

CHALLENGES FACING IT LEADERS WHEN MANAGING PLANNED AND UNPLANNED WORK IN DISPARATE SYSTEMS

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INTRODUCTION

As developers of **IT Work Management** software Entry Software has a vested interest in knowing what issues and challenges IT organizations are faced with regarding the management of projects, customer service and team resources. This “intelligence” is the basis of our development, marketing and the foundation of our sales successes.

This report delivers the findings of our **2014 IT Resource Management Survey of 151 business leaders in SMB’s across private enterprise, higher education and medical organizations in the United States**. Readers will be educated in how peers are relating to and solving issues related to resource management planning, project management and service.

SURVEY GROUP

The survey includes a cross section of 151 organizations in healthcare, education and private enterprise. The survey was designed for a broad audience and intended to identify issues common to all industries. A single industry focus, (medical for example), would have limited benefits to readers and would not help Entry Software understand universal issues that could be addressed through software and process.

We are satisfied that the Resource Management Survey has provided a universal picture of how organizations handle issues related to project management, customer service and resource management planning that can be applied across the entire SMB market, regardless of industry vertical.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY & QUESTIONS

Using the services of an independent marketing firm, IMTS of Austin Texas, over 500 candidates for the survey were identified and represented the following demographics:

- Healthcare, education and private enterprises – an equal mix.
- Organizations with a minimum of 25 IT employees with a maximum of 150 IT employees
- In the United States
- IT Managers and executives

The respondents, 151 in total, were asked a series of 6 questions. (Detailed answers to the questions will follow in the **Survey Results** section of the report. Jump to the results by [clicking here](#).)

THE QUESTIONS

Question 1: What percentage of projects were delayed due to demands from support operations?

This question reviewed and identified issues that combine both support services and project management. Only in very few organizations is the dedicated project management method in place and often only in larger enterprises. In the demographic some variation of mixed project methodology is in place; pulling project team members together in either a full time or part time capacity from different areas of the organization. In IT specifically, IT staff are multi-tasking in support in some capacity while also working on projects.

A key challenge that our clients face is the accurate prediction of project completion dates. There are common factors and uncommon factors that result in delayed projects. A common factor is the shifting of team-member focus from the project to support activity.

With question number one we wanted to determine the following:

- a. How serious was the problem
- b. What processes were in place to adjust for the problem
- c. Was this a problem that was worth addressing and fixing
- d. How could our solution address this very particular issue

Question 2: What are your most significant project management challenges?

This question takes a deeper dive into issues regarding project management. More specifically the information and systems used to perform the duties of a project manager. The average Project Manager uses a number of tools to gather information to support their processes including, but not limited to: spreadsheets, meetings, project management software and email.

While the first question focused on the impact of support on project timelines, this question focused on tools and availability of information.

With question number two we wanted to understand if their most significant project management challenges were a result of:

- a. Using the wrong tool for the job
- b. Overbooked or mismanaged resources
- c. Wasting time looking for project information for the purpose of reporting
- d. Spending too much time in status update meetings

Question 3: What is the accuracy of personnel resource planning for project availability?

A significant concern for our clients and prospective clients has been the accuracy of planning activities. A common set of questions asked by Project Managers is, “Who is available, when can I have them and how much of their time can I have?” These questions, when answered incorrectly or with guesswork, result in missed project deadlines, overworked staff, and blown project budgets.

Entry Software’s view is, “If we can deliver accurate personnel resource planning information to Project Managers and IT Managers then our clients will have better functioning IT departments.” Specifically they will experience:

- Timelier projects
- A reduction in data blind spots,
- An improvement to customer service
- A decrease in overtime hours
- A greater confidence in project management and planning processes.

Question 4: What are the most challenging aspects of tracking project status?

As mentioned in question two above, Project Management practices utilize multiple processes and tools to manage projects. In many cases Project Management tools are not in use universally throughout the IT organization which can result in information “blind-spots”.

Information required by Project Managers for project management processes, when scattered across the organization in different systems, (information that has not been recorded anywhere, dark data (Gartner), information in other systems i.e. timesheets) and which is not readily available can result in high-effort onerous processes for interviewing team members, collating and compiling information. The effort involved and the impact of the process on the organization, (use of valuable resource time, burden, cost), is such that project management becomes a difficult practice to execute.

