



From Rejection to Results

Overcoming systemic resistance in project/program management

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The Next Hour of Our Lives Will Include...

- 01** **Anna's Project Story**
Turning a grassroots AI initiative into company-wide success
- 02** **What is Project Success?**
Lessons from PMI's Updated Success Criteria
- 03** **How we gain Buy-In**
A Step-by-Step Approach to Rally Support
- 04** **Executive-Level Failsauce**
Common Mistakes Leaders Make
- 05** **How YOU can achieve Success!**
Real-World Strategies for Transforming Ideas
- 06** **Thanks and Q&A**

From Rejection to Results

Anna's Project Story

Turning a grassroots
AI initiative into
company-wide success



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The Project Evolution

A Vision of Empowerment

- We were all told to create SMART Targets by management, but we weren't given the tools to do it
- Everyone hated Targets and there was severe misalignment with departmental and company goals
- I became an early adopter of ChatGPT as a GenAI SME, focusing on a scope of project and program management usage
- In the first week, I realized ChatGPT was the tool my team needed for building SMART Targets
- I had a vision of empowering EVERYONE through a custom GPT and a chatbot



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The Challenge

Absolutely no one wanted anything to do with this idea...



Lack of Leadership Buy-In

- My manager: “No one in our department is interested in being a project sponsor for this.”
- Sr VP of AI: “You should talk to HR, but I’m not sure which HR person that is.”
- Head of R&D: “We don’t have any resources to give you to build a chatbot.”

Emotional and Professional Hurdles

- Managing time for a passion project
- Doubting if others would understand my vision
- Wondering how to put a team together
- Meeting a tight deadline before the end of the year



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A Grassroots Solution

It's all about the Right People - Sponsor and Team

Persistence led us to advocates who aligned with the vision and had influence (even if it took a few tries):

- Regulatory and Compliance
- Marketing
- Human Resources

We built Trust through Collaboration

We faced resistance by listening and providing solutions to:

- AI & ML, R&D
- Security, IT, Legal
- HR

Aligning with organizational goals built credibility and support.

Small wins validated the idea, such as positive feedback from the test group.



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The Resolution



Leadership Recognized Value

- VP of Strategic Initiatives: “This is exactly what we needed to help solve alignment issues.”
- Sr VP of AI: “Everyone at the OpenAI conference talked about workshops to promote adoption.”
- Head of R&D: “Can you present at the upcoming GenAI meeting about your project?”

Emotional and Professional Empowerment

- I’m inspired in my other work
- My vision being realized was empowering and professionally brought me company-wide attention
- I’ve made friendships and many connections
- Staying adaptable through Agile and phasing resolved many issues

Phase 1 Project Impact

- 867 attendees at 3 workshops - 3.5x over the average workshop total participation
- 500 custom GPT chats in the first 45 days - top performing custom GPT
- 357 added licenses during workshop month (1,000 total)
- +878% workshop adoption impact over typical non-workshop days



Interactive Poll:

Have you ever had a
project idea
rejected or
roadblocked?

How did you
respond?

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What is Project Success?

Lessons from PMI's Updated Success Criteria



www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/project-success

Maximizing Project Success

Elevating the impact of the Project
Profession. Elevating the impact
on our world.



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Lessons from PMI's Updated Success Criteria

Delivering Value that Justifies Effort and Expense

- Shifting the definition of project success beyond traditional metrics
- Value-based outcomes drive stakeholder satisfaction
- Aligns efforts with strategic goals and broader impacts

Figure 1 – Definition of Project Success

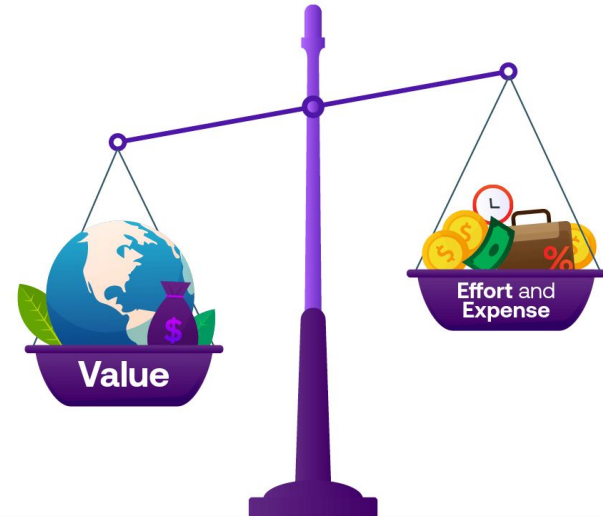
Our new definition accounts for both execution and outcomes.

