



White paper

Planning makes projects slower

How too much process can kill a project

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Planning makes projects slower

In the previous chapter you said that planning makes projects faster. Now you say it makes them slower. What gives?

Yes, it is true, as explained in the previous chapter that project planning saves time and ultimately makes your project more efficient. After seeing this work in practice it's tempting to build upon the success and look for formalized development methodologies that others have perfected. And they exist. The problem with formalized methodologies is that they can be overbearing and bureaucratic. Do you know the difference between a methodologist and a terrorist? You can negotiate with the terrorist.

The premise in the previous chapter was that a small amount of process overhead reduces thrash and increases the resulting volume of work. The key word here is small. Formal process methodologies aren't small. There are policies, reviews, procedures, and documentation for everything. Those sometimes make the process stifling to creativity and freethinking. Furthermore the process itself makes so much paperwork that very little actual work is performed. People don't have time to do the tasks they were assigned to do, and they sense that productivity is lost to process. Morale is affected.

Balance is the key. Since the ultimate objective is to produce as much actual work as possible, the balanced approach is to inject enough process to reduce thrash, but remain productive. Attempting to eliminate all thrash with a heavy-handed methodology may have diminishing returns and affects other areas of productivity. There is a science to this, but the variables are myriad and complex. Some of these factors include creativity, unnecessary rework, morale, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, company goals, budgets, product vision, and product release dates. These all need to be held in delicate balance.

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