

# MILESTONE

*Providing Stepping Stones  
Along the Path to Success*



A WOMAN-OWNED  
SMALL BUSINESS

WHY PROJECTS  
BECOME DISTRESSED

Whenever a project starts to go off track, it has gone into distress. A distressed project doesn't mean that it's failing or unrecoverable, but it does mean that some adjustments should be made to get it back on track. In this *Milestone*, we will look at six reasons why projects become distressed. This is not an exhaustive list.

### ***Poor, Inadequate, or No Requirements Documentation***

It is impossible to generate complete requirements documentation at the beginning of a project. However, that is not an excuse for not trying to do so. Once requirements have been generated, ask yourself what your level of confidence is that you have done the best job possible. You should be reasonably certain that you have identified the necessary and sufficient set of requirements and only their detailed decomposition is suspect.

### ***Inappropriate or Insufficient Sponsorship***

Some sponsors take their job of sponsorship seriously. Others do not. As project manager, you should keep the project visible to your sponsor. Sending an email once a week is not sufficient. Try for face-to-face meetings if there is doubt about your sponsor's attentiveness to the project. Send them informal notes of project happenings to keep them connected. Keep them excited about the project and how it is going to contribute value to the organization.

### ***Lag Time between Project Approval and Kick-Off***

Getting a project approved is one thing. Getting it started is another. If the time between approval and startup is too long and the completion date is firm, project risk goes up. Any date-dependent tasks are compromised by the delay, so avoid using those in your project schedule if possible. You are also at some risk of losing team members due to the delay, especially those who have scarce skills that you need but so do other projects.

### ***No Plan Revision after Significant Cuts in Resources or Time***

Budget cuts, staff cuts, and shorter deadlines are not unusual. Under those circumstances, many project plans are not changed. Despite your pleas, senior management says something like this: "You'll figure out how to do it anyway. You always have." Most project managers do not have the tools to push back with an intelligent business argument.

### ***Estimates Done with Little Planning or Thought***

Far too many project managers don't take estimation seriously. They throw some numbers at the plan, and if no one objects, the numbers stay. The correct strategy is to get estimates from frontline workers who have done the tasks before or will be assigned to it. Unless they have been a credible source previously, you will want some validation of their estimates. Getting a second opinion from someone who is not on the project can be a good validation strategy.

### ***Overcommitment of Staff Resources***

This continues to be a major problem. Projects are often approved without assessing staff availability. You may have the skills needed, but the people with those skills are already committed to other projects and cannot work your project into their schedules.

<https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/effective-project-management>

Join Dr. Mathis on Monday, October 4 for our free *Distressed Projects* webinar. If you cannot attend, a replay link will be sent out after the webinar. To register, go to **[www.themathisgroup.com/webinars](http://www.themathisgroup.com/webinars)**.

UPCOMING  
FREE WEBINAR

DISTRESSED  
PROJECTS

MONDAY,  
OCTOBER 4

10:00 - 11:00 AM CST

1 PDU

TO REGISTER, GO TO

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# PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION AND INTERVIEW SKILLS FOR GATHERING BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS - 1 DAY

*PDU*s - 6.5

**PMI's Talent Triangle Breakdown**

Technical - 3.25

Leadership - 3.25



face-to-face



virtual  
instructor-led

**Course Description:** This one-day course will focus on ways to use communication to gather detailed information from the customer, analyze the information, and expedite the outcomes desired by the customer. Participants will understand how to focus a message and incorporate means to gain information using effective communication skills. This course will recommend ways of building stronger communication skills and will provide insight to different communication styles. Participants will learn new power by using certain words to impact the message and by asking questions that get noticed. This course will follow one or more of Project Management Institute's knowledge areas of the *PMBOK® Guide*.

## **Course Objectives:**

### **Objective 1: Evaluate how to approach people**

Identify perception

Examine what impacts perception

Compare reducing perception differences

### **Objective 2: Discuss how to gain understanding**

Analyze communication styles

Develop ways to increase understanding

Compare kinds of communication

Describe what communication should be communicated online

Examine reasons why communicating online is extremely difficult

Identify questions to ask if miscommunication is common

Discuss how to match your body language and the message

List characteristics of a poor listener

Predict obstacles of listening

Identify ways of asking questions which open up communication

### **Objective 3: Examine techniques for disagreeing**

Discuss caution signs that a disagreement is turning into a conflict

### **Objective 4: Create questions which explore the customer's desires and requirements**

Recognize which follow up questions will detail the expressed wishes of the customer

Analyze the interview data and determine true requirements of the customer

Develop a sequence of questions which encourages customers to give information freely

Examine feedback techniques for clarifying the real message being given from the customer

Evaluate the best feedback technique to use in mirroring the requirements back to the customer for approval

Analyze interview skills that will give insight into any project

### **Objective 5: Discuss which areas to brainstorm when doing a client project**

Examine how to set project objectives that are measurable and realistic

Discuss collecting data and information

Evaluate how to analyze a problem

Analyze the best skills and personnel needed to successfully fulfill this project

Evaluate ways to create a project plan, set expectations, and monitor progress



A WOMAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS (WOSB)



Providing quality, customized training and consulting services that inspire, educate, and equip organizations to be better tomorrow than they are today.

DR. KEITH MATHIS, PMP, PMI-ACP, CSM  
WANDA MATHIS, M.ED. PMI-ACP

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

OVER 60 PROJECT MANAGEMENT COURSES REGISTERED WITH PMI

PRESENTATIONS THE EDUCATE, MOTIVATE, AND INSPIRE

Since 1993, The Mathis Group has been helping organizations change worker productivity and behavior.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
MARKETING  
MOTIVATION  
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR  
LEADERSHIP  
CUSTOMER SERVICE

## COMPANY MANDATE

The Mathis Group provides training and consulting that will impact the organization and individual while maintaining an outstanding reputation for success and integrity.

## VALUES STATEMENT

Every person has worth and should be treated with respect.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Curriculum Design
- Project Management
- Organizational Behavior and Development
- Management
- Marketing
- Strategic Planning
- Executive Coaching
- Performance
- Team Building
- Emotional Intelligence
- Leadership
- Customer Service
- Creating Customer Value
- Supervisory Leadership
- Coaching and Counseling

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