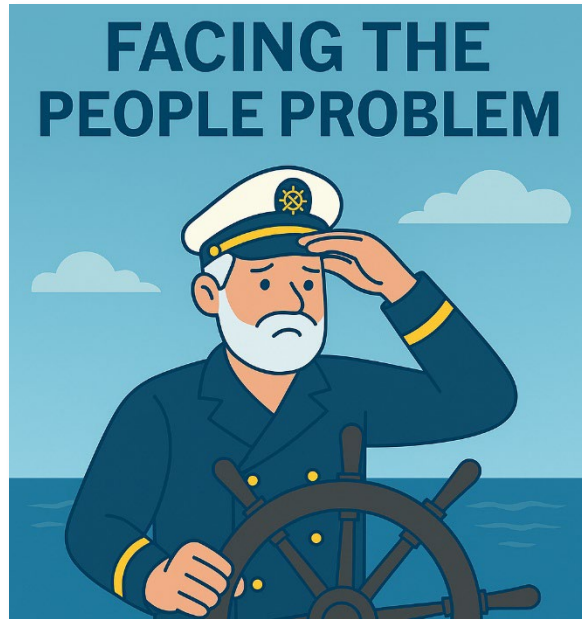


Chapter 1: What Are We Actually Delivering Here?



Most people think project management is about getting stuff done on time and on budget. You start with a goal, build a timeline, track your tasks, solve problems as they pop up, and hopefully hit your deadlines without losing your mind. That's how most project teams focus their work. That's how most companies define successful projects.

However, there's a known fact that no one likes to talk about: You can deliver the components of a project *perfectly* and still fail.

There are projects that check every box. The system works. The new process is clean. The budget's in line. Everyone who touched it is technically "done." But a few weeks later, the people who were supposed to use it, just don't. They go back to old habits. They skip the new steps. Or worse, they find workarounds and pretend they're on board.

And suddenly, that "successful" project? It's a sunk cost.

An All-Too-Common Story

A regional healthcare network was rolling out a new digital intake system for patients. The platform was great. It automated manual steps, improved accuracy, and made things easier for staff and patients alike.

The IT team nailed the delivery as the project was done on schedule, under budget, and the software worked as advertised. There was just one problem: Nobody used it.

Less than 10% of the front-line staff even logged in during the first week. Within days, they were back to the old paper forms. They weren't lazy or resistant, they simply weren't ready. No one explained why the change was happening. No one showed them how the system fit into their already packed workflow. They weren't trained, weren't supported, and they weren't asked for feedback.

That's when the sponsor asked the question: **"Where's my crew?"**

The Problem Isn't the Project. It's the Assumption.

In the regional healthcare network story, the project team did the job they were scoped to do. The build was solid, and the go-live checklist was complete. But everyone assumed that if the solution was good, people would naturally use it.

Therein lies the trap. Most project plans treat the build as the hard part, and adoption as automatic.

Building the thing is only half the job. *Getting people to use it* is the other half, and most projects don't plan for the people half at all.

What's Actually Being Delivered?

Let's step back and ask the real question this chapter is about: "What are we actually delivering when we say a project is complete?"

Here's the answer: You're not just delivering a system. You're not just rolling out a process. You're delivering a *change* in how people work.

That means your deliverable isn't just the tool or the document. It's the *behavior shift* that comes after it. It's the way people go about their work differently once the project is done.

That's the *shift* most project teams miss.

Why This Matters More Than Ever

Almost every project involves change such as technology upgrades, process improvements, new policies, reorganizations, you name it. And all of them depend on people doing something new or different.

If people aren't ready, willing, or able to work in the new way, the project doesn't succeed, no matter how well it was managed.

And here's the kicker: When that happens, we don't blame the project plan. We blame the people.

We call them "resistant." We believe "the users don't get it." We act like it's a training issue or a behavior problem.

But most of the time that "resistance" is a symptom. It's the result of not preparing people for what's coming. It's the natural response to change done *to* people instead of *with* them.

And that's the sole purpose of Organizational Change Management - helping people make sense of change, get comfortable with it, and make it part of how they work.

Redefining What Success Looks Like

So, what does success *really* look like?

Yes, we still want to hit deadlines and we want to stay on budget. But we also need to ask:

- Are people using what was delivered?
- Are they confident and capable in the new process?
- Are we seeing the results we promised when we scoped this thing?

If the answer is “no,” then it doesn’t matter how great the project documentation is. The value’s not being realized, and there is a gap between building the ship and readying the crew.

What Do We Do About It?

Start simple from the very beginning of a project by asking one more question alongside your usual scope-timeline-budget checklist: “What’s going to change for people, and how do we help them get ready for it?”

That one question opens the door to everything else covered in this book. Because when we plan for people, not just the product, we build projects that truly deliver.



Pro Tips

Don’t wait until planning to talk about people.

Start during intake. Ask if the users know what’s coming and what it means for their day-to-day.

Success = Adoption.

If no one uses what you build, you didn’t succeed, you just finished a checklist.

Walk the floor, not just the chart.

Spend time with the folks who’ll be most affected. Ask them what they need to be successful. They’ll tell you.