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L2 Activity

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U.S. Census Bureau's Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) Project

The FDCA project by the U.S. Census Bureau was intended to modernize data collection processes for the 2010 Census through handheld devices. However, it faced numerous issues leading to its eventual failure.

Initial Budget and Final Cost

- **Initial Budget:** \$600 million[1]
- **Final Cost:** Over \$1.3 billion[1]

Timeline of Key Events

- **2006:** The project is initiated with the goal of completing by the 2010 Census.[1]
- **2008:** Significant technical issues and delays are reported, leading to the decision to abandon the handheld devices for most operations.[1]
- **2009:** The Government Accountability Office (GAO) criticizes the project's management and lack of proper testing, resulting in increased costs.[1]
- **2010:** The project is completed using paper-based methods and limited use of the new technology, far exceeding the initial budget.[1]

Source

[1] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "High-Risk Series: An Update," GAO-08-550T, Mar. 2008. [Online]. Available: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-08-550t.pdf>. [Accessed: May 17, 2024].

Fig 1: Discussion Post for project "U.S. Census Bureau's Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) Project"

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The failure of the California DMV IT Modernization Project can be attributed to several factors. Poor project management led to inadequate oversight and missed deadlines. Scope creep expanded the project's goals beyond initial plans without proper evaluation, while technical challenges made integrating new technology with existing systems difficult. Vendor issues and inadequate testing further compounded the problems, leading to delays and undetected issues.

To avoid these issues, robust project management with clear milestones and accountability is essential. Defining the project scope clearly and managing changes rigorously can prevent scope creep. Implementing the project in smaller, manageable phases allows for thorough testing and feedback. Engaging stakeholders, especially end-users, early in the process ensures the system meets actual needs and identifies potential problems. Regular audits and independent reviews help catch issues early, and strict vendor management practices, including performance-based contracts, ensure accountability and high-quality delivery. These strategies could have significantly increased the likelihood of a successful project outcome.

[See less](#)



Fig 2: Comment on Chinmaya Garg's case "California DMV IT Modernization Project"



Fig 3: Comment on Vaibhav Ramchandani's case "Runcible: Anti Smartphone Concept"