Bart Flos

THE PERFECT PROJECT

Why People Are Key To Success

Why People Are Key To Success

Bart Flos

THE PERFECT PROJECT

Why People Are Key to Success

Previously published by Bart Flos:

Het anti-klaagboek – Het anti-sleurboek – Het perfecte project
De kenniskermis – Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden

De mens als grens ('Our Inner Limits')

The Anti-Complain Book – The Perfect Project

De hoogvolwassen organisatie – De klimaatconfrontatie

De zelfmoordsoort – The Suicide Kind

As addenda to 'De mens als grens':

Addendum I – Het begin van het einde: onwetendheid
Addendum II – De frontale confrontatie: klimaatverandering
Addendum III – Het grote probleem: overconsumptie
Addendum IV – Het laatste taboe: ineenstorting

As addenda to 'Our Inner Limits':

Addendum V – The Beginning of The End: Ignorance
Addendum VI – De Frontal Confrontation: Climate Change
Addendum VII – The Big Problem: Overconsumption
Addendum VIII – The Final Taboo: Collapse
Addendum IX – The Next Step: Collapse Awareness
Addendum X – The Last Resort: Collapse Acceptance

If something can go wrong, it will go wrong.

Murphy's law

Second edition December 2024 (V_9)

Original Dutch title: *Het perfecte project – De mens als sleutel tot succes*
Publisher: Uitgeverij Haystack Zaltbommel

www.blijvendbeklijven.nl
info@blijvendbeklijven.nl

www.hetperfecteproject.nl (Dutch version)

Author, translation, final editing, correction, interior work and cover: Bart Flos
Translation consultant: Benjamin Roberts (www.benjaminbroberts.com)
Publisher: Uitgeverij BlijvendBeklijven Boeken, Helmond
Logistics and administration: Uitgeverij Santasado, Zutphen

ISBN: 9789083480282
NUR 801, 800, 810, 982

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Perfectionize your project 191

EPILOGUE 199

BLURB 208

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Imagine you're a project manager asked to take over an ongoing project. It involves a complex, global implementation of a new ICT-system, which must be integrated across the entire business supply chain. But the team doesn't make its targets. They lack insight, oversight and overview. There is lots of turmoil and stress and every day the company is losing heaps of money.

Like a new kid on the block, you get started and in no time you manage to get the entire team together. After two days of workshops with intense *backward and forward scheduling* exercises, the current project status is compared to the original planning. It soon becomes clear that the project will not be finished by the commissioned date. There are too many hitches, too many loose ends and just not enough time.

After reaching agreement with your team about the new status, you draft a report with a more realistic planning and deadline. You send the report to John, the program director and chief operations officer of the company. He shouts over the phone: 'Unacceptable! This can't be right! I've already promised everybody that everything will be finished on time…' He calls you over to discuss the report and before you know it, you're face to face with him in his office.

John sits there nervously twitching back and forth in his chair, tweaking his laptop, checking his smartphone and shuffling papers around on his desk, obviously in distress about all the planning shenanigans. Finally, he works up enough courage, looks you straight in the eye and says: 'I would like to ask you

something...'. He folds his hands before his mouth as if he is going to start a prayer, pauses for a while and then says: 'Can't we just get it done withóut planning?'

Why are we monkeying around all the time?

Welcome to the wonderful world of project management! This is a funny anecdote and I do like to share it, especially to newcomers. But this joke comes between a laugh and a tear, because I've experienced this kind of behavior far too often. And I'm not the only one. Honestly, how does someone come up with stuff like that? You've probably witnessed on more than one occasion how crazy things get when a project starts to go haywire.

