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Business Insights

ACHIEVING REPEATABLE SUCCESS

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For a service firm such as Clientek, achieving a project management/governance methodology that creates many, repeatable, successful completions is absolutely essential. While adaptation remains important, it must come from and support a solid base. Since adaptation is a trailing activity reacting to changes and challenges after the fact, leading indicators are needed to balance fire fighting with planning. At Clientek, we've been using several leading indicators that provide great insights into managing a project to successful completion.

1. **Average Days Late.** All our projects follow an iterative model. For us, through our adoption of agile management techniques, but any iterative model can give you this powerful metric. When work is planned in fixed-length increments, measure the number of extra days that have been added to an increment to complete the planned work. Our work proceeds in two-week sprints, or ten business days per increment.
2. **Average Percent Delivered.** This is a very similar metric to Average Days Late and applies when you mark a sprint ended even if all the planned work is not yet complete. The left-over work is moved into the next sprint. Although this seems to measure very nearly the same metric, "percent delivered" can be subject to a little more fudge and fog. It is tempting to change a few definitions to arrive at 100% every sprint. We track both (since

some changes in the committed list can occur during the sprint) and use each to watchdog the other.

- 3. Average Churn.** This measures churn that occurs during the span of a single sprint. Churn is defined as the amount of change in the list of planned items for the sprint. If two items were added that's a +2 on incoming churn. If three items were removed that's a -3 on outgoing churn. Churn should be scaled by the relative size of the incoming or outgoing item and incoming and outgoing should never summed but remain tracked separately. Then express them as a percentage of the work planned for the sprint. Something more than +10% or -10%, for us, start to indicate increased risk.

For each of these metrics, you'll need to observe your teams to find the right sweet spot for each. While each is a trailing metric for each sprint, their continued monitoring turns them into leading indicators for the whole project. The longer the project, the more important to focus on tracking these numbers. If your Average Days Late floats around a one (or more) there is no way that project will be finished according to schedule.

Watch for other, upcoming articles from Clientek discussing project management metrics.

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