

TwentyEighty StratEx Italia per  
**Information Technology**

Soluzioni e Strategie  
per progetti IT vincenti



ESI International fa ora parte di TwentyEighty Strategy Execution,  
la più grande azienda mondiale dedicata alla Performance Education e al Corporate Training.



Da oltre 35 anni siamo global provider in Project Management, Business Analysis e Agile Project Management e offriamo la più estesa gamma di corsi di formazione a persone provenienti da ogni settore aziendale, aiutando concretamente nel raggiungimento e mantenimento del successo delle proprie iniziative di business.  
Il 99% dei nostri clienti raccomanderebbe TwentyEighty Strategy Execution per efficacia, tempo e costi.

Tra i nostri partner vantiamo



Il Project Management Institute (PMI®), di cui siamo Registered Educational Provider. Tutti i nostri training sono allineati con le Knowledge Areas della PMBOK® Guide e garantiscono quindi lo standard internazionale di eccellenza.



International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA®), di cui siamo Founding Sponsor e Endorsed Education Provider (EEP™).



La George Washington University (GWU), nostro partner accademico che valida e certifica il contenuto e le metodologie didattiche dei nostri corsi e programmi. I nostri Master in Project Management e Business Analysis hanno valore internazionale.

Il mondo dell'**Information Technology** costituisce da sempre un caso peculiare tra i diversi settori di business. Alla base, la costante necessità di **innovazione** per essere up-to-date ed utilizzare **tecnologia** all'avanguardia.

**La sfida:** stare al passo con i tempi e trovare la giusta connessione tra Business Needs e tecnologia in Evoluzione.

Sapeva che **almeno il 60% dei Progetti IT falliscono** e circa il 30% incontra difficoltà durante lo svolgimento che ne compromettono l'esito? **Solo il 10% è efficace.**

## La soluzione? **Il Project Management!**

**TwentyEighty StratEx Italia** ha sviluppato un **corso dedicato e specializzato**, in grado di adattare tecniche e skills tipiche del Project Management **alle particolarità dell'IT**.

Grazie al nostro **training**, è possibile conoscere ed analizzare un progetto IT nel suo **intero lifecycle**, imparando terminologie e tecniche utili per condurre **soluzioni vincenti**.

I **Case Studies di settore** offrono spunti per riflessioni di business efficaci, riconducibili alla propria attività.

Lo scopo del nostro lavoro è di fornire tutti **gli strumenti e le skills** necessarie ai professionisti dell'Information Technology che più di chiunque altro hanno bisogno di pianificare e prevedere i rischi del loro intricato mondo.

TwentyEighty non si limita però a questo: il nostro commitment e la nostra dedizione per il successo dei clienti si traduce anche nella costante ricerca di news e idee.

In occasione della partecipazione al convegno Information Technology Forum, abbiamo selezionato per lei alcuni dei nostri **articoli e aggiornamenti dedicati ai progetti IT e alla figura dell'IT Project Manager**.

Buona lettura



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### Why are IT projects different?

Information Technology is so varied and IT projects range from kitting out new buildings with computers and telephones to designing bespoke apps. Although all projects in all sectors have their challenges, there are some unique considerations for IT projects. So, why are IT projects different?



### Varied stakeholders

As IT is a specialized discipline, you'll find that there are lots of technical teams involved for something that may look relatively straightforward to the outsider. Some of the key teams within IT divisions include:

- Hardware: operating systems, platforms
- Networking: firewalls and connectivity
- Software: applications and interfaces
- Business Intelligence: big data, data warehousing and analytics
- Service Management: contracts and procurement, dealing with vendors
- Service Desk and field engineers: over the phone and onsite front line support for end users
- Information security: governance, compliance and data management

Of course, that's just a sample and your organization may include other teams.

IT projects have a high track record of failure – a quick Google search will throw up plenty of surveys that provide statistics on that – but they rarely fail because of the technology. When you work with experts who are interested in the tools they use and know the products, it's not the solutions that let you down. It's the people.

