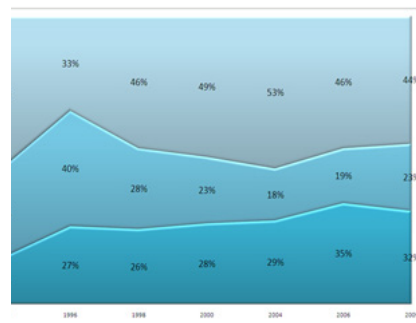


Atos Origin Point of View

# TURNING AROUND CHALLENGED PROGRAMS >>

It is interesting to see from Google Trends and Google Insights that the interest in ‘project management office’, ‘program management’ and ‘project management maturity’ have been steadily decreasing and the interest in ‘failed program’ has been increasing in the last five years.

Based on research in Chaos Report® by the Standish Group, an average of 25% of all IT investments has failed since 1994 and another 47% of all projects have been challenged in the same period. These statistics are somewhat alarming and is a reflection of ways we have been. In this period of recovery from downturn, as Ryan Schebler – a thought leader from Atos Origin - quotes: “Companies that re-examine their organizations and look for ways of minimizing costs without making any concessions to their innovative capacity will be the clear winners.” Leading the turnaround successfully in this manner needs a fresh perspective and thinking to achieve.



However, most organizations that try to self-heal typically ensure ‘Active-Inertia’. According to Donald Sull from Harvard Business School, Active-Inertia is a condition, where good companies, in order to improve, go back to their strengths and gift zones which actually end up hurting them in the turn around process. According to Sull, “Active inertia is the condition of doing what you’ve always done (and doing it well) but missing the curve in the road. It’s not what you do that gets you in trouble; it’s when you keep doing what you’ve always done...Hence, instead of digging themselves out, they are in fact digging deeper... only faster. “



## Who is Karthik?

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In these leading companies, their strategic frames- set of assumptions that determine how managers view the business - become their blinders. Their processes and procedure, the way things are done, become embedded as traditions, rituals and routines. Their ties, their relationships with partners, vendors, suppliers and even management philosophies become shackles. Their values, the set of shared beliefs that defines the program cultural space become disdainful dogmas. History is replete with such examples.

So, how can we turn around investments that are failing when we cannot afford to fail? If one is parachuted into such a failing program, how can one help turn it around?

Our research points to three definitive vertices of successful programs as depicted in the image below:



- A compellingly articulated, wholly appreciated and subscribed purpose for the program.
- A robust governance structure to monitor and manage program metrics, while balancing the purpose and environmental factors.
- A pro-active management of environmental factors.

The path to a new future, the methodology to turn around such failing programs along the three vertices above involves

four processes and they are outlined below. These processes overlap and relate to each other in ways that are not detailed in this article. They are also iterative in nature, progressively elaborating in every iteration.

- **Responding to Emergency:** This process involves responding to programs' immediate problems by understanding its purpose and immediate pain points. It involves analyzing the most painful of the program problems, identifying and implementing opportunities for delivering quick wins. This is mostly an art – involving two key elements: emphatic listening and creative solutioning. It helps to leverage experts from consulting organizations like Atos Origin who have seen other programs and have successfully helped the turn around. This process would start on day 1 and could typically take 30 to 60 days.
- **Understanding the Purpose:** This process involves understanding the purpose or premise under which the program was originally envisioned and compellingly articulating its alignment and importance to all interfaces. It involves understanding the stakeholders, appreciating the benefits realization plan, understanding the program portfolio and its alignment to other entities. It also involves evangelizing overall change, persuading subscription to strategy and thus gaining a wholly appreciated purpose for the program while decomposing refined program objectives in alignment to it. This process overlaps Emergency Response process and could take 45-90 days.
- **Correcting the structure:** This process involve developing and implementing a corrected program management plan and a robust governance structure to ensure success. This requires maturity and perspective that brings in fresh thinking without losing sight of the purpose. These activities typically cannot start until 45-90 days and can last between 2 – 12 months after that.
- **Actualizing the change:** The last set of processes involve actualizing the plan by deliberately developing stakeholder and customer intimacy and leveraging it. It is important we plan for and deliver shorter win cycles, manage expectations and control variances through mature and state of the art risk management and issue management practices. This also involves developing practices that helps imbibe a cultural change within the fabric of the organization.

These insights have been gained through lessons learned from several such turnarounds we have accomplished ourselves and seen in our research. These four processes are generally universally applicable in varying degrees to achieve turnarounds.

**“IT’S NOT WHAT YOU DO THAT GETS YOU IN TROUBLE; IT’S WHEN YOU KEEP DOING WHAT YOU’VE ALWAYS DONE...”**

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