**CHEAT SHEET:**

Tips for Successful IT Infrastructure

Project Management

This cheat sheet contains expert tips on how to successfully manage IT infrastructure projects. It also includes advice on how to avoid the most common pitfalls.

EXPERT TIPS

**Collect all the technical requirements *before* you start planning**:
Your project won’t be successful unless you know what you’re working with. [Alexis Nicole White](https://alexisnicolewhite.com/), a certified project manager and Scrum master with more than 15 years of experience, advises people to collect “business, functional, and technical requirements in order to properly plan. Remember to identify all of the correct stakeholders to ensure you’re capturing the proper requirements.”

**Select a project manager with strong technical and interpersonal skills:**According to [Mary Beth Imbarrato](https://mbiconsults.com/), a project management professional who runs consulting services and provides project management trainings, a strong IT infrastructure project manager should have
“a solid understanding of the critical foundational needs of a strong, secure, protected, organizational infrastructure.” In addition, they must have “effective team leadership and communication skills, especially when having to communicate infrastructure risks to the leadership team.”

**Create a detailed project plan:**Make sure you map out everything that has to occur — including any work or communication with nontechnical teams — to complete your project. Having a roadmap is essential so that the project stays on track and doesn’t spiral out of control or stall out.

**Consider creating a communication plan:**Some experts recommend creating a plan dedicated to communication with the larger organization. It is critical that the technical IT team communicates regularly with other, nontechnical teams, so that everyone is on the same page.

**Assess risks and make a risk contingency plan:**Make sure you map out all the risks, both technical and nontechnical, that might occur. Communicate these risks to upper management, and build in a buffer — for both time and budget — so that you can pivot when you need to.

**Select the project management methodology that’s right for your project:**You can use Waterfall or Agile methodologies to complete an IT infrastructure project. Waterfall is a sequential, linear approach, where the product is tested only at the end. Agile is an iterative approach that works well for projects that demand more flexibility.

**Create a knowledge base for future projects:**Imbarrato says that it’s critical to have a vault of documentation on all IT-related projects so that future teams can use it as a resource. “If there are no system diagrams, start creating them,” she says. “They will certainly help you and the next person hired to support the IT infrastructure (Include them in the onboarding package.) What about a glossary of terms for the infrastructure team? Do all team members have the same understanding of the terms, system components, and phrases? If not, it's time to create a glossary. Again, add this to the onboarding package for new staff.”

COMMON PITFALLS

**Not identifying and including the correct stakeholders:**Sometimes, IT teams will plow ahead with an infrastructure project but not sync with other teams. This can pose issues down the line, so make sure you do a thorough check on all parties that need to be involved.

**Poor communication:**This is one of the top reasons why IT projects fail (or go way over budget and timeline). [Ben Timmerman](https://www.linkedin.com/in/benjamin-timmerman-psm-56b2a768/), the Chief Solutions Officer at The Brookfield Group, says that “projects tend to fail when those necessary for validation of delivery aren’t properly informed.”

**Inadequate scoping or requirements gathering:**Our experts said that this is one of the biggest issues in IT projects, as many teams move onto the planning stage before they have a full scope of the project.

Imbarrato shares, “In my career, I have witnessed many projects (IT or not) that have failed or come close to failing because they do not effectively initiate the project. They don't take the time during the gathering requirements phase to define the project, understand the goals and objectives, determine the impact to the organization, and identify the key stakeholders. Many people, organizations, groups, and even project managers jump right into the planning. How can you effectively plan a project if you haven't clearly defined it or don’t know what the user requirements are?”

**Scope creep:**A poorly scoped project can also lead to *scope creep*, which is the unplanned change or increase of requirements in a project. This often results in an overrun schedule and budget. Timmerman says that in IT infrastructure projects, “there is often time unaccounted for in the scoping of the project, which in turn leads to scope creep.”

**Failure to identify post-deployment support requirements:**Sometimes, IT infrastructure teams focus only on the launch of the project and fail to plan for all the ongoing effort, such as monitoring, maintenance, testing, and eventual decommission. It’s important to include these ongoing, post-deployment support requirements in your initial planning so that you can adequately budget for them and set expectations with management.

**Failure to identify and manage risks:**Timmerman says, “Proper risk management is required, especially when operating in large projects. If you cannot manage your risk, then your project becomes too much of a liability that ultimately tends to fail either from stakeholder support withdrawal or an unsuccessful implementation.”

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