Strong stakeholder management is essential on IT projects as you'll have a lot of different specialties and business areas to bring together into a cohesive team.

### Complexity

IT systems can be very simple or very complex. They can be standalone applications or systems of systems. The general rule though is that an IT project will turn out to be more complicated than you think.

Build in extra time to deal with unforeseen situations and to unpick problems. Even straightforward requirements like "grant system access to Marketing" needs lots of thought. Imagine this:

- Who in Marketing? "Oh, not everyone, just this list."
- What level of permissions do they need? "The ability to edit records."
- Does everyone need the same access? "No, three managers need to be able to create new users and reset passwords."
- What about external access? "Yes, there are thirdparty consultants who need access?"
- Do you want them to see financial information? To be able to edit records? "Erm, no..."
- What about these Australian users? The system runs a batch process overnight for us but that will be when they want to use it. "Oh, OK..."



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And so on. You need to be really specific with requirements and spend time with the right people establishing exactly what is required so you can meet their needs.

### Uniqueness

Something else that sets an IT project apart from many other types of project is the uniqueness. You are often bringing together teams and technology in a way that hasn't been done before – perhaps it's a first for your organization, perhaps it's a first for anyone, anywhere. Unfortunately you can't mitigate that. Someone has to be first.

That brings its own challenges, not least risk management.

### More risk

The twin challenges of complexity and uniqueness introduce project risk. Risk management is critical on all projects, and IT initiatives are no different. The difference is that you might not understand or be able to identify all the technical risks when the project starts, especially if you've not done this kind of project before.

Make sure that risk management is something you do continually, as a team, throughout the life cycle of the project. It shouldn't be a oneoff activity during project initiation because you'll encounter new risks as you move into each new stage of the project.

Everyone should feel as if they can raise risks with you, so encourage your team to flag potential problems as and when they arise, and from any area of the project.

### Communication requirements

This is a sweeping stereotype: technical people don't know how to talk a language that business users will understand. However, stereotypes normally have some kind of grounding in perceived reality, and if you have worked in IT projects for any length of time you will have come across technically brilliant engineers with poor business communication skills. I actually think the situation is improving and these days I meet far fewer technicians who fit that stereotype. There is a shift in all business areas and all levels towards developing great communication and leadership competencies.

A business analyst on your project will be a huge help in bridging the technology business communication divide, but as a project manager you can also fill that gap. The role involves taking the requirements of the end users and translating them into terms that the technical teams can understand. Then they can scope a solution to meet those needs and work with you to articulate it effectively back to the users.

Many end users (and I count myself in this bunch, when I'm on the receiving end of a project) don't want to know about the ins and outs of the technology. We don't care how the firewalls are configured or whether there are enough ports on the switch. All we care about is whether the end result is fit for purpose. Tailoring your communications is important to avoid bogging people down with unnecessary detail.



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### Testing and prototyping

IT projects have a testing phase that is normally the first thing to get cut when timescales are tight. This is a huge mistake. Protect your testing phase to the end: it's the only point where you really get to see if what you have designed and built actually works.

Use prototypes to bring your deliverables to life. It can be hard to get excited about lines of code or boxes in the server room. Wireframes, storyboards and prototypes can be a good way to demonstrate progress and show your testers what they are going to get.

Spend enough time preparing great test scripts so that every eventuality is covered. Brief your testers to not only try to make the processes and workflows work as they should but also to try to break the system. Real users won't always do the right thing. You need to be confident that your project deliverables can stand up to a virtual battering.

Don't forget technical testing as well. You'll want to make sure that your new system works fast enough, can be audited and is secure enough. These are nonfunctional requirements but are equally important for the project's success. Design these features in from the start as it's almost impossible to do a good job of it if you leave them out of the development phase.