Our survey sought to categorize the most challenging aspects of tracking projects status as:

- a. Information is scattered
- b. Amount of time spent collecting information
- c. Information not available
- d. Process and data not transparent

Question 5: What amount of time do project coordinators spend, per project update, gathering information for reporting?

With the quantification of time we can apply a cost to the activity of project reporting. By quantifying the cost of project updates we need to factor the time of the Project Manager and the resources and tools used to perform the process. In some cases, when added together the time required to perform the project update process, the cost can be far in excess of its value to the organization.

Project update tools and processes are critical to project success and customer satisfaction. Unfortunately many organizations have abandoned formalized project updates when using traditional project management methods because of the burden of cost and effort.

With this question we sought to determine the amount of time used for each project update as:

- a. Less than 30 minutes
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. More than 2 hour

Question 6: How important is improving resource capacity planning?

Given the struggle that Project Managers are having in planning, managing and reporting on projects we wanted to find out if organizations still felt that Resource Capacity Planning was still a valuable and important objective. We sought to understand if improving resource capacity planning was:

- a. Not important at all
- b. Important
- c. Very important

SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTION 1: THE PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS DELAYED DUE TO DEMANDS FROM SUPPORT OPERATIONS

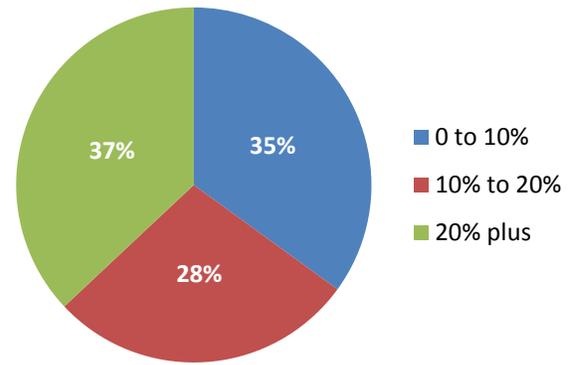
The survey told us that over two thirds of all projects are delayed due to the demands from support operations. Substantiated by additional interviews it was no surprise to find out how pervasive delayed projects were in the survey group. The information required to calculate, the calculations themselves and the burden of effort make it

all but impossible for Project Managers to

effectively and efficiently predict the future availability of a resource based on their work habits and support history.

In most cases this has created complacency and apathy towards effective project planning. Essentially, everyone has resigned themselves to the fact that there will be delays and that project planning is simply a benchmark.

There are a number of ways to manage this issue and many project managers have employed factors in their scheduling. In most cases an estimate of x from a development manager can have a factor of $2x$ applied to it. At the very least this provides a buffer of time that could, if done properly, provide project slack.



CHECK-IN WITH THE ANALYST

86% of projects fail to deliver against their budget, schedule, scope, quality and benefits baseline.

Commercially available Project Management software drives higher levels of portfolio performance through data driven and timely decision support.

— Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2013

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT PROJECT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES?

The majority found that using the wrong tool and the mismanagement of resources were their biggest challenges to effective project management.

The tools of the project manager are many but most have common challenges:

- They are not in use by the entire project team or they are meant only for the project manager.
- They don't include information about the other activities of their team members, i.e. support activities.

“The majority of respondents found that using the wrong tool and mismanaged resources were their biggest challenges”

- They are a challenge for team members to integrate with — another system to add to their list of systems. Buy-in on system usage then becomes a challenge with various team members deciding to opt out or provide minimal or spotty compliance.

These factors and other less common culture or situational factors combine to make the Project Manager’s job difficult and the project update processes ineffective.

When these factors are compounded the resources are scheduled on projects when they don’t have capacity and impossible timelines are provided to customers.

