

Lessons From a Decade of IT Failures

The takeaways from tracking the big IT debacles of the last 10 years

Ten years ago, *IEEE Spectrum* published “[Why Software Fails](http://spectrum.ieee.org/computing/software/why-software-fails)” (<http://spectrum.ieee.org/computing/software/why-software-fails>),” an article that examined the underlying causes of notable project failures. A couple of years later, we started the [Risk Factor](http://spectrum.ieee.org/blog/riskfactor) (<http://spectrum.ieee.org/blog/riskfactor>) blog, with the goal of tracking technology failures both large and small.



Photo: Getty Images

To commemorate the last decade’s worth of failures, we organized and analyzed the data we’ve collected. We cannot claim—nor can anyone, really—to have a definitive, comprehensive database of debacles. Instead, from the incidents we have chronicled, we handpicked the most interesting and illustrative examples of big IT systems and projects gone awry and created the five interactives featured here. Each reveals different emerging patterns and lessons. Dive in to see what we’ve found. One big takeaway: While it’s impossible to say whether IT failures are more frequent now than in the past, it does seem that the aggregate consequences are worse.

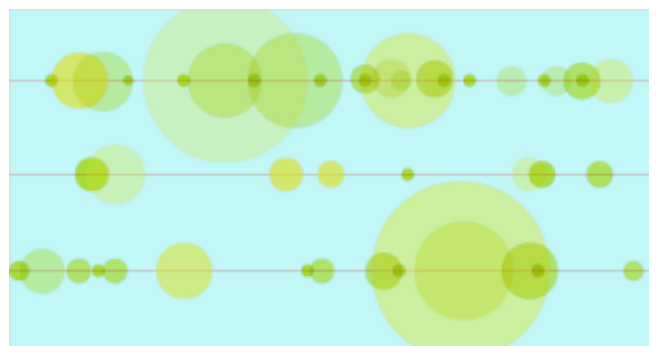
The Staggering Impact of IT Systems Gone Wrong

Explore the many ways in which IT failures have squandered money, wasted time, and generally disrupted people’s lives

16 Oct

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Overcomplexifying,
Underdelivering



Lesson 1

Trying to replace multiple systems with one can lead to none

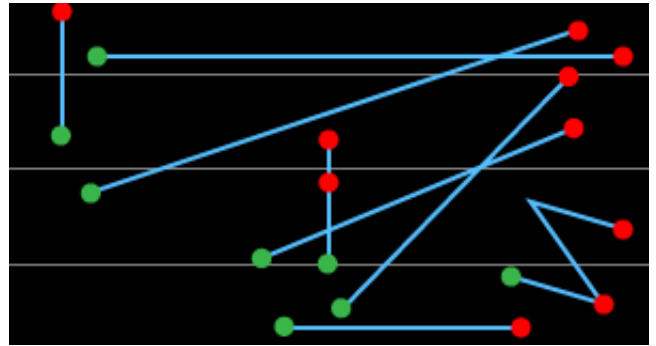
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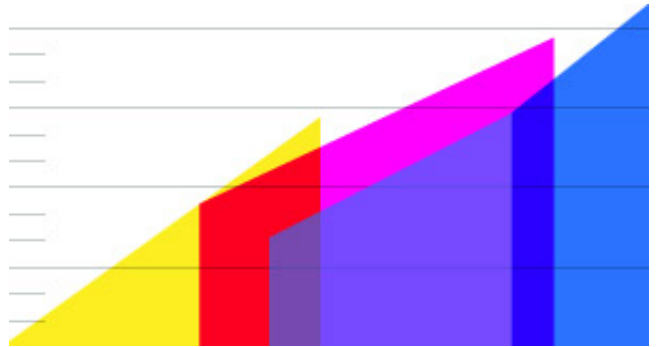
The Life Cycles of Failed Projects

When even more money and more time can't prevent project disasters

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Lesson 2



Lesson 3

The IT Failure Blame Game

Try to match failures and glitches with their reported causes

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Monuments to Failure

The cadavers of dead IT projects are buried under mounds of cash

(/static/monuments-to-failure)

The Making of "Lessons From a Decade of IT Failures"

Why and how we're looking back at a decade's worth of IT debacles

16 Oct

(/riskfactor/computing/it/the-making-of-lessons-from-a-decade-of-it-failures)



Lesson 4



Lesson 5



Blog