### Transition to go live

The final stage of the project is the transition to go live. This is when you stop working on a project and start working on something that is 'business as usual'. You put your products live and handover to the operational team who will be managing the product going forward.

Ideally, you'll have had someone from that operational team involved from the beginning of the project. They can liaise with their colleagues to ensure a smooth handover. If you don't have anyone on the team yet who represents the operational business or IT team, get them seconded to the project as soon as you can.

Prepare your handover documentation as you go along. Keep a project wiki or document repository stored with everything you think the operational team would find useful, like manuals, training materials, history of changes and decisions and so on. You can give them this library as reference material and it will vastly speed up the knowledge transfer.

Part of the handover should be introductions to any vendors with whom you have worked. Another characteristic of IT projects is the reliance on outsourcing for various workstreams or products so it's quite likely that you'll either have a consultancy relationship or a product supplier relationship to handover. The easiest way to do this is to convene a meeting (conference call or facetime) and introduce everyone at once.

You may also have to decommission an old system (read more about considerations for retiring old IT systems in this article). That could be a whole new project in itself – perhaps the next thing you go on to manage?

The very last thing to remember (and, in my opinion, the most important) on an IT project is that it probably isn't an IT project. It's a project to deliver business capability, and an IT solution just happens to be how you are going to do that. There isn't a dichotomy between 'the business' and 'IT'. You are all part of the business: project managers, IT subject matter experts and technicians, and end users alike. Don't let the 'IT project' label come between you and doing a great job for the company.

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# Successfully Launching an IT Project

**In any organisation**, the time comes when significant portions of the information technology (IT) back office infrastructure—such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), order entry, marketing or accounting—need to be replaced. The system or systems in place no longer meet business needs and instead of enabling employees, they are an impediment to efficiency.

After committing to the decision to **make a change** and following the initial excitement of selecting a vendor and negotiating the best terms, it's finally time to **get down to work**.

**How do you successfully get a project off the ground and through its initial phases and on the route to implementation?**



Starting off on the right foot in a largescale business systems project demands that you assemble an appropriate internal team and that any external teams you engage are properly managed.

Unless you're developing your system internally, you'll be engaging and managing a professional services group from your vendor. **Before the ink is dry on your licensing agreement**, you'll have their resources at your disposal. Although you probably can't launch or complete the project without these resources, defining how they'll work with you and what roles they'll play are of paramount importance.

Setting **ground rules for engagement and scope** at an initial executive session will assist in sizing the vendor team you'll need, thereby controlling cost and setting expectations with your partner and your internal customers. Vendor professional services are more than happy to provide almost anything you need, but these services come at a price and may not necessarily make the most of the opportunities a new system offers.

Determine what **external resources** are needed up front and realise it is not always expedient to defer to the vendor's familiarity with their system at the cost of ignoring your own requirements. You can't sacrifice your own user community based on outside advice.

Most importantly, **the external team needs to acknowledge the complexity and uniqueness of your business**. Getting them to understand and translate your business into a software plan is the single most important early project activity that will occur. Navigating the way between shoehorning existing processes into a vendor template and a true reflection of business requirements, as well as steering a course through the opportunity to reengineer processes based on old systems versus replicating "as-is" functionality, won't happen unless your partner is prepared to understand your business—and it won't happen at all if it doesn't happen early.

The initial relationship and the requirements that flow out of it also won't materialize without an internal team that can do more than fill out the surveys provided by the vendor to gather your requirements. **A business analyst from within your own organisation** who is intimately familiar with the processes that are in scope is crucial to this part of the project. As good as any professional services business analyst is, they are on site temporarily, i.e., probably not long enough to discover the nuances of your organization and its systems. If your team can't make clear how your business operates, you'll be getting a system that reflects this imperfect understanding.



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**If your team doesn't have a business analyst**, you'll be delivering a fractured and incomplete view of the system/process confluence you're attempting to bridge. Finally, if your team doesn't have an advocate for improvement, your chances of getting a system that truly enables your user community are in danger of falling by the wayside.

