

There's a signpost up ahead

...recognizing and dealing with
project warning signs

January 12, 2011

J. LeRoy Ward, PMP, PgMP
Executive Vice President
lward@esi-intl.com



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Group Grope--The Modern Day “Bad News Bears”

FORRESTER®

**These guys
are really
pessimistic!**

 **IDC**
Analyze the Future



Gartner

**THE
STANDISH
GROUP**

Warning signs--what do they really tell us?



They tell us about the future..there are many ways to see the future



And then, there's "A Most Unusual Camera"



And then, there's "A Most Unusual Camera"



And then, there's "A Most Unusual Camera"



Where did he go? Where would **YOU** go with this camera?



To the race track, where else?



How do PMs' & organizations do it then?



How do PMs'
&
organizations
do it then?

By looking in the rearview mirror at their troubled past!



They provide a mechanism, or “help” to avoid future problems

Project health checks

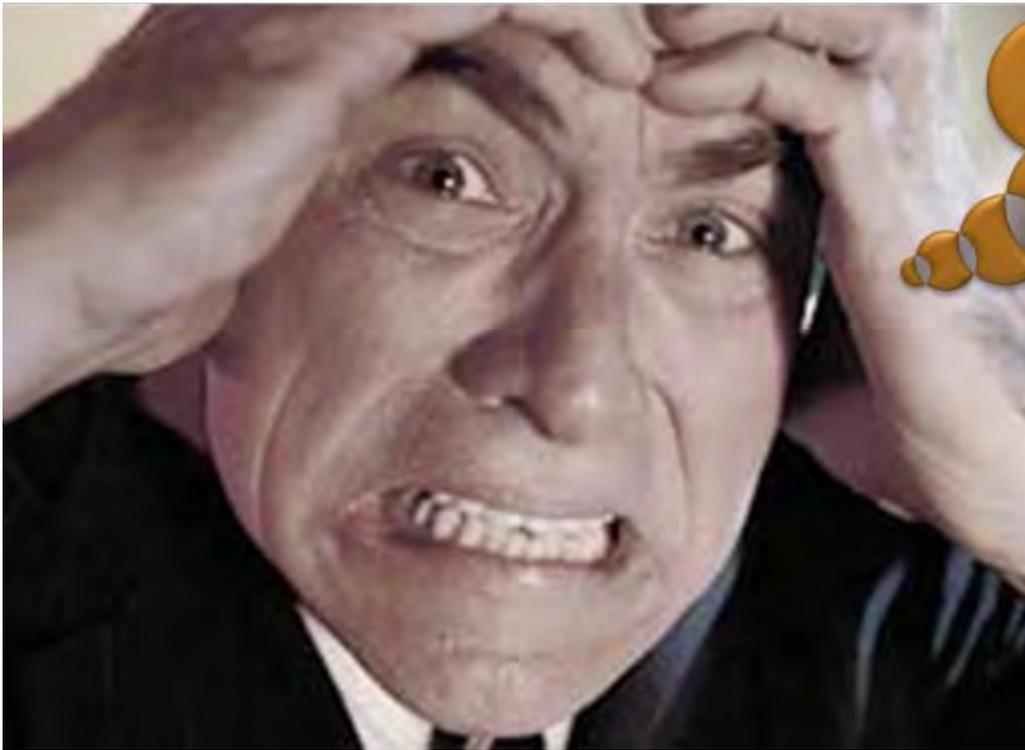
Risk reviews

Project reviews

Project audits



Our approach to “helping” people is critical



Oh NO! The
\$#%@ auditors
are coming!!

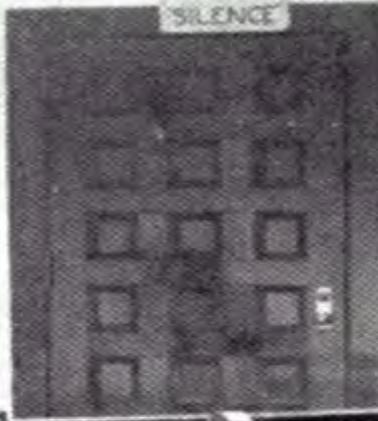
Because “help,” like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder

**Ah ha! here's
a “t” they
didn't cross!**



What a Project Health Check should not be seen as....

Project Manager goes here



Bring in the next PM!

Project Health Checks and Reviews

What warning signs do we look for?

How should we conduct the “exam”?

What do we do with the results?



What warning signs do you look for?

