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## Short Article

What does it Take to Replicate a Pilot or Model Program?

The idea is great. Build a program that works, then clone the program. Let someone else shoulder the burden of thrashing out, fleshing out, tweaking a program; then grab their working model and "run with it." Once the kinks are worked out of a pilot or model program, we just make carbon copies and avoid start-up stress, avoid the confusion of pioneering, and avoid start-up costs. A copycat project should be a model of efficiency.

Great scheme! How come it just doesn't work? Unique, One of a Kind Programs: Local Issues Trump Uniformity Programs don't stamp out in replicas like auto body fenders, just like it students don't clone into uniform grade-level-month-achievement-levels.

So, once you have a package that someone else developed, what do you have? The Rest of the Story! The old saw, "the devil is in the details" applies to the implementing a pilot or model program. This "wise caution" applies when it seems like a "gremlin" sabotaged the program the second you began to implement it.

You expected to just plug in the package, "pop in your individual particulars" and skate on a "smooth-sailing," downhill slide to success and glory.

What you encounter as you implement the program is the "redacted" lessons-learned, and the unstated, "real-story" best-practices.

You have just been "Zapped!" by the best-face-forward documentation and the it's-easy-when-you-know-how" instruction pack.

Not that anyone from the pilot project wanted to deceive. They just wanted to keep their jobs. Maybe they didn't want to give the grant money back to the donor organization. They didn't want to embarrass their bosses, or lay the blame for project miscues where it belonged, on their supervisors.

An organization's stakeholders meddle in projects, and these decision-makers place obstacles and barriers to the smooth development of a project. Then, when staff works extra-hard to overcome the hurdles that the stakeholders placed on the playing field, those same supervisors frolic in the limelight and sop up the success accolades.

But, it is a career-stifling move to tell the world what happened to snag, delay and hamper the project when those lag-producing drags upon the project derived from internal pressures. Key Factors for Project Implementation The keys to a successful project implementation are...

Teamwork among the Principals (Maybe the Principals, too)

Contingency Plans (that head off trouble)

Formative Assessments (that identify what is going askew)

Rapid Response (with corrective actions) What the project team needs is a clear vision of what issues really impacted the pilot or model program. A public relations rendition of best-practices and lessons-learned serves no one except the "high-level, guilty."

Recipients and implementers of follow-on programs based upon the pilot or model program need to be informed about the "going-haywire-happenings" involved in the foibles, shortcomings or outright sabotage of the pilot program stakeholders.

Why expose such dirty underwear? Aren't the guilty best served by status-quo silence?

Absolutely not! The best information that implementers of the "copycat" program can have is a chronicle of how stakeholders from the pilot project "goofed" up the original project.

Armed with this information, the folks that implement the copycat program have the strongest repellent possible to ward off the meddling and depredations of current stakeholders. All they would have to do is refer to the documentation to show that such "bone-head" decisions during the pilot project were responsible for delay, diminished progress, squandered opportunities and accelerated cost overruns.

Real Copycat Project Requirements Real-world projects are unique, and must adapt to local issues, local concerns, differences between the pilot venue and the copycat site.

But, projects do need similar environments. Environments where... Upper level executive management commits to adequate funding

A clear vision of what will be accomplished

Competent staffing

A clear vision of the benefits that the program will produce for all concerned

Buy-in from the low-level staff that will actually implement the program

A realistic timeframe

Measurable milestones that are time-and-outcome specific

A realistic contingency plan There are more items that prove to be the pulse of a project, but these provide a clue as to the reason that pilot projects seldom "get off the ground" the way that copycat supporters imagine. Easy success for copycating a project is as rare as an airplane that flies without fuel.

To Discover the Truth If you want to discover the truth about a project, ask the engineers.

This bit of wisdom was discovered by researcher, Scott Adams. One of the many truisms from the world of Dilbert is that engineers are like Vulcans, they cannot tell a lie. They will happily contradict their company's marketing hype, usually without even the slightest provocation, telling you: What their product does well What their product does poorly\* What they wish their product could do

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