It almost goes without saying that **a strong project manager is also a prerequisite on your internal team** as well as selected key business unit members. **Your project manager will coordinate your internal resources and communication** and ensure that pieces of the project that are not in the opening phase, such as data migration and user training, are being adequately addressed and planned for. Although you won't begin to get really valuable feedback from your business units until you can get a prototype in front of them, getting them involved in contributing early is a key factor that your project manager can also help direct.

**Getting your external and internal teams resourced and working correctly will help launch your project in an optimum way.** Although a software system is a major project with many risks, properly forming and managing your team resources is a major early factor in its success.

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# Leadership and Communication Skills for the IT Project Manager

Over the past few years, the pace of technological change has accelerated considerably with organisations turning to new innovations. At such a juncture, **it is paramount that IT leaders think strategically** on how to manage their workforce to ensure they are well-equipped to adapt, respond and deliver in line with emerging IT trends. Equipping project managers with **a wider range of skills** and engaging an effective succession strategy will be even more crucial to keep pace with these fastchanging dynamics.



## Going beyond tech: New skillsets needed for IT professionals

Once considered a field in which only technical skills ruled, IT talent management is now faced with a new paradigm. IT professionals are now required to not only deliver highquality products, but also to **address the business impact of evolving technologies and align technology strategy with business objectives**.

In other words, **IT professionals now need to think like business professionals**, not just technical ones.

Increasingly, **leadership and communication skills** are viewed as critical competencies for influencing management, managing relationships and championing technology as a business enabler across the organisation. Gone are the days where chief information officers (CIOs) and their teams were only needed to deliver technology and manage information. Now they have to deliver business sense as well.

## IT project managers as change agents

Project management, a vital discipline involving almost every IT professional, is in a constant state of flux due to the very nature of rapidly changing technology trends. **IT projects are getting more and more complex** as data gets increasingly colossal and when different technology platforms converge.

Project managers have broken free of their own silos within the IT department to infiltrate **other business such as HR, financial and legal**. Their role has expanded to include competencies for implementing organisational changes and meeting common business goals.

Change management means IT professionals must also be adept at **communication and negotiation** in order to acquire internal buying and ensure that any implemented system or solution works seamlessly and delivers value across the organisation.



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### HR alarm: The unskilled in communication and general management need not apply

According to recent TwentyEighty research, project leadership and communication and general management skills were the **top two competencies** ranked by respondents as critical to career advancement in the IT industry. Similarly, hiring managers also look for the same skillsets when recruiting project management professionals.

A recent Deloitte study revealed that **leadership was the number one capability** with the largest reported skill gap worldwide. At the same time it was also found that leadership was the **number one skill priority** in the tech industry. In light of these findings, leadership training will remain on the radar for the IT industry throughout the rest of this decade.

### The importance of succession management

Staffing challenges faced by organisations today are best addressed by developing talent internally rather than hiring from the outside, according to the TwentyEighty study, from both a sustainability and economic point of view.

Thus, an effective talent retention and succession programme can enable an IT organisation to leverage employees' institutional **knowledge and experience** to best achieve business objectives within the confines of the existing environment.

In the highly competitive and volatile IT sector, CIOs and IT directors are having a hard time retaining talent. Under such circumstances, investing in ongoing training and development for employees can contribute significantly to talent retention in the long run and is instrumental in advancing the IT project manager's career.

**Continuous learning is intricately linked to talent retention and succession management.** It is paramount for CIOs and IT leaders to manage their talent flow to ensure that their team members are developed comprehensively and frequently to meet both current and future needs. This requires baselining the current talent of the IT project team, defining clear competency requirements for meeting both departmental and overall business needs in the near and longterm, identifying gaps in achieving those requirements, laying out a development framework, and executing against that framework. The project management office (PMO) can be instrumental in supporting this activity as they have been shown to be a crucial body in an organisation providing structured training and career path support.