Many, many lists

What list is right for you?

Signs categorized in 5 broad areas

1. *Project control*
2. *Compliance*
3. *Business case validation*
4. *Risk issues*
5. *The “Human Factor”*



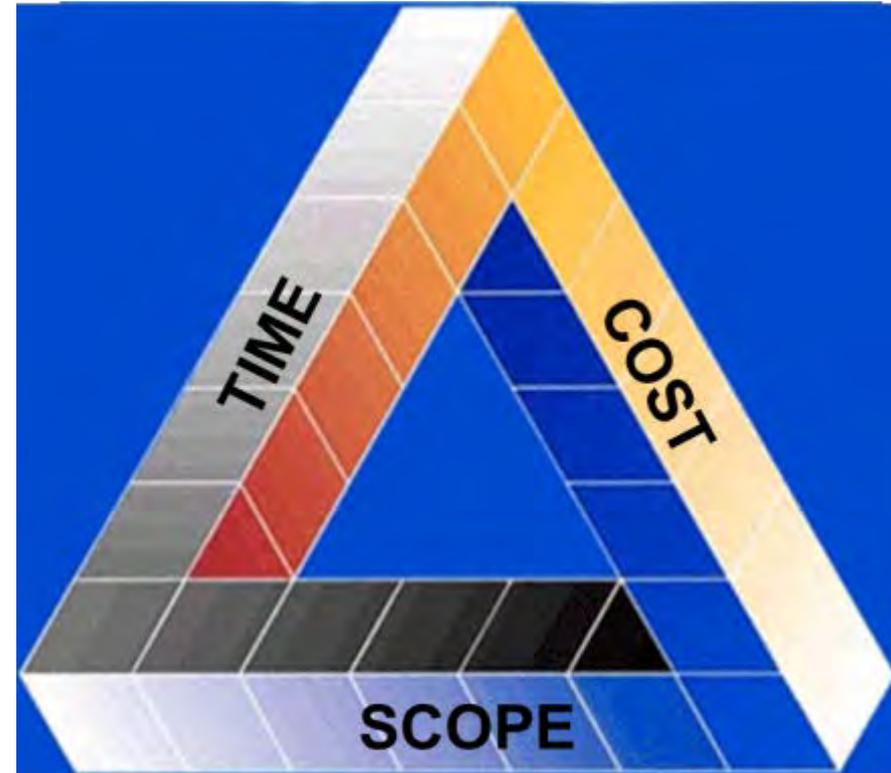
Project Control



Achievement of project tasks ***on time*** & to agreed ***quality***

Actual project costs within those ***budgeted***

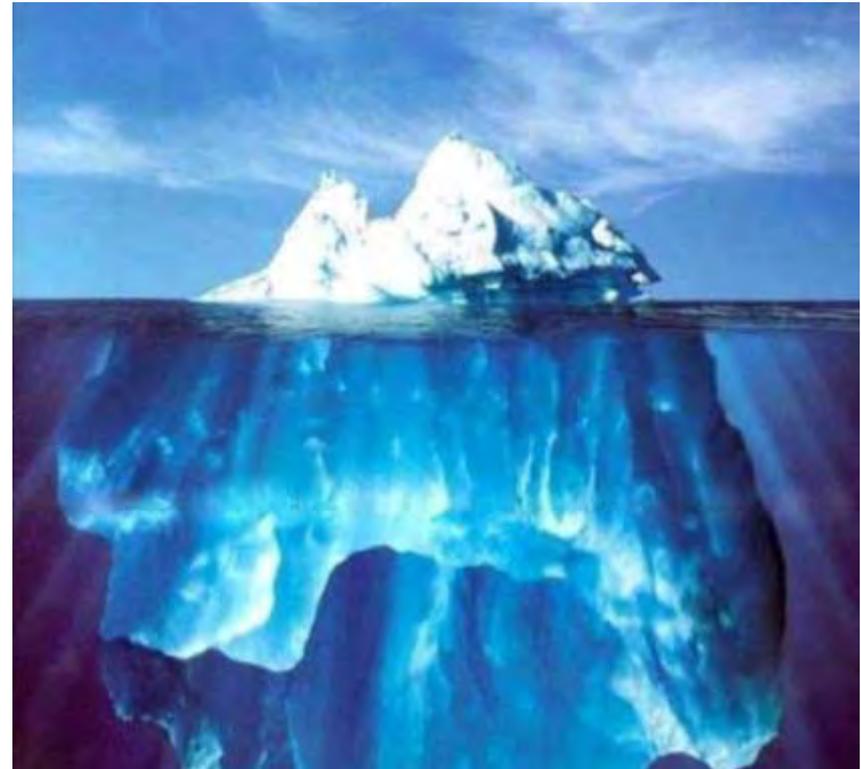
Resources being allocated as ***planned***