According to meta-studies, two-thirds of all projects, in general, are doomed for failure. And half of those never make it to the finish line. The other half does, but only by the skin of its teeth and at a huge expense, wasted energy and tremendous human suffering. It's a remarkable phenomenon with an especially intriguing constant. Only one-third of the original goals people set in projects are successfully completed within the boundaries that were set up-front in terms of time, money and quality. There is no specific branch, industry or business type in which this persistent phenomenon *doesn't* occur. No matter how big or small, thick or thin, long or short, expensive or cheap, local, national or international: one third of all projects end up in the dumpster.

For as far back as I can remember, I've always been intrigued by how people, from utter genius to crazy maniac, work together. From the greatest successes to the worst failures, as interim project manager and crisis manager, I always had a front row seat. Nowhere else people are challenged more than when put

under pressure in a project, which often entails a combination of potentially catastrophic events that lead to major screw-ups.

I observed the misery. I witnessed people fail dramatically, vertically across the chain of command and horizontally along the supply chain, and watched entire projects come apart at the seams. All the time I thought to myself: 'Why are we monkeying around all the time? What do we have to do to stop it?' Fortunately, I had plenty of opportunities to find answers to my questions.

The First Law of Golub

A carelessly thought-out project takes three times longer than expected; a carefully thought-out project only takes twice as long.

In the mid-1990s I changed jobs from logistics to ICT. It was way before the Internet Bubble burst and 'the sky was the limit'. There were plenty of projects to go around. Most ICT companies had enormous project management departments, which gave me plenty of opportunities to gain experience and make a career for myself. I got at it with passion and before long I was promoted from team leader to project manager, and subsequently to international program manager. I established a good track record with lots of successful projects in the pocket and they often called me in as troubleshooter. Ultimately, that made me the perfect mediator and crisis manager.

I was amazed and astonished at how often I saw projects nosedive. I couldn't stand the thought that it seemed unavoidable. What was the common denominator in these failing projects, one that could help and stop it from

happening again? I managed a variety of projects, from implementations, migrations, transitions, workplace projects to business process optimizations, you name it, and slowly but surely my understanding of the fundamental problem grew.

James Bond doesn't exist

It became clear to me that many of the reasons why projects fail are perceived as *causes* when they are in fact *symptoms* of a larger problem. A project doesn't fail because of *bad* planning, a project fails because John doesn't care about planning at all!

No wonder that new methodologies and technologies have little or no effect on the success rate of projects. Project managers are constantly bogged down with intensive training on how to execute new methods and techniques to make projects run smoothly. But they fail anyway. Entire departments are sent off to Project Management School, but it doesn't help one iota. Digitalization and automation also don't help, even though our computers are thousands of times faster than they were only a few decades ago. The truth of the matter is that projects continue to fail at the same rate they've always done. Studying the few success stories that remain, I have found out that botched-up projects are caused primarily by one fundamental factor and one factor only. And this primary cause of project failure has nothing to do with the applied methodology or technology, or with being computer savvy.

Of course, I also studied the numerous project management methodologies that teach us that the end of a project follows the beginning, that we must prepare a project as best as we can and that we must break it up into orderly

steps, serial phases and parallel processes. Duh! After that, doing the project management dance appears so easy, so logical and so predictable. But appearances are deceptive.

I understood the jargon of project managers with ease. I could sit out an entire management meeting floated with *business cases, acceptance criteria, initiative phases, quality plans, phase and configuration management, phase transitions, change management, risk status, management tools, work packages, exception reports, product delivery, routing and standardization*, without cracking a smile or breaking out in laughter. But it started to bother me more and more, because, apparently, it-just-didn't-work. I soon started to change my mode of operation completely.

Gilb's Law of Unreliability

Miscalculating is a human trade, but to really mess things up you need a computer.

