



Lessons Learned – Top 10

1. **Projects must have a clear shared vision and agree on the problem to be solved.** The project has succinct, clear goals that can serve as a reference throughout the project. The sponsor can clearly articulate what “done” looks like. Active communication exists between internal resources at all levels, as well the vendor or vendors and any stakeholders in the project to help maintain alignment and transparency.
2. **Business strategy alignment and operational context are well defined and drive requirements definition.** Business requirements are defined by those who will use the product, technical and performance requirements are included, and individual requirements are vetted against the overall project objectives. Business processes have been reengineered as applicable.
3. **Change management is an integral part of the project plan.** The range of stakeholders is identified and engaged. Their expectations are well managed. Their buy-in is sought and they are able to get involved in the project and understand the desired solution.
4. The project is defined as a “solution”, not an IT or business project. The sponsor and team are flexible in how to achieve the solution and willing to try alternative paths. **Early on, the state decides whether it will “make” the solution, allowing greater customization and reducing the need for process change, or “buy” the solution, allowing quicker adoption of existing software but requiring significant process change.**
5. **The executive sponsor is active, visible, and has sufficient expertise and standing for the project being conducted** and is prepared to champion the solution throughout the life of the project. The project manager has sufficient expertise and experience for the scale of the project. **The project team is sufficient, committed to the project, and has clearly defined roles** and backfill state resources have been appropriately planned and their onboarding is timely. Last, appropriate governance is applied, and it is tailored to the needs of the project.
6. **The complexity of the solutions is not underestimated, and the plan has well defined project success criteria.** Estimates on cost and time are well researched and analyzed. Fundamental planning and management disciplines are applied, and planning is transparent, logical and inclusive. Risk identification, tacking and mitigation are practices in a comprehensive fashion. Dependencies and constraints are fully considered and well understood.
7. **The contract is clear, logical not overly complicated, and is appropriate to the solution being developed.** The project manager and project team (and contract manager if a separate role) are involved in the development of the RFP and the request is framed in a manner that encourages competition. Strategic partnerships are leveraged for both the state and supplier’s benefit. The contract is managed effectively, and maximum value is sought for the state. Quality is a focus and is everyone’s responsibility as a critical component of the project.
8. **Service level agreements are appropriate and drive project quality.** Projects include appropriate acceptance criteria and the contracts include appropriate remedies.
9. **Formal, appropriate project management methodology is used.** Early delays are not ignored, and schedule, budget and quality are considered equally. Quality is not sacrificed for speed. The project is based on appropriate increments, not just large work items. Testing is robust and incremental to address complex situations and find and fix problems early. Knowledge transfer is effectively conducted.
10. **Key decisions are made by people who have the expertise to be making the critical decisions.** Decisions are documented and brought to closure and group decisions are facilitated toward the best possible answers. Answers are complete and not delayed.