Achievement of project tasks ***on time*** & to agreed ***quality***

Actual project costs within those ***budgeted***

Resources being allocated as ***planned***



Compliance

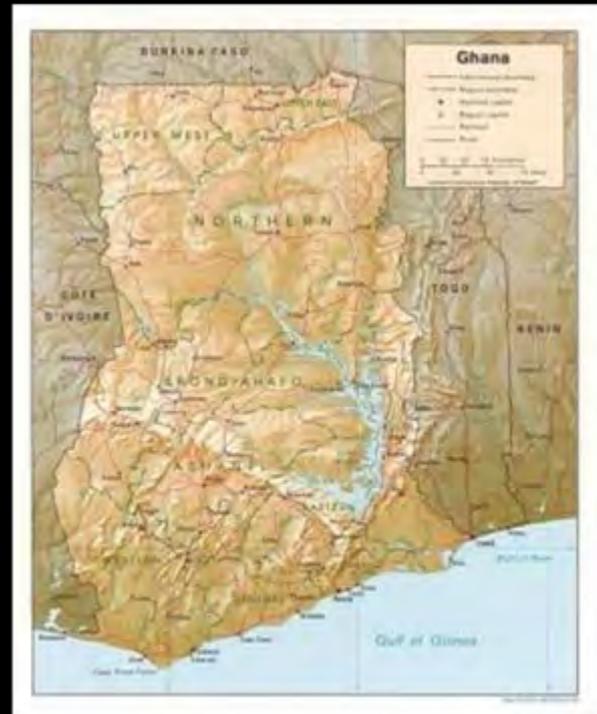


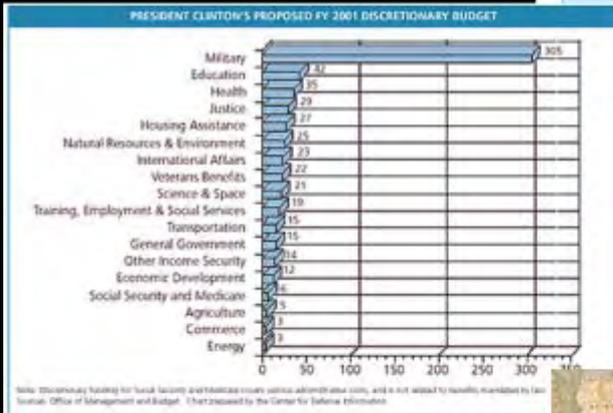
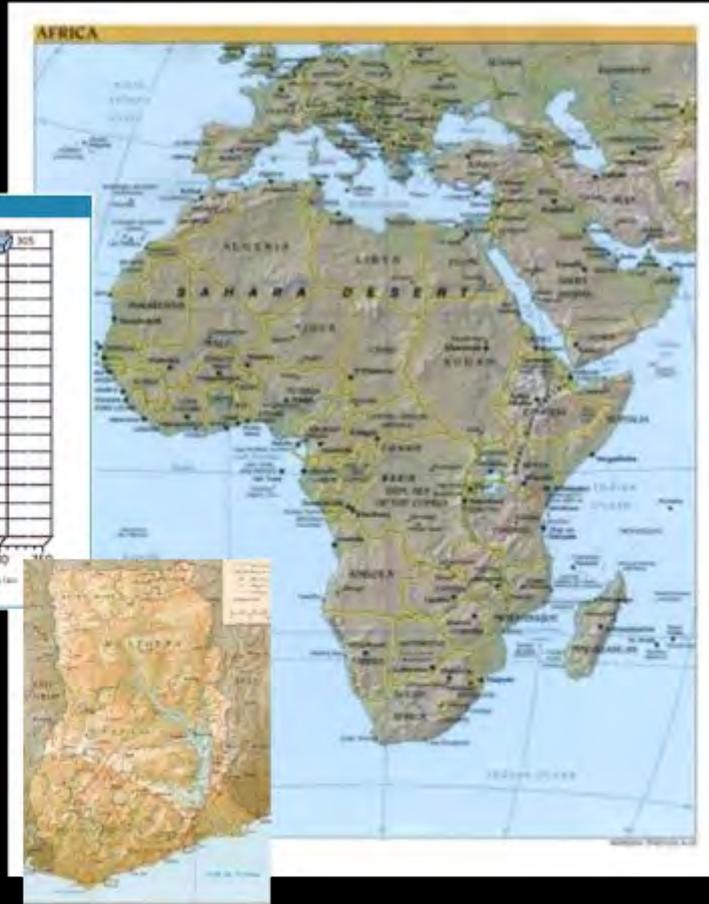
Focus on process & deliverables and not on outcomes