Jumping from one project meeting to another – and from one project crisis to another – I slowly but surely discovered a collaboration pattern that might best be explained by comparing it to a fire triangle. A fire triangle describes the relationship between oxygen, combustion temperature (heat) and fuel. Together these three elements keep the fire going, but when you remove one or more of them, the fire goes out. In any collaboration, but especially where projects are concerned, you can apply a similar fire triangle:

Man - Method – Machine

I call this the Primary Fire Triangle wherein *Method* stands for the processes, procedures and protocols that we use, *Machine* represents the technology and tools that are required to execute a project: from fire stone to arrow point and from steam engine to computer. *Man*, as in *humankind* or *People*, doesn't take a central position in this triangle but it is positioned on top. People cannot be successful without machines and methods. But people and technology are useless without a methodology. And people with methods are useless without technology. You get the gist. Remove one of the three elements from this fire triangle and any collaboration will 'extinguish'. It will come to a halt and subsequently fail miserably.

The problem with all these project management methodologies is that they don't say much about the required *leadership in projects*. It is simply assumed that everyone possesses the ability to do what the methodology stipulates. The inventors of *Prince2*, *PMBoK*, *IPMA*, *Agile*, *Lean* and *Scrum* assume that project teams have James Bond, Superman and Lionel Messi as members and that Steve Jobs leads them. They don't seem to realize that these kinds of team members are fictitious, dead or simply unavailable. They only exist in the world of make-believe, in *La-La-Land*.

Eventually, I came to the realization that the real reason why projects fail have little or nothing to do with poor methods or faulty machines; it is all about the deployment and involvement of human beings of flesh and blood. People are driven to extremes in projects. Under the right amount of pressure, they will excel and outdo themselves beyond belief, but the opposite is also true. Failing, derailing projects that go haywire can bring out the worst in people; they

uncover dark and ugly behavioral properties. We all respond differently under pressure.

Suddenly the program director comes stomping into the project room, yelling and blaming everyone for everything in an absurd state of rage, foaming at the mouth, stamping his feet, slamming the door and disappearing again before you can wink your eyes.

The chairperson of the steering group informs the project manager in advance that he has to take into consideration that none of the members of the steering group will ever take the time to study the project documentation beforehand.

At the last minute, the steering committee announces it wants to completely overhaul the mutually agreed approach of a huge, complex and expensive project that has been meticulously planned, by a simple show of hands standing the meeting: 'Who's in favor? Put your hands in the air... Yesss! Proposal accepted.'

Weiler's Law

Nothing is impossible for someone who doesn't have to do it himself.

Unmask your botched-up project

The more they consulted me as mediator and crisis manager, the less I emphasized on the substantive details of methodology or technology and the

more I started to focus on the people at hand and their ever-mesmerizing character traits. When I encountered sheer chaos, I kept asking myself the same question: what is the *real* problem here? And time and time again, it turned out that it was a waste of time to blame the *method* (our processes, procedures and protocols) or the *machine* (our technology, computers and tools). Every single time the pivotal answer, the decisive determinant of botched-up projects boiled down to the human factor. *It's the people, stupid!* It's high time we get the people out of the toolbox.

So, you can understand that this book will not cover the advantages of one method over another. Or which software you must run on your computer to turn every project into a success. Or which technical traits and skills a good project manager needs to possess or what makes a steering committee better in commandeering a project. This book is primarily about the human factor: which buttons need to be pressed, and which knobs need to be turned to stop folks from messing around, to quit the jumbling and muddling, to prevent each change endeavor from drowning in the swamp of failure and to finally make them all Perfect Projects.

And believe it or not: it *is* possible. By constantly putting people first, I have been successful as a leader, as a project manager, program manager and crisis manager. I have taken many projects across the finish line successfully – or at least made sure it did not end in total disaster – oftentimes against all odds and no matter how disastrous the initial status quo. For sure, it requires a great deal of natural leadership, maturity and resilience, but you, my friend, can learn to debunk your botched-up project too. Whether you are a team member, team leader, project leader, staff member, steering group member or stakeholder, the Perfect Project is within grasp for everyone.

Armed with PRIC-lists, botch-up tests and checklists for problem and success analysis, this book will help you combat the chaos around you. Not only will you debunk and unmask your own botched-up project, but you will also learn how, when, and where to intervene (or let others jump in). By turning the knobs of leadership, maturity and resilience you will get the people out of that darned toolbox and make them enjoy the smell of success again.

