

Introduction

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

-Mark Twain

In 2002, a major IBM Division performed a significant upgrade to their SAP system (their Enterprise Resource Planning [ERP] system). It was planned as a six month project that turned into an eighteen month nightmare, draining dollars from ongoing projects, and delaying other much needed new projects. There were many mistakes made, after all, projects are planned and executed by human beings, but, as with any collection of activities, Pareto¹ rules (the significant few that have the greatest impact). The most significant mistakes were: wrong talent, too much project management

¹ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pareto_chart

bureaucracy, and ... *the wrong upgrade strategy*.²

So, in 2004, IBM's Server Group would move ahead with a project to do this same significant SAP upgrade. If it were to fail, it would impact a major revenue stream for the IBM Corporation. Not only was it a major revenue stream, it was also the most profitable product line within IBM. So, this is a story of creating a radically new upgrade strategy by a small team of dedicated individuals who put their careers on the line, very nervous senior executives, palace intrigue/drama, and in the end, a major success that was not as well celebrated as one would expect.

Though this book deals with an ERP project, the methodology of project planning is universal to all projects. This story can be the story of any project that poses a threat to an organizational bureaucracy by changing the way it has always done things.

² These are my assessments, not those of the IBM Corporation.