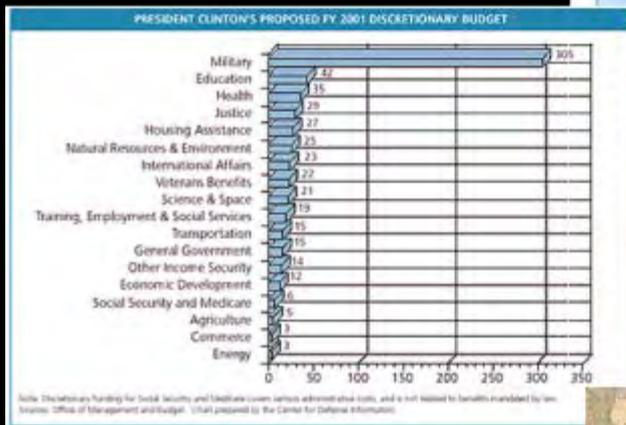
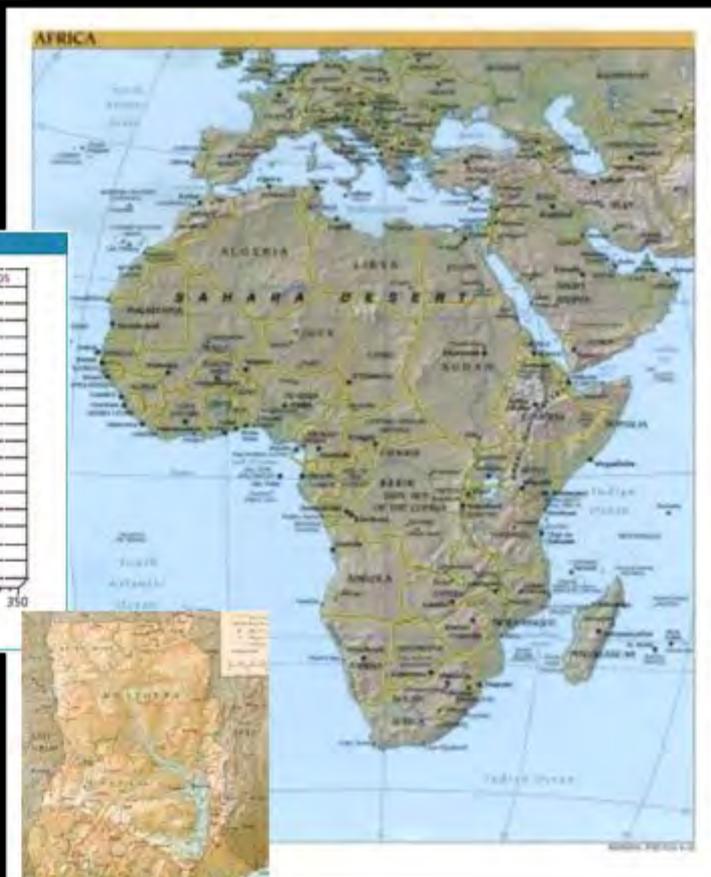
What value does this have?











Validating the business case

~~Plan A~~

Plan B



Validating the business case... or what were we thinking?

3

Projects done for many reasons

- Increase customer sat.
- Enhance efficiencies
- Avoid costs
- Increase revenue
- Bring new products to market



Why Bad Projects are Hard to Kill,
Isabelle Royer, HBR Feb. 2003

Validating the business case... or what were we thinking?

3

Projects done for many reasons

- Increase customer sat.
- Enhance efficiencies
- Avoid costs
- Increase revenue
- Bring new products to market

Do we even have a business case?