Project Success

[proj-ekt suhk-ses]

The consensus view across intended beneficiaries, other stakeholders and project participants that a project was perceived to have:

*Delivered **value** that was
worth the effort and expense.*





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The Transformations in PMI's Updated Criteria

Manage Perceptions

Align stakeholder views of success

“Help stakeholders to see value relative to the resources invested and feel aligned on objectives with measurable outcomes.”

Own Success

Accountability beyond execution

“Be accountable for the project's value, not only its execution.”

Reassess Parameters

Adapt as projects evolve

“Projects evolve. Adapt as needs, technologies or goals change to deliver value and manage perceptions.”

Expand Perspectives

Link projects to organizational goals

“Consider how the project integrates and aligns with broader business goals and impacts the world.”

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Why This Change Matters

- Focuses on delivering tangible and perceived value
- Sets the project up for success
- The project manager is more business partner, less administrator
- Transforms our profession

Insights to Activate Project Success

Our new definition — delivered value that was worth the effort and expense — reflects broad agreement that project professionals can and should be responsible for the success of the project, even beyond completion by expanding their perspective to take accountability and ownership for outcomes.



Project Professionals

The focus on VALUE implies a mindset shift for practitioners to being responsible for project success, not just project management success.



Executives

Setting the project up for success beyond the specifications is a higher level of expectation executives should adopt, while considering the project manager more of a business partner and less of an administrator.



The Project Management Profession

Meeting this new set of expectations could be transformative for the profession.



Open Dialogue:

What do YOU think about this updated success criteria?

Which transformation most resonates with you?

- Manage Perceptions
- Own Project Success
- Reassess Parameters
- Expand Perspectives

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How we gain buy-in

A Step-by-Step Approach to Rally Support

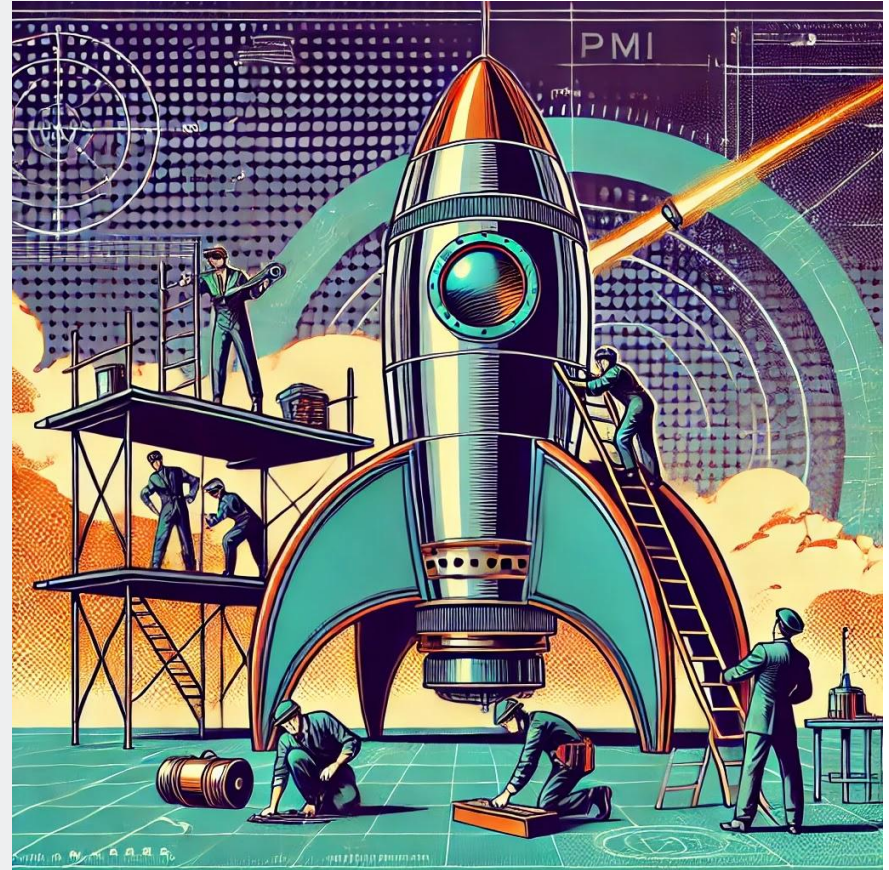


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Frame Your Project's Value for Organizational Alignment

Key Points:

1. **Understand Organizational Goals:** Tie your project to high-level objectives.
2. **Speak Their Language:** Use terminology and metrics that resonate with decision-makers.
3. **Demonstrate Strategic Fit:** Showcase how the project supports broader initiatives.