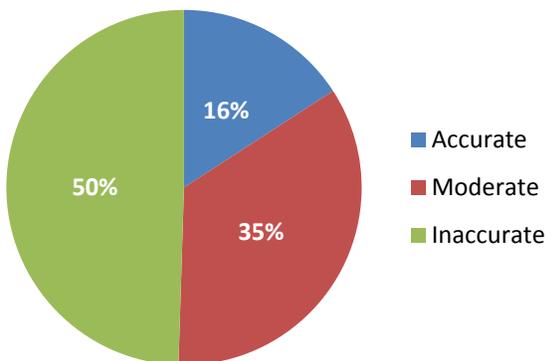
These two mismanaged processes alone can derail an organization; create chaos, cost over runs and impact morale negatively.

QUESTION 3: WHAT IS THE ACCURACY OF PERSONNEL RESOURCE PLANNING FOR PROJECT AVAILABILITY?

Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated that the accuracy of resource planning for project availability was inaccurate.

Information on resource utilization is often stored in accounting or payroll/timesheet systems, shift schedules, spreadsheets, and other systems. Transferring this information, if available to the Project Manager, can be a tricky and onerous task.

More often than not, resource planning is a “one-



CHECK-IN WITH THE ANALYST

The majority of IT organizations lack the processes and practices to address the most common failure points!

—Robert A. Handler,
Gartner Analyst, 2 Sept 2011

on-one” discussion with a network resource or manager to negotiate resource availability with less reliance on systems.

Project Managers have indicated that a combination of systems and networking provide the best results; reviewing what is known about the resources’ schedule then meeting with managers and individuals to negotiate involvement.

QUESTION 4: WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF TRACKING PROJECT STATUS?

Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated that the absence of information was the key factor in tracking project status failures.

CHECK-IN WITH THE ANALYST

Artifacts and practices that are designed as "status reporting" for projects and programs are — for the most part — worthless in terms of the results they yield.

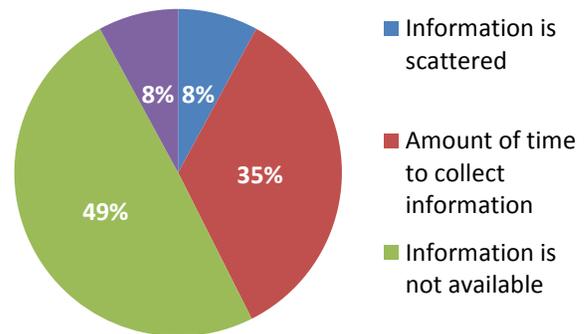
— Michael Hanford, Gartner Analyst,
12 March 2012

Many IT cultures in the surveyed demographic don't support time tracking. Team members are not accountable for their time and other measurements are in place for gauging success.

IT staff are typically fast paced individuals and the admin time required to manage their timesheet is difficult.

The solution is in some cases:

- Face to face meetings with Project Managers and IT Managers to determine task and support progress.
- Backfilling timesheets to satisfy managers.



QUESTION 5: WHAT AMOUNT OF TIME DO PROJECT COORDINATORS SPEND, PER PROJECT UPDATE, GATHERING INFORMATION FOR REPORTING?

75% of respondents indicated that it takes more than 1 hour to coordinate and develop a single project update report.

The vast majority of respondents are spending substantial amounts of time preparing project updates.

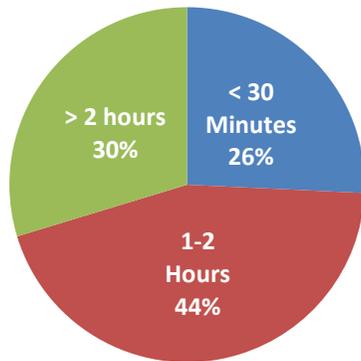
Capturing the value of time associated with a routine task is important in understanding the entire project management cost breakdown. There are seldom real automation components around the routine task of reporting status.

However, there are routine data required for

CHECK-IN WITH THE ANALYST

Most organizations are dissatisfied with the process, the contents and the amount of work effort invested in reporting the "status" of initiatives!

