

## How A Fresh Approach To Project Management Can Drive

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When an organization suffers from stalled or failed projects, I call this projectdefunctitis. Symptoms of this common disease often include:

- Not growing as an organization / company.
- Falling behind competitors.
- Losing money or customers or staff.
- Decreasing employee satisfaction & morale (due to the failure of projects, stale organization, complacency, etc.)

All joking aside, this really isn't a laughing matter. A fresh approach to project management often cures things, getting projects back on track and resulting in creative problem-solving.

### Why a Fresh Approach to Project Management Makes a Difference

Projects stall for a number of reasons—your team comes to an impasse, you are bogged down in project management, there's in-team conflict, you're saddled with doubts because of past failure. Any of these issues can get in the way of your success, but a fresh perspective and an independent leader can break through all of these barriers. Let's look at how.

#### When Your Team Is Stuck

Sometimes you just get stuck on a particular idea or course of action. Some of your team may have strong ideas, while others believe the opposite. Sometimes you have too many questions to move forward.

When a project feels stuck, **independent leadership can help decipher whether to further validate an idea or see new avenues forward.** Independent leadership can facilitate engagement and make sure everyone has a chance to weigh in. It's important to break down silos and get people working together.

If you're stuck trying to do it "the way we've always done it," an independent leader will observe the situation without judgment and find common ground among your stakeholders to move things forward in a new way. Companies bring me in for a fresh perspective, unique processes – and input without bias.

#### When Project Management Weighs You Down

When a project plan is too structured, you can get bogged down in details and check-ins. An overly structured plan can also stall a project if the project manager can't keep up. Independent leadership can make the difference that saves a project.

When project management feels heavy and too structured, I **plan as much or as little as an idea or initiative needs.** From managing numerous projects of varying sizes, I know how much detail and how many check-ins to include. I work with key players to create a plan that makes sense and feels concrete and doable.

And when I manage that plan, I put everything into. While in-house leadership may get sidetracked by other initiatives or day to day dealings, I can focus on the project at hand.

## When Team Conflicts Derail You

You are only as good as your team. If there is a conflict between leaders and team members or tension and conflict among team members, it will affect your progress. Whether these tensions are a product of this project or an ongoing issue, outside project leadership brings fresh perspectives and ideas. I find new ways to create wonderful experiences for those on my team to overcome conflict so that everyone can focus on the tasks at hand.

One trick I use sounds counterintuitive, but **instead of focusing on conflict resolution, focus on opening minds.** This allows us to be more aware of similarities in other people and creates a sense of inclusiveness and acceptance. In turn, inclusiveness creates unity, generates growth, and makes leading and executing on strategic projects so much easier.

## When You're Stuck on Past Failure

Success can build momentum, and likewise, past failure can breed more stalled projects. Some of the issues that arise are:

- Team morale drops because of past failure, especially if a lot of work went into the project before it failed or stalled.
- People are afraid to commit to a project for fear of failure again.
- The team may lose faith in leadership.
- People fail to learn from past experience and follow paths that will stall projects again.

When big ideas or initiatives have failed in the past, independent leadership can give you a fresh start.

When I work with teams who have experienced past failed projects, I **create a safe space to help them accomplish hard-to-reach goals, while enjoying the process** along the way. We debrief on past projects for lessons learned but don't dwell on the past. We devise a fresh approach with enough structure and check-ins in the plan to give confidence. And we acknowledge the feelings that could derail the process so that we can stay on track.

Projectdefunctitis is a real problem for many organizations, but it is definitely curable. A fresh approach and independent project management are the best treatments. If you've experienced a stalled or failed project and find that it is impacting your company or organization as you try to move forward, it's time for a checkup. Let's talk about where you are stalling and steps you can take to avoid another stalled or failed project. [Set up a 15-20 minute call here](#) and we'll talk soon!



A passionate organizer of people and initiatives, Erica Smigielski brings over twenty years of experience in project leadership to financial software and SaaS companies who want to launch their next big idea. She leads large-scale, complex projects like product launches and company mergers and acquisitions as well as focused efforts to bring structure and process to fast-track businesses. Erica holds certifications as a Stanford Advanced Project Manager as well as a Certified Group Facilitator, making her a master orchestrator of strategic planning, as well as a skillful communicator who can expertly navigate complex group dynamics.