



Battling With Alligators
Effective Recovery Project Management
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What is Recovery Project Management (RPM)?

- Contrary to popular belief, RPM is not always about “Recovery” defined as: Fix and Finish.
- It is about “Recovery” defined as:
 - Agree on what defines “recovery” for this specific project.
 - Define specific measurable goals to achieve.
 - Plan how they are to be achieved and by whom.
 - Execute the recovery.





Recovery Survey

Recovery Survey - Answers

1. What is the main reason that IT projects fail (either completely, or come in late and over budget)?

- Poor scope management – 39%
- Unrealistic targets – 15%
- Lack of strong sponsorship – 12%



Recovery Survey - Questions

2. How do you (as the PM) know / define when a project is in trouble?

- Not tracking to plan – 18%
- Trend in missed deliverables – 15%
- Poor team moral – 12%
- Decrease in communication – 12%



Recovery Survey - Questions

3. (If you've ever had a troubled project) What is the first step you, as the PM, take once you have determined your project is in trouble?

- Inform client / sponsor – 25%
- Interview project team – 17%
- Find root cause – 13%

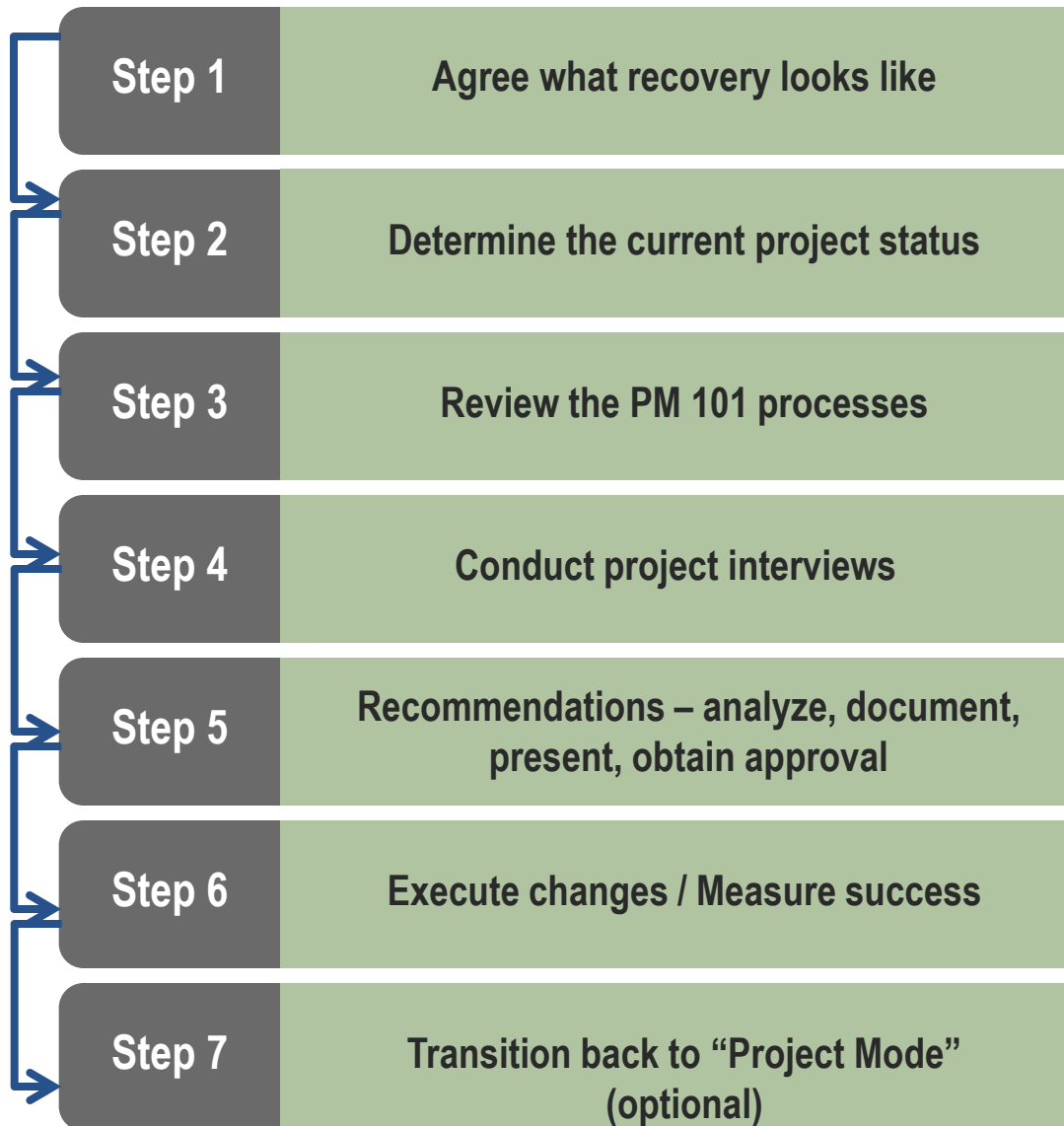




The Seven Steps of Recovery

Regaining Control

Steps to Recovery



Steps to Recovery - Step 1

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- Need to define:
 - Who needs to be involved in this agreement?
 - What specifically needs to be accomplished to achieve recovery?
 - Who will sign-off on the recovery?
 - When do you transition from “recovery” to “project”?
 - How do you transition from “recovery” to “project”?



Steps to Recovery - Step 1 (Continued)

- **R.O.T. (Rule of Thumb)**
 - If the plan is to transition the project back to the original PM, then the PM needs to be involved in the recovery process but not in a lead role. They can be involved as an observer and an information source.



Steps to Recovery - Step 2

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- What has gone wrong?
- Why has it gone wrong?
- What has changed?
- Review status of basic project building blocks
 - Scope, Budget, Resources, Schedule, Issues, Risks, and Quality
- This is your “As Is” picture of the project.
- **R.O.T.:** Managing “Symptoms” provides immediate short term relief, correcting the “Roots” fixes the project.



Steps to Recovery - Step 3

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- What are the PM 101 Processes?
 - The basic blueprint of a project
 - It defines – Scope, Budget, Resources, Schedule, Issues, Risks, and Quality.
 - You can use the PMBOK® as a guide, or create your own process checklist as a starting point.
- Review for design and operational effectiveness
 - Design: Are the processes designed properly to add value and support this project?