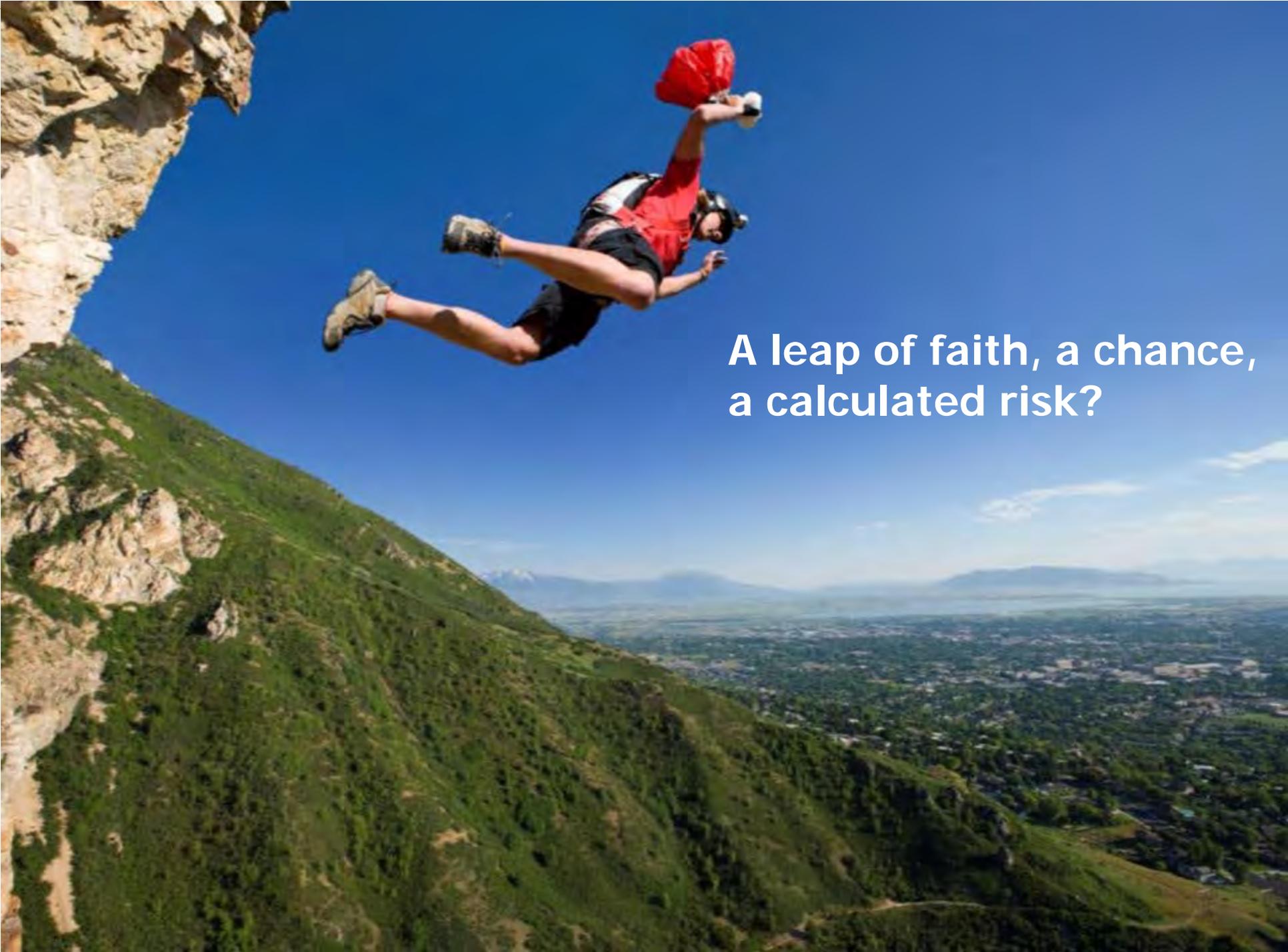
Is the business case still valid?



Why Bad Projects are Hard to Kill,
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Risk Management



**A leap of faith, a chance,
a calculated risk?**



*I'm taking a
calculated
risk...I hope!!*

Risk management process
Risk response plan
Top ten risks
Risk reviews
Issue management

The Human Factor



Government

Suppliers

THE ORGANIZATION

Top Management

Project Sponsor

Boss

PROJECT MANAGER

Project Staff

Colleagues

**Functional
Managers**

Internal Clients

External Clients

Subcontractors



Everyone won't get along all the time...but



We should all be heading in the same direction.



Let's summarize...