Do you ever go shopping?

After John had asked me if we couldn't 'do it without planning', I was taken aback for just a brief moment. Did he really say that? Wow. Bizarre. But by the look in his eyes, I could tell: John wasn't joking, he was dead serious. Repeating rational arguments or throwing project management wisdom at him wasn't going to help here, so I thought of another way to get my point across.

I suddenly asked him: 'John, do you ever go shopping with your wife?' Utterly confused, he threw himself back in his chair heatedly and shouted: 'Yeah, of course I go shopping with my wife! What, for Peat's sake, has that got to do with anything?' 'Well,' I responded kindly, 'Let's find out, shall we?'

I continued: 'Which three things do you at least have to agree upon before you're able to be successful in going shopping?' He clearly didn't get it, and his eyes were gleaming with frustration, so I decided to help him a little bit more. 'First of all, you have to decide whén you are going shopping. Because if you have this week Saturday planned and your wife is set on next week, it's not going to work, right? After that, you must decide whére you're going shopping. Because if you go to Amsterdam and your wife to The Hague, it's

not going to be a grand success, now, will it? Finally, you've got to agree on the time you're going shopping. Because if you are ready at two in the afternoon and your wife at nine in the morning it's not going to be a nice day together, now, is it?'

John snapped back angrily: 'Yeah, yeah, but what – for crying out loud! – does this have to do with my project?' 'Well, John', I said, and I leaned towards him, folded my hands, looking him straight in the eye: 'If something as simple as taking your wife out shopping for a day already requires you to plan these three simple things, then how do you expect to run your huge, complex, international project withóut planning? If you can't go shopping without reaching explicit agreement about planning, then what are we supposed to do?'

INTRODUCTION

Looking beyond the length of your project nose

The five main causes of project failure are easily explained within the context of human behavior and not by the (im)possibilities of methods or machines. People are always key to success.

Listening to Mr. Murphy

At the end of World War II, an American captain named John Paul Stapp conducted several scientific experiments at an Air Force Base in California. His research was known as *Project MX981*. Stapp investigated the odds for pilots to survive an airplane crash. In other words: how much brute force can a human body take? He and his team laid down a railway track of a couple of hundred meters with a steel sledge attached to it, powered by rocket engines. At the end of the runway, this sledge reached speeds up to 300 kilometers an hour, after which the hydraulic brakes slammed on and ended its devilish ride.

After conducting several test drives using dummies, John Paul Stapp got in the sledge himself. He was convinced that a human body could endure much more than the, assumed fatal, 18 g's of acceleration (18 times the normal force of

gravity on earth). The experiment wasn't exactly comfortable to him – to make that the understatement of the century – but he survived up to 35 g's!

To measure the acceleration forces better, Stapp called in the assistance of an air force engineer with a reputation that already preceded him. His name was *Edward Aloysius Murphy*. He brought a couple of new sensors with him that were tested on location, by shooting a live chimpanzee across the track. But when they wanted to check the results, nothing had been recorded: the sensors were incorrectly installed! Murphy, rightfully frustrated, grumbled, 'If mechanical engineers have a chance to do something wrong, they *will* do it wrong'. That caught on. Murphy had barely left the Air Force Base (he only stayed there a couple of days) or his 'law' had already become a common manner of speaking throughout the base.

Green's Law of Debate

Anything is possible if you don't know what you're talking about.

If it weren't mentioned at a press conference a few weeks later, *Murphy's Law* would have died a quiet death. However, during that meeting, held at location of the Air Force Base, a journalist asked Stapp why nobody was injured during these dangerous rocket sledge experiments. Stapp simply replied: 'Whatever we do, we always apply Murphy's Law'. Luckily, the journalist pressed on and Stapp was forced to explain that the preparation for each experiment was done with an elaborate and meticulous analysis of every aspect that possibly *could* go wrong, to prevent potential disaster. A couple of journalists from national

magazines and newspapers subsequently wrote about it, explaining *Murphy's Law*, and the rest, as we say, is history.