— Michael Hanford,
Gartner Analyst, 12 March 2012



reporting including, (at least):

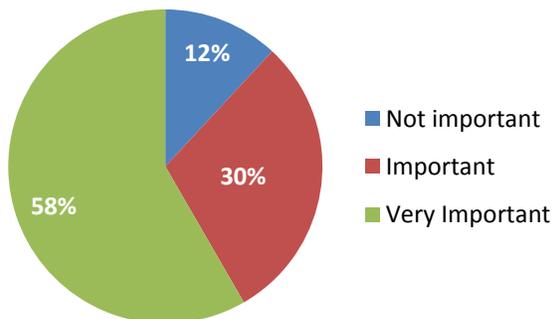
- Project progress snapshot
- Project task snap shot
- Project tickets snap shot
- Hours worked snap shot

Each project manager has their unique way of performing project updates yet the survey indicates that the project update continues to be a challenge for many of them.

QUESTION 6: HOW IMPORTANT IS IMPROVING RESOURCE CAPACITY PLANNING?

Improving resource capacity planning is important or very important to 58% of all IT Managers. Subsequent discussions with survey respondents helped us to confirm the result. We found that the majority of organizations surveyed were either actively involved in improving resource capacity planning and project management practices or were planning to do so.

Significant benefits cited for the improvement of resource capacity planning are reduced cost of labour and contracting, improved customer service and support of project management as a process.



CHECK-IN WITH THE ANALYST

The two biggest reasons cited for application development project failure are "functionality" and "missed schedule," accounting for 63% of the application development projects deemed less than successful!

—Robert A. Handler,
Gartner Analyst, 2 Sept 2011

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the survey supports the view that **the integration of IT work into a single system** will help SMB's across healthcare, education and private enterprise with IT organizations of 25 employees or more by:

1. Reducing the percentage of projects delayed due to the demands from support operations.

An integrated IT Work Management system reveals all work to the interested party whether it is the IT worker looking for tickets and tasks, the Project Manager looking for resource availability, the IT Manager looking for resource optimization or the customer looking for a project update.

There is a direct correlation between the confidence customers and team members have in their management team and the quality of the information and management practices being used. With an improvement in the quality of information then effective management can be achieved.

The integration of all IT work into a single system will provide all team members with:

- a. Better quality information
- b. A single system to capture their effort (time sheet)
- c. A single system to communicate about projects and support with customers.

2. Eliminating systems that do not support the entire team.

The elimination of systems that do not support the entire team and the implementation of systems that do will result in a net reduction in overall systems. An integrated IT Work Management system will eliminate the use of stand-alone ticketing, project management and development systems and significantly reduce the use of spreadsheets to manage processes.

By eliminating systems that do not support the team and replacing them with systems that do the net benefit is an improvement in the quantity and quality of the data collected and a reduction in the effort to collect and report on the data.

3. Providing Project Managers the systems and processes required to effectively communicate and negotiate with team members when planning resource involvement in projects.

Centralizing all IT work into a single system provides the Project Manager with a single channel to view the work habits and availability of resources. This valuable information can be reviewed with managers when negotiating use of their resources on projects.

4. By increasing the amount of quantitative information available to managers and team members.

Quantitative information is ultimately valuable to the Project Manager, and the IT Manager. Unreliable or incomplete information — quantitative or not — is of less or no value. The integration of all IT work into a single system will provide managers with better information.

5. Help Project Managers communicate effectively with their network, customers, sponsors and team members.

Reducing the effort and time required to provide project status updates means that all team members, customers, sponsors and managers will benefit from improved information. The information, most notably the quantitative values related to project schedules, will improve overall project success.

6. **Reducing the cost of labor and contracting and improving customer service and support of project management as a process.**

The integration of all IT work into a single system will reduce the cost of labor related to the project management process — the Project Manager themselves and the effort of the team to provide effective data to facilitate the processes.

The subsequent improvements to the quantitative information available to the Project Manager and management team will help to avoid costly contracting costs and overtime costs associated with completing projects on time based on incorrect project resource plans.

Customer service improves when communication improves. Communicating both good news and bad news to customers on a timely basis improves the customer relationship.

Project management successes help to support project management as a process and improves organizational adoption and buy-in.

ENTRY SOFTWARE CORPORATION

Entry Software is a pioneer in the field of integrated service desk and project management software. Entry Software Corporation has been developing and delivering high quality software and services since 1998. Our passion is an unwavering dedication to the integration of all IT work management into a single system to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction, project success and team wellbeing. For more details about our product TeamHeadquarters please visit our website. (entry.com)

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