster. Best people available in the company should be deputed in the project team. It should be a combination of functional & technical consultants. The technical person knowing a computer

language very well may not know the intricacies of the finance department & vice versa.

Who owns the project
There should be proper ownership of the project. Someone should be answerable in case of any shortcoming. It is not the only responsibility of the third party to whom you had given the project for execution.

Defining the scope
The projects are always extendable in terms of functionality. It should not be left open ended. After due consultations the scope of the project should be freezed leaving little room for scope creep.

Quality Check
Many tools are now available to perform the software Engineering related tests on your products. Other techniques of quality measurement are also there. These will ensure the longer life & durability of the project in terms of enhancements & modifications or troubleshooting required later.

Integration issues
Majority of the projects now spanned in multiple locations in many countries, different technical environments & different cultures. All the issues related to Integration should be deliberated threadbare.

Legacy Systems
If the data has to be shifted from the legacy systems or the project has to be interfaced with the legacy systems then compatibility issues need utmost attention.

Security
Security has become the buzzword; because we are now prone to more security hazards due to Internet & other networks our machines are part of.
Any security breach can create havoc for your systems & the company as well.

III. Sensing the problem & having a problem resolution process
When anyone of the project team senses a problem, the following techniques can be used depending on the type & no. of problems.

Disaster avoidance Committee
A committee can be made to take any decision related to the project. If any hurdle comes then this committee can be called & decisions can be taken.

Guidelines for making the committee
a. It should be vested with necessary powers
b. It should not have more than five members
c. All the members should be readily available

Escalation process
The issues, which can't be solved at the project team level, should be escalated up the hierarchy. These issues should be properly followed up. The documentation & status of all these issues should be kept in a depository.

Dividing the problem
If the problem involves more than one department or locations then it should be categorized with respect to the departments or locations to avoid confusion. This will also help in early resolution of the problem.

Problem Feasibility
Whether the problem is economically & technically feasible or not? Is it worth raising it? With this analysis the number of problems escalated reduces o half.

IV Project Diary
As we require a dairy for our daily schedule for keeping all our jobs in office, home & society in sync. Similarly to keep all the aspects of the project on time we need a project diary.

We keep on taking notes in our daily dairy if some work is left or any other important notes & references.
Similarly project Diary will also keep the important remarks about every significant step or work, which requires attention. So project Diary will act as a reflection of the progress & health of the project.

The Project diary should contain
1. Plan for meetings and reviews. All the concerned should be informed at proper time to attend the same.
2. All the training plan
3. Change Management Data
4. Area of work of different members of the project team
5. Time schedule of different works to be completed
6. Dates for achieving the Milestones should be highlighted
7. Any issue, which has come up should be noted down. The resolution date should also be fixed in the diary. It helps to keep the minor issues in your memory.
8. Follow up date of the decisions made in different meeting sessions.
9. Names & addresses of the team members, vendors, consultants, senior people & Govt. Officials associated with the project.

V. This is often not given the attention it requires resulting in some or other kind of disaster. Gap analysis is analyzing the gaps between the existing system & upcoming system which we are trying to develop.
The importance of it is always undermined in the excitement of the new system by the project team. The existing system is the one, which is running the organization & can't be neglected out of your analysis.
The comparison can be on the basis of
a) Weaknesses in the existing system & how we are going to remove it in the new system. If the new system can't do away with the weaknesses then what is the use of it & it will prove to be a disaster.

Strength of the existing system

The strength of the existing system can be in its business process or it can be in its security & privacy or in some other things. This has to be properly inculcated in the new system.

Infrastructure of the existing system

The existing software, hardware, network, database can be used for cost saving. It should not be dismantled in haste. It should also be kept running side by side as an alternative. There are many examples of companies shifting to their older systems for survival.

Will there be new persons on the job or the same persons will do the job. It can be mix of both. All the issues related to Human resources are very sensitive & should be handled in that sense.

Engineering approach being used in the existing system

The existing system will be working on some Engineering Approach prevalent at the time of introduction of that system. That should be studied & lessons should be learnt which can be included in the new system.

Which Methodology the existing system is using

Whether the current system is using Object Oriented Methodology or Procedural Methodology or some other. Depending on that there will be significant shift in the upcoming system & the process how we will bring about the change.

So we can conclude this by saying that disaster avoidance is always better than disaster recovery. It involves less risk & less cost & also result in better project progress. The point which comes on the top is that any problem which comes in should not be left to be solved by GOD but the project team has to follow it & resolve it unless it is not dropped.

The new methodologies in the project development are taking care of the risk avoidance & preventing the disaster in the future.