Throughout my career, I've always had a sympathy for Mr. Murphy. I imagined him as someone being present 'in spirit' during a project. In silence, he beholds our plans, ideas and intentions, holding a glass of brandy in one hand and a big fat cigar in the other. He usually smiles in approval, but if we neglect our duties, if we forgo a proper preparation and botch it all up, he will come for us big time. With a sip of brandy and a puff of his cigar, he simply nods his head and, with thunder and lightning, makes everything go wrong that can possibly go wrong. And so, early on in my career I already learned that you'd better listen to Mr. Murphy very carefully. I made him an *Honorary Team Member* in each of my projects and debated him, battled with him, hated and loved him, whilst dealing with all the project problems we inevitably were going to encounter.

Project botch-ups for professionals

There are almost as many definitions for the word 'project' as there are books written about 'project management'. Your definition is as good as mine; it all boils down to the same thing. However, for the context of this book, I will use the following simplified definition:

A project encompasses all change-related activities within a regular business process that are executed with a clear set goal, specific added business value and a razor-sharp defined beginning and ending.

To put it bluntly, many projects are not worthy of that definition, because they don't even come close. As explained, more than two-thirds of all projects fail miserably. Half of them don't even make it to the finish line. The other half does make it across, but only with a lot of blood, sweat and tears and at an enormous financial and personal expense. The derivative is simple: only one-third of all projects turns out to be a success, with reference to the original goals set in terms of time, money and quality.

Roy's Second Law

If you can distinguish between a good and a bad advice,
you don't need advice.

Businesses take a huge economic, financial and social loss with failed projects. In 2004, the Royal Academy of Engineering together with the British Computer Society, published an overview of the problems involving complex ICT projects. The report made an estimate of the cost involved. In the US, a whopping $150 billion a year is wasted on failed ICT projects and in the European Union an equally shocking $140 billion goes down the drain. Together that amounts to $290 billion annually, which breaks down to about $33 million an hour, day and night, twenty-four-seven.

In the spring of 2013, the Dutch government started for the umpteenth time a national investigation into the continuous failure of its ICT projects. Already back in 2007, several university professors published an open letter in the national newspaper *Trouw*, estimating that failed projects cost the taxpayer 4 to 5 billion euros per year. The researchers also figured out the social and

financial implications for all these setbacks. By formulating a new step-by-step plan 'the government must establish better ICT policies and execution', according to the (overly optimistic) assignment letter.

In October 2011 *De Volkskrant*, a major Dutch national newspaper, published an analysis of problems with the automation process of the policy administration at the UWV (the Dutch Unemployment Agency). In March 2004, the original costs were estimated at € 40 million. By 2007, that amount had increased to € 256 million, and in that same period it skyrocketed to somewhere between € 350 and € 400 million. That is roughly € 50 million 'leakage' per year. In August 2009, *Gartner Inc.* established that the UWV spends almost half a billion euros yearly on ICT costs. That amounts to about € 40 million a month, just shy of € 1,5 million per day, every day of the year, year in, year out. Why doesn't anybody raise a finger? Or a hand? Or cry in outrage? Why isn't anybody dóing something about it?

In a 2011 interview in *De Volkskrant*, René Veldwijk, a public administrator and ICT entrepreneur, wrote that he is 'sick of all the ICT nonsense'. Veldwijk: 'All major governmental ICT projects will fail or turn into financial nightmares. And that tendency is only growing stronger'. He argues that ICT personnel as employed with the government are a bunch of nitwits: 'ICT is difficult. A large ICT-system is a hyper-complex machine. You need to follow a straight line; if you sidetrack, it will all come tumbling down before you know it'.