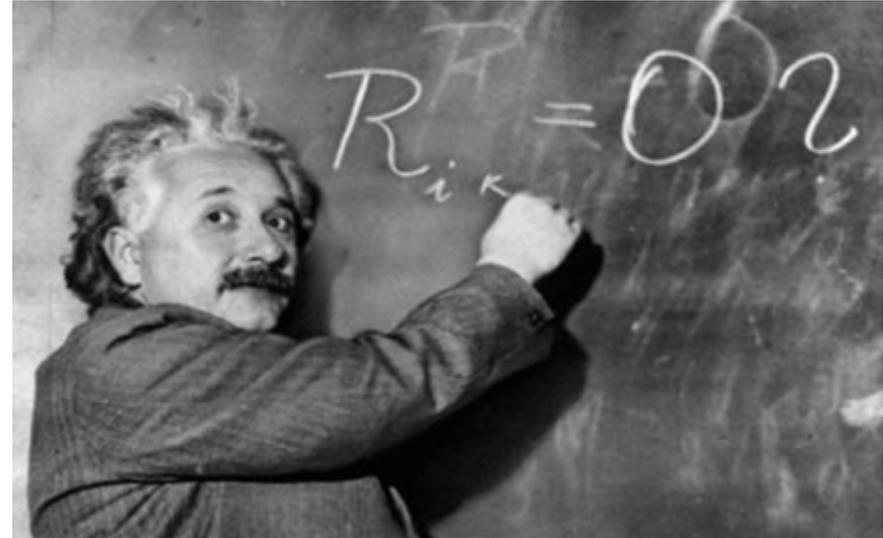
Project control

Compliance

Business case validation

Risk issues

The "Human Factor"



What categories would you add?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What categories would you add?



Conducting the “exam”

Who does it?

- PM for small projects
- Independent party for large, complex projects



Conducting the “exam”

Who does it?

- PM for small projects
- Independent party for large, complex projects

When?

- Regular intervals
- End of milestone or major phase
- Occurrence of significant event



What do we do with the results?

Report findings to:

- Project Manager
- Project Team
- Project Sponsor
- Steering Committee

**Health Checks/Reviews
result in “follow up” activity**

**May initiate full project
evaluation**



When should we “pull the plug”?



- **Business objectives can't be met w/in time/cost/budget**

When should we “pull the plug”?



- **Business objectives can't be met w/in time/cost/budget**
- **Other alternatives have better ROI**

When should we “pull the plug”?



- **Business objectives can't be met w/in time/cost/budget**
- **Other alternatives have better ROI**
- **Business objectives have been OBE**

We're sick of throwing money
down a rat hole!



Your “homework” assignment

Compare these categories and approaches for dealing with warning signs with those in your project

In fact, do you have such guidance in your project?



But life is funny....



One last thought...

**Project
warning signs
are all about
avoiding the
“imponderables”**



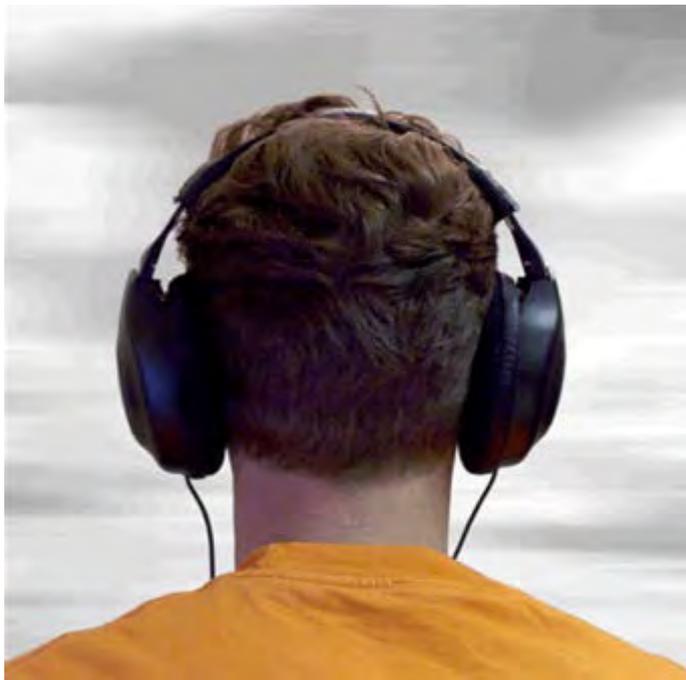
One last thought...



One last thought...

**Honey, I'll be
late for
dinner!**





Thanks for listening!

J. LeRoy Ward, PMP, PgMP
www.linkedin.com/in/leroyward
lward@esi-intl.com