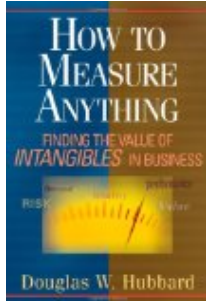




2013 IT Project Success Rates Survey Results



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This survey was performed during November and December 2013 and there was 173 respondents. The survey was announced in my October 2013 DDJ article, on the [Ambysoft announcements list](#), my [Twitter feed](#), and several LinkedIn discussion forums (Disciplined Agile Delivery, Greater IBM connection, and Considerate Enterprise Architecture Group).

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The Survey Results

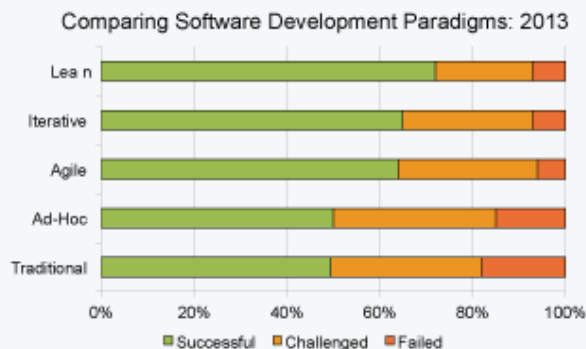
The survey results are summarized in my January 2014 [Dr. Dobb's Journal](#) article [The Non-Existent Software Crisis: Debunking the Chaos Report](#) and in a blog posting [Comparing Software Development Paradigms](#) (there are some nice infographics in that posting).

Some findings include:

- As you can see in [Figure 1](#), Agile and Lean strategies are more effective than traditional strategies on average. For a detailed discussion, read [Lean and Agile Software Development is More Successful than Waterfall](#)
- As you can see in [Figure 1](#), ad-hoc project teams (no defined process) and traditional project teams have lower success rates than agile/iterative project teams
- [Figure 2](#) compares the effectiveness of the five paradigms for delivering in a timely manner, for providing good ROI, for delivering value to the stakeholders, and for producing a quality product. For more a more detailed discussion, read [Modern Software Development Strategies are More Effective](#).
- As you can see in [Figure 3](#), there is no common definition of software development success.
 - When it comes to time/schedule, 16% prefer to deliver on time according to the schedule, 39% prefer to deliver when the system is ready to be shipped, and 42% say both are equally important
 - When it comes to ROI, 13% prefer to deliver within budget, 60% prefer to provide good return on investment (ROI), and 23% say both are equally important
 - When it comes to stakeholder value, 4% prefer to build the system to specification and 86% prefer to meet the actual needs of stakeholders, and 10% say both are equally important
 - When it comes to quality, 10% prefer to deliver on time and on budget and 56% prefer to deliver high-quality, easy-to-maintain systems, and 34% say both are equally important
 - Only 8% of respondents indicated that their definition of success included all three of delivering according to schedule, within budget, and to the specification (answers where both was indicated were included in this calculation).

Figure 1. Perceived IT project success rates by paradigm.

How successful are software delivery teams?



Successful - A project is considered successful if a solution has been delivered and it met its success criteria within a range acceptable to your organization.

Challenged - A project is considered challenged if a solution was delivered but the team did not fully meet all of the project's success criteria within acceptable ranges (e.g. the quality was fine, the project was pretty much on time, but ROI was too low).

Failed - The project team did not deliver a solution.

Agile, lean and iterative strategies were superior on average compared to traditional and ad-hoc strategies.

Source: 2013 IT Project Success Rates Survey, Ambysoft.com/surveys/success2013.html
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Figure 2. Success factors by paradigm (Scale is from -10 to +10).

How do software development paradigms compare?

Product Quality. When it comes to the quality of the system delivered, what is your experience regarding the effectiveness of [paradigm] software development teams?

Stakeholder Value. When it comes to ability to deliver a solution which meets the actual needs of it's stakeholders, what is your experience regarding the effectiveness of [paradigm] software development teams?

ROI. When it comes to effective use of return on investment (ROI), what is your experience regarding the effectiveness of [paradigm] software development teams?

Time/Schedule. When it comes to time/schedule, what is your experience regarding the effectiveness of [paradigm] software development teams?



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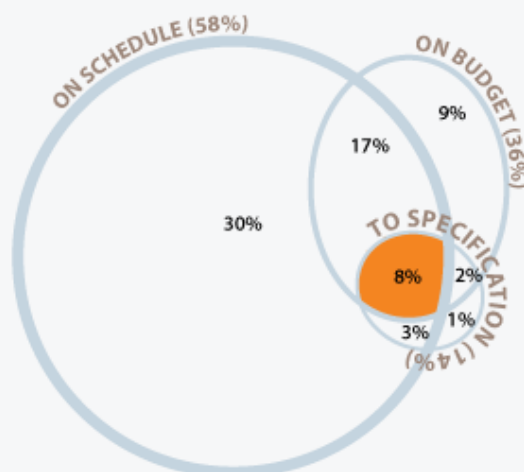
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Figure 3. How do people define success?

How do you define software development success?

The definition of success for software development projects varies by team. The 2013 IT Project Success survey found that 58% of respondents valued being on schedule, 36% on budget, and 14% building to specification. When it comes to being on budget and on time, only 25% of respondents valued those two success factors together. Only 8% of respondents valued all three of on time, on budget, and built to specification.

Less than one in ten IT professionals define success as "on time, on budget, and to specification."



Source: 2013 IT Project Success Rates Survey, Ambysoft.com/surveys/success2013.html
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Downloads



The Survey
Questions

[Raw Data](#)

[Summary
Presentation](#)

What You May Do With This Information

You may use this data as you see fit, but may not sell it in whole or in part. You may publish summaries of the findings, but if you do so you must reference the survey accordingly (include the name and the URL to this page). Feel free to [contact me with questions](#). Better yet, if you publish, please let me know so I can link to your work.

Discussion of the Results

1. It's difficult to get a good estimate of project success rates because there isn't a standard definition of success (nor will there ever be). So, if I define success specifically, for example as "reasonably on time, on budget, to specification" that definition will be applicable for some projects but not others. So, I could presumably get an accurate estimate of how well we're doing against that criteria but it wouldn't be the actual industry success rate. If, however, I define allow people to define success in terms of how it was defined for the actual projects then I'll get a much more accurate estimate of project success rates but I won't know exactly
2. This survey was huge, up to 50 questions, so the response rate was a bit lower than usual.
3. This survey suffers from the [fundamental challenges faced by all surveys](#).

Links to Other Articles/Surveys

1. [My other surveys](#)

Why Share This Much Information?

I'm sharing the results, and in particular the source data, of my surveys for several reasons:

1. Other people can do a much better job of analysis than I can. If they publish online, I am more than happy to include links to their articles/papers.
2. Once I've published my column summarizing the data in DDJ, I really don't have any reason not to share the information.
3. Too many traditionalists out there like to use the "[where's the proof](#)" question as an excuse not to adopt agile techniques. By providing some evidence that a wide range of organizations seem to be adopting these techniques maybe we can get them to rethink things a bit.
4. I think that it's a good thing to do and I invite others to do the same.



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