The Dutch government isn't really occupied with these universal project laws. If projects exceed their time frame, they just fork over more money, Veldwijk argues. 'Because the government rather loses money than lose face. This creates a situation in which failure is in everyone's best interests and projects

never end. Because ICT is not physically tangible, and therefore in fact invisible, these abuses and excesses can grow endlessly'. In other words: if everyone benefits from failure, success becomes a threat.

Veldwijk is radical in his judgement, but he has earned the right to speak. His company was hired to resolve this ICT conundrum at the UWV. And they succeeded, big time! 'More than 150 consultants from Capgemini and a whole bunch of UWV-coordinators couldn't do it. Within five months and with only eight people, we came through and build the ICT administration policy system from scratch. For one million euros in man hours. For a project that had already spent 270 million euros and that by now must have cost, by my estimate, about 400 million euros. Because of course, the old junk is still there. What we received in return was animosity and contempt, both from the ICT department and the administrators. An agonizing reward for the greatest success in your career'.

Third consequence of Murphy's Law

If certain things can go wrong, the one that causes the most damage will.

This example implies two things simultaneously. On the one hand, it is actually feasible to tackle a project professionally and turn it into a success. On the other hand, this sobering fact, however noble, is not necessarily in everybody's interest. It is saddening to me, and it sometimes downright angers me, that ICT service providers and opportunistic freelancers can sponge off an indecisive and apparently powerless government that, on top of everything, presides over almost inexhaustible sources of money.

‘An ICT-project is a psychological minefield’, says Arno Nuijten, a PhD student at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam in an article in the Dutch newspaper *Eindhovens Dagblad* in august 2012. In particular, his research entitled *'Deaf effect for risk warnings. A casual examination applied to information system projects'* studied the psychological factors involved in these kinds of projects. '*The Casino Behavior*: you are losing, you want to stop but you can’t. Because you're anticipating that stroke of good luck, that will turn everything around. *The Expense Argument*: you've already sunk so much money into the project, so now you múst continue. And *The Completion Effect*: we've completed 90 percent; we just have to continue a little bit longer. The only hitch is it will never surpass that 90 percent’.

The conclusions from Nuijten's dissertation are underpinned with, inter alia, interviews with high-ranking managers from twelve large companies. He also subdued persons to tests. And what was the result? People are more likely to ignore negative formulated advice than advice with positive content. So much for all the complaining within projects.

These kinds of problems do not only occur in ICT projects. Projects in general are constantly failing everywhere, from the construction of a motorway underpass to the realization of the Dutch high-speed railway (estimated at around € 2 billion and completed for over € 7 billion), from the expansion of a subway rail system to nationwide infrastructure projects, from the purchase of high-speed trains (the Dutch *Fyra Fiasco* with hundreds of millions of euros lost) to building (and later crashing) a space shuttle. As soon as we want to accomplish something with a specific start and finish date, with a limited amount of time and money and with lots of people involved, things *will* go

wrong. And they always go wrong the same way. Apparently, there's something else going on here, something more generic.

Don't be deceived by the scale of projects! Those 'enormous' governmental programs that cost hundreds of millions or even billions of euros will just as easily triple their budgets when they go haywire, as the 'tiny' projects within your company that 'only' cost tens or hundreds of thousands of euros. It doesn't make any difference; they all go haywire just the same. It's high time to examine these intertwining time- and money consuming human disaster areas from a different angle.

25-year-old Saïd has just started his career at a big international company, and he is participating in an internal introduction program. He is scheduled for a meeting with Ryan, a high-level senior department manager who just returned from a company pow-wow weekend. Ryan and the rest of the management team have been discussing topics like 'business improvement, 'core strategy' and 'shareholder's value' and the like. Now Ryan's all hyped up about it.