 - Operational effectiveness: Are the processes being used properly to add value and support this project?



Steps to Recovery - Step 3 (Continued)

- Some of the questions to be asked:
 - Are appropriate processes and tools in place to track and control project Scope, Budget, Resources, Schedule, Issues, Risks, and Quality?
 - Are the processes clearly documented and the tools readily accessible?
 - Is the entire project team aware of the processes in place and knowledgeable in the use of the tools?
 - Is compliance to the project processes and use of the tools monitored and enforced?



Steps to Recovery - Step 4

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- Unless it is a small project, you will not have the time to interview everyone – choosing the right people to interview is key.
- Start formulating your list of interviews during steps #1 and #2.
- Obvious key interviews – Sponsor, Project Manager(s), Functional, Technical, Stream Leads, Lead SME’s.
- Not so obvious key interviews – Project Admin / PCO, Vendor Account Manager, Periphery Support (IT Operations), PM’s from related projects.
- **R.O.T.: Interview Sponsor, all lead roles, one additional resource per stream, one resource minimum per external (to the project) organization.**



Steps to Recovery - Step 4 (Continued)

- Use a structured core set of questions so that you can do an apples-to-apples compare of data gathered.
- There will be some role specific questions.
- Ensure you get the answers to the questions you ask, but leave room for elaboration and flexibility to explore different paths.
- Probe and test answers. Look for examples, metrics and facts.



Steps to Recovery - Step 4 (Continued)

- In the interview – Test for common project failure points:
 - Inconsistent understanding of the key objectives of the project.
 - Balance of Scope = Time and Resources.
 - Clarity of definition of Scope, Schedule, and Deliverables.
 - Insufficient or incomplete communications.
 - Role definitions – scope and relation to other roles.
 - Square pegs in round holes.
 - Participation in processes such as status reporting, schedule updates, issue and risk management.
 - Understanding of the Quality Assurance process and gates.



Steps to Recovery - Step 4 (Continued)

- Example Interview Questions:
 - **Background**
 - What are your name, title, and role on the project?
 - **Project Purpose and Objectives**
 - Please describe the purpose and objectives of this project?
 - Are there any dependencies between this project and any other projects?
 - **Project Organization**
 - How is this project organized and who is in charge of this project?
 - Is the project organization appropriate for this project?
 - **Project Status**
 - What is the status of the project today? Are we ahead or behind schedule, within or over budget?



