

Starting New Projects

When you start a new project, you need to follow these 8 "golden rules" to ensure its success...

1. **Sponsorship:** You need to have a highly motivated sponsor who understands the criticality of the project on the business and is motivated to making it a success. They need to have the resources available to support you, and the right level of "influence" in the business.
2. **Targets:** Sit down with your sponsor and agree specific targets. Make sure they are realistic. Perform a feasibility study to ensure that what is discussed is feasible to achieve. Only agree to the targets if there is sufficient contingency. Add an extra 20% to the budget and timeline if you can.
3. **Scope:** Keep your scope to a minimum. If you can't get the contingency you need, then try and negotiate to deliver less than you have to. And if that doesn't work, identify any deliverables that are not on the critical path and negotiate to produce these items after the project deadline has been reached.
4. **Resourcing:** Find the best people you can afford. Then find extra people to assist, as further contingency. You will always need more people than you plan for, so you need to identify additional help as a "backup" should you need it. This could include people from other teams in your business, contractors or suppliers.
5. **Planning:** Your success will be measured against your ability to deliver against the plan. So plan wisely. Only plan in detail the next few months. After that, plan at a summary level. Never "over-plan" by listing every tiny task for the entire length of the project, as people will hold you to it. Then, stick to the plan.
6. **Processes:** Implement processes for managing time, cost, quality, change, risks and issues upfront. Communicate these processes to your entire team and make sure that everyone follows them rigorously.
7. **Tracking:** With your plan complete, you need to start tracking progress against it. Track your progress against budget and schedule. Track your risks and issues. Track your work efficiency and your overall percent complete.
8. **Reporting:** Report on your project status weekly. Keep your reports brief and 100% accurate. Report the summary level to your Sponsor and the detailed level to your team. Focus on the current issues to hand. Remember that your project report can be a great motivational tool to rally everyone behind the project and focus them on the outcome. With the whole team motivated to achieve the goals, you have the best chance of success.