Big shot Ryan has prepared a summary document, which includes seven main points of the new departmental strategy. He quotes each point briefly to Saïd. Each sentence is inundated with wooly management speak, covered in buzz words like 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', 'synergy', 'transparency', 'profit maximization' and 'cost optimization'. It's all wonderful, swell, neat and dandy. Ryan glances at his young apprentice gleefully. 'Well, what do you think?'

At first Saïd is hesitant. After all, Ryan is 'the boss of his boss'. Caution is advised. But eventually he answers very carefully: 'Well, that all sounds great, when you put it together like that. But if I may ask, where do we, the people, fit in that list? What about us?' Ryan looks at him for a while, clearly shaken up, stares at his shiny slides again and stammers, 'Well, uh, that's sort of mentioned a bit here in items three and five, I think, and eh ... um ...'

Saïd's remark probably resulted in an early CLM (*), but kudo's for trying. Because in Ryan's *Wondrous and Miraculous Seven Strategic Points* not óne word was mentioned about the people required to achieve all that. Ryan was so busy yacking away in management jargon that he had totally forgotten to include his most important asset: human beings.

(*) *Career Limiting Move*

The Seven-Tiered Hourglass: From Fail Trail to Cycle of Success

If you want to discover why projects *really* fail and how to establish a Perfect Project, you need to look beyond the length of your project nose. To be more precise: you must get off your project butt, stand-up, climb up the process and procedure ladder and extend your view. Please allow me to explain.

A simplified, two-dimensional way to observe an hourglass is to regard it as two triangles, vertically pointing at each other by the tip. Above and below, they start broad, narrowing as they approach the middle, where they meet in a crossover point. In this case, the bottom triangle represents the signature of botched-up projects while the top triangle resembles the signature of perfect

projects And, as I'm sure you have already figured out, this is not an ordinary hourglass. This hourglass is made of 'project stuff' and that's why the grains of sand must flow from bottom to top, *against* gravity, representing the *Cycle of Success*, instead of flowing down, *assisted* by gravity, representing the *Fail Trail*. When we 'manage' our projects, we too must pull ourselves up against the forces of gravity, that only want to pull us down.

In the following overview I will describe the seven steps we have to climb to get from sheer chaos and turmoil to the highest level of order: *The Perfect Project*. We will work our way up from floor -3 of the parking garage, where it stinks of deteriorated concrete and urine, to floor +3, on the roof, outside in the sun, where we can breathe freely again.

Level -3: Fighting symptoms in botched-up projects

Say, you want to research the background of failing projects, and you start by googling 'project failure causes' or 'what are the main causes for project failure?' The result is a seemingly endless summation of causes that you can scroll through forever. It looks somewhat like this:

– Objectives not defined, assumptions insufficiently logged, started too soon.
– Unrealistic goals and plans, no margins incorporated, project members not involved in the planning phase.
– Week foundation for the project, insufficient research into the user needs.
– Planning poorly monitored, lack of internal and external communication within the project.
– Original requirements and starting points change during the project.

Traditional project management leads to a huge waste of time, money, and human talent. Two-thirds of all projects, large or small, end in failure, always and everywhere. Still, your project can be a success when you put people center stage.

Forget everything you have ever learned about project management up until now. The never-ending Fail Trail can only be turned into a continuous Cycle of Success when you start pushing the right buttons. Look beyond the length of your project nose and get your project people out of the toolbox:

– Put the right leader in the right place!
– Think maturely and act like an adult!
– Lift your finger when you don't like it!

In this book, stacked with frontally confrontational examples, anecdotes and hands-on tips & tricks, Bart Flos offers you a simple yet revolutionary body of thought to unmask botched-up projects, turning them into Perfect Projects.

Bart Flos has over 25 years of experience as project, change and crisis manager and has saved numerous projects from doom and failure. In the Netherlands, Flos is the bestselling author of *Het anti-klaagboek*, available in English as *The Anti-Complain Book*. He is a well-known public speaker and workshop leader, fascinated by the human condition and our struggle with continuous change.