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Start Small to Build Momentum

Key Points:

1. **Identify Early Adopters:** Find colleagues or small teams who are open to innovation and willing to support your idea.
2. **Start with a Pilot:** Implement a small-scale version of your project to demonstrate its viability and value.
3. **Leverage Success Stories:** Share tangible results from the pilot to build credibility and attract more supporters.



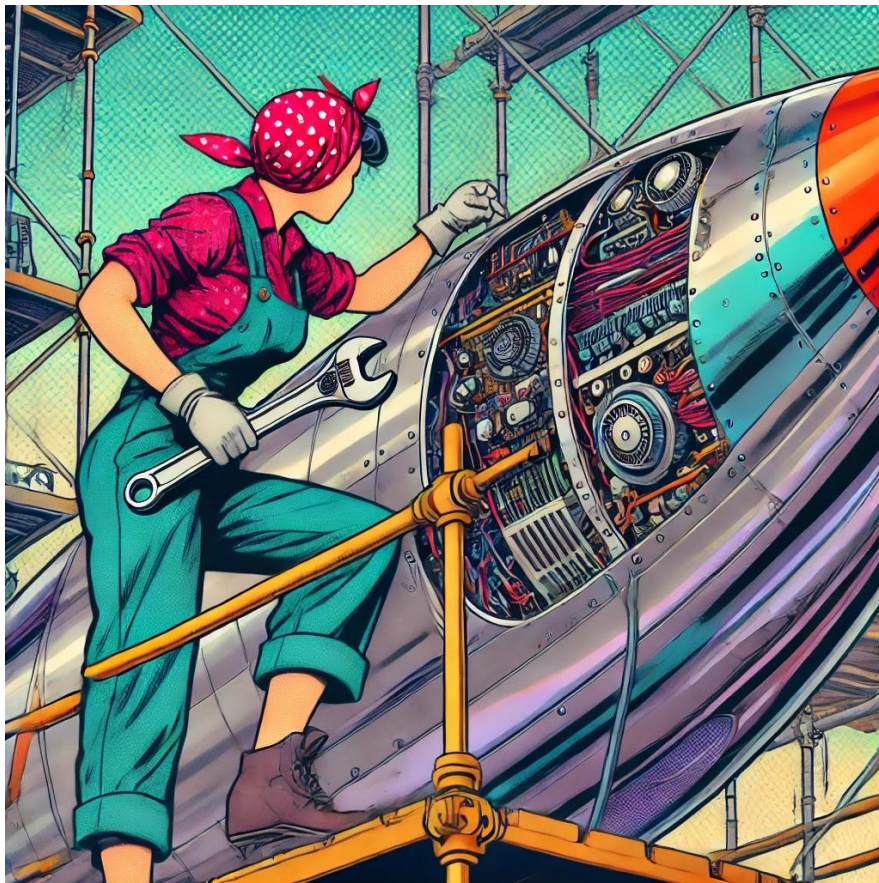
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Use Data to Build Confidence and Buy-In

Key Points:

1. **Collect Relevant Metrics:** Identify and track metrics that are directly tied to your project goals.
2. **Present Data Clearly:** Use visuals like graphs, charts, or dashboards to make your data easy to understand and impactful.
3. **Anticipate Questions:** Prepare data to address potential concerns.





Your Turn: Outline One Step to Gain Buy-In

- Prompt: “Think of a project or idea you’d like to implement. What’s one **concrete step** you can take to gain support?”
- Examples for Inspiration:
 - “Identify a peer who could pilot my idea and provide feedback.”
 - “Schedule a meeting with a stakeholder to present the value proposition.”
 - “Create a one-page summary with key metrics for my idea.”

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Executive-Level Failsauce

Common Mistakes Leaders Make



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Oops # 1 Ignoring Sponsorship Opportunities



Overcoming as a Project Manager

- Identify Potential Sponsors with a vested interest in success
- Communicate Value with alignment and team benefit
- Foster Engagement with regular updates to keep sponsors involved and invested

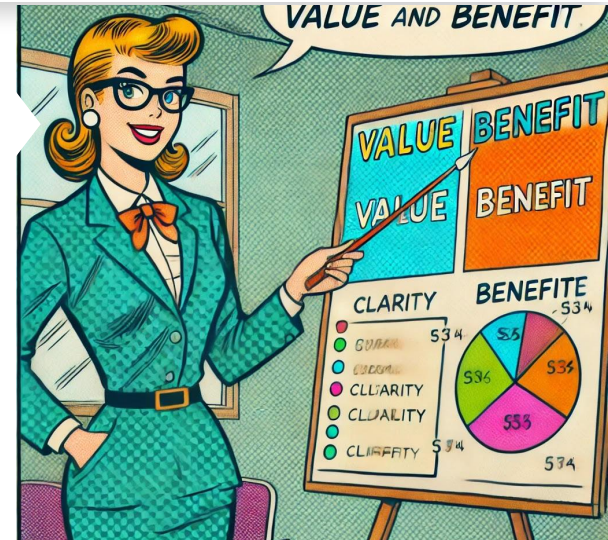
Why It Matters as a Leader

Sponsorship provides:

- Authority
- Visibility
- Resources

Without it, project champions

- Face unnecessary obstacles
- Lack the credibility to push initiatives forward



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Oops # 2 Misaligned Strategy



Real-World Pitfalls in my AI Initiative

It was possible that we could have:

- Launched a campaign disconnected with company and HR goals
- Focused on technical innovation without addressing needs

Instead we stayed aligned and avoided these pitfalls

Why It Matters as a Leader

Misaligned projects:

- Waste **Resources**
- Fail to contribute to organizational **Objectives**

Without it, project champions

- Struggle to gain support
- Find it hard to demonstrate value

Overcoming as a Project Manager

- Understand **Strategic Goals** - mission, vision, and key objectives.
- Tie projects to **Outcomes**, supporting broader initiatives.
- **Engage Stakeholders Early**, validating alignment with leaders in advance

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Oops # 3 Unbalanced Support and Autonomy



Overcoming as a Project Manager

- Set clear **Expectations** - roles, responsibilities, and goals
- **Trust** your team, allowing autonomy in execution among team members
- Get and provide **Feedback** consistently

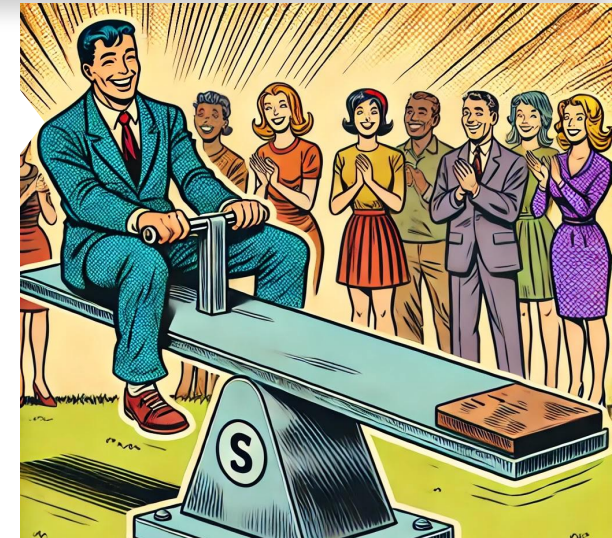
Why It Matters as a Leader

Micromanagement

- **Stifles** creativity and innovation

Under-engagement

- Leaves teams **Unsupported**





Interactive Poll:

What do you
experience more -
micromanagement or
under-engagement?

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How YOU can achieve success!

Real-World Strategies for Transforming Ideas



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Think Big, Start Small

Scaling Ideas through Incremental Wins

Why It Works:

- Demonstrates feasibility and value early.
- Builds confidence and momentum for larger initiatives.

Key Steps:

- Start with a **Pilot** program
- Gather **Feedback**
- Use **Iterative** cycles to continuously improve and adjust
- Leverage success to **Expand** support and reach

Example: Our AI project started as a grassroots idea, tested in a single department and then a larger group, and scaled to enterprise-wide adoption



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“Don’t fight forces, use them.” -*Buckminster Fuller*
Leveraging Momentum for Success

Key Points:

- **Identify the Forces:** Understand organizational dynamics, stakeholder priorities, and external trends that influence your project.
- **Harness Momentum:** Align your project with these forces to gain natural support
- **Adapt and Flow:** Avoid rigid plans—be flexible and responsive to changes that can benefit your project.

Examples:

- We found supportive people
- Resistance was a signal for us to adapt and communicate alignment; we added phasing and clearly related to bigger goals
- When stakeholders were hesitant, we adapted our pitch for different audiences and presented small wins



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Be Brave and Build Resilience Cultivating it in Project Management

Why It Matters:

- Essential for tackling resistance and pursuing bold ideas
- Resilience ensures you can pivot, learn, and continue progressing despite setbacks

How to Build Bravery and Resilience:

- Embrace **Challenges as Opportunities**—obstacles can be a chance to innovate or refine your approach
- Use **Feedback** and constructive criticism as a tool for improvement rather than a threat
- Celebrate **Small Wins**, building confidence by acknowledging incremental successes along the way
- Trust your **Vision** and take **Calculated Risks** to push boundaries, staying brave in the face of uncertainty

Example: In our AI project, initial rejection didn't stop us—we adjusted your approach, rallied grassroots support, and turned skepticism into advocacy.





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Thank you!

Q&A Time

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