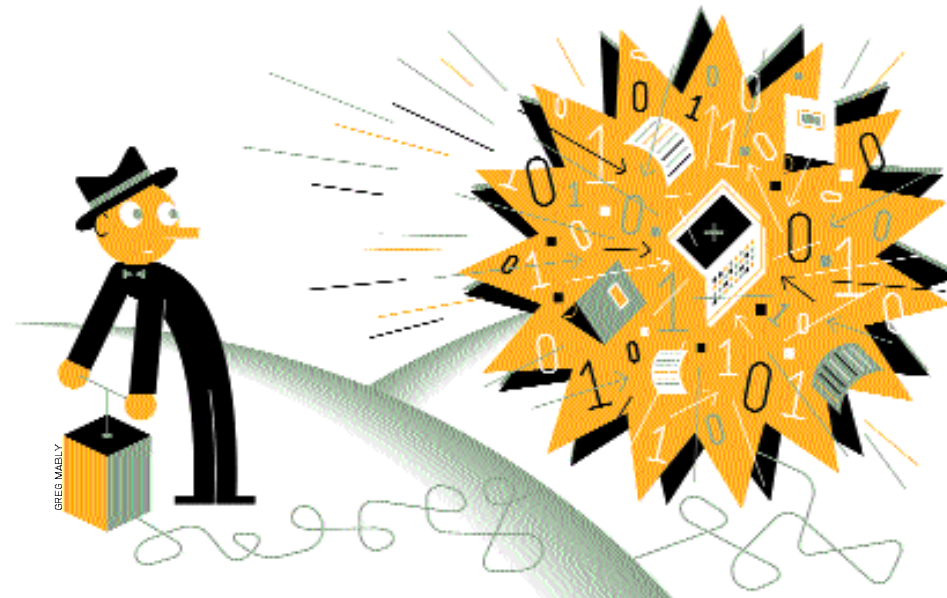


How to Kill an IT Project



VITAL SIGNS Define vital signs and set threshold levels.

Vital signs use a point system; the higher the point value, the more serious the problem. The sponsor and project manager must agree to thresholds indicating that a project is healthy, requires caution or is in danger.

VITAL SIGN	VARIANCE	POINTS	VITAL SIGN	VARIANCE	POINTS	VITAL SIGN	VARIANCE	POINTS
Schedule delay (actual vs. planned)	<10%	0	Unresolved issues (issues vs. deliverables)	no issues < deliverables	0	High-probability, high-impact risk events*	1-3 risks	1
	10% to 20%	1		< deliverables > deliverables	1		4-5 risks	3
	>20%	2		> deliverables	2		6-7 risks	5
Milestone delay (actual vs. planned)	<10%	0	Cost over budget (actual vs. planned)	<10%	0	Disposition of the team	good	0
	10% to 20%	1		10% to 20%	1		fair	2
	>20%	2		>20%	2		poor	4
Deliverable delay (actual vs. planned)	<10%	0	Resources shortage (actual vs. planned)	<10%	0	Sponsor's commitment and time	good	0
	10% to 20%	2		10% to 15%	2		fair	3
	>20%	4		>15%	4		poor	6

REPORT CARD

- Healthy (1-8 points):** The variances are acceptable, and the project is in good shape.
- Caution (9-15 points):** Project is in trouble. Project manager needs sponsor's involvement if recovery is warranted.
- Danger (16+ points):** Project is a runaway. Sponsor must shut it down or implement a recovery plan.

* High-probability, high-impact risk events can result in a loss of budget or sponsor, a change in strategy, or a similar move.

Close to 40% of IT projects fail or are abandoned before completion, resulting in annual financial losses of more than \$100 billion in the U.S. alone, according to the Center for Project Management in San Ramon, Calif. The center has developed a process called ProjectHALT to help identify and cancel doomed projects early. **Here's how it works.**

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