Steps to Recovery - Step 4 (Continued)

- Example Interview Questions (Continued):
 - **Project Standards**
 - What guidelines, standards or tools are in place (including ones developed for the project)?
 - **Change Control**
 - Are there a lot of changes and/or rework? If there is a lot of rework, what is being reworked and why?
 - How does change control work on this project? How do you manage changes on this project?
 - **Quality Assurance**
 - How is QA done on this project? (Be specific: how is it done by you, by your team members, etc.)
 - Are deliverables identified and is there an acceptance procedure for the deliverables? Who is involved and how does it work?



Steps to Recovery - Step 5

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- Steps #1 - #4 will not give you all the answers.
 - More often than not you will initially surface problems already being tackled, not necessarily successfully, by the team.
- You will have collected a lot of data up to this point – allocate time to analyze it and look for trends and anomalies.
 - Quite often projects that are in trouble, are there because sufficient analysis and planning were not done up front.



Steps to Recovery - Step 5 (Continued)

- Do a checkpoint to ensure you have investigated for problems in each of these key areas: Scope, Budget, Resources, Schedule, Issues, Risks, and Quality.
- **R.O.T.: All key metrics should have a “Control Metric”. Another measurement that validates the reasonability of the first.**
- Categorize problems into “Root Causes” and “Symptoms”.
- Document findings without attribution as much as possible.
- Document recommendations including very high level plan.
- Prioritize recommendations to allow for some quick wins while working on the larger changes.
- **R.O.T.: Stop the Bleeding. If there are activities or practices going on that are causing further detriment to the project, address those first. You must stop the backward motion before you can proceed forward.**
- Get Sign-off on approved recommendations.



Steps to Recovery - Step 6

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- “Plan the Work – Work the Plan”
- Very similar to regular project planning at this point, except you are not at the beginning.
- Reference back to your problem set.
 - How are you addressing each problem approved from Step #5?
- Have a “Recovery” kick-off as you would for the beginning of a project.
 - Gain team buy-in.
 - Ensure that the team knows it is everyone’s responsibility to make this succeed – all involved – all accountable.



Steps to Recovery - Step 6 (Continued)

- Mentor and coach the team.
- Shield the team from negative influences.
- Celebrate success – Not just at the end, but along the way. Start early, celebrate often.
- Measure progress closely – act quickly.



Steps to Recovery - Step 7

Step 1 Agree what recovery looks like

Step 2 Determine the current project status

Step 3 Review the PM 101 processes

Step 4 Conduct project interviews

Step 5 Recommendations – analyze, document, present, obtain approval

Step 6 Execute changes / Measure success

Step 7 Transition back to “Project Mode” (optional)

- As stated at the beginning, not all projects transition back to “Project Mode”.
- So when is it time to transition back to Project Mode?
 - The easy answer is when you’ve completed the recommendations signed off in Step #5.
- **R.O.T.: Measure KPI’s through at least one complete iteration of the longest project cycle (within reason).**



Steps to Recovery - Step 7 (Continued)

- You must also ensure that the Change and Transition Management are in place.
 - **Project Manager**
 - If you are handing the project back to the originating PM, is he/she ready to take control?
 - Does he/she understand what went wrong and why?
 - Does he/she have the tools to keep the project on track?
 - Is his/her head back in the game?
 - **Project Team**
 - If resource replacements needed to be made as part of the recovery, are the new resources in place and up to speed?
 - Is the team functioning well together?
 - Is the team onboard that the recovery is complete?
 - **Related Projects**
 - Has the project recovery realigned you with, or kept you in line with related projects?
 - Have you assessed and factored in any changes to related projects while your project was recovering?
 - Are there new related projects in play?
 - **Periphery Personnel**
 - Has the group who signed off on the recovery process signed-off on its completeness?
 - Are other periphery people bought into the success of the recovery?



How to avoid this happening (again)

- There is no Silver Bullet.
- Ensure properly designed processes are operationally enabled to monitor Scope, Budget, Resources, Schedule, Issues, Risks, and Quality .
- Constant attention to the details – Update, analyze, react.
- A PM should be a PM only.
- Get a second opinion from somewhere else in your company or from outside.
 - Must be a qualified resource not involved in the project.



Final Thoughts

- It is much easier (and cheaper) to stop a project from failing than it is to recover it.
- A Project Manager is there to **manage** a project, not **administer** it.
- There is no such thing as “over communication”.
- If a project team has confidence in and respect for their Project Manager they will follow the PM anywhere and do whatever the PM asks.
 - Earn the confidence and respect of your team from day one by being honest, open, ethical, and knowledgeable.
- **R.O.S. (Rule of Steve): Work to become that Project Manager you admired when you entered into the profession.**





Questions and Answers