



RHarper Consulting Update

Don't Let "Drag" Cause Your Project to Crash and Burn



I have had the good fortune over the years to have been involved in the development of a number of successful projects, and the unfortunate (but very educational) experience of being involved in some which did not do so well. Regardless of the outcome, there are a number of similarities and common experiences present in one form or another on every project.

Several of us were sitting around recently over a couple of adult beverages, exchanging war stories of about various projects in our personal histories, their challenges, trials, and tribulations. Someone came up with a great analogy: Projects are like airplanes in flight. They have lift, they have drag, and when drag exceeds lift, the project will not fly.

Let's look at some of the typical participants who can increase drag and keep the project from getting off the ground:

Team members with hidden agendas – The biggest obstacles confronting a project are internal. The failure to sell the strategic vision of the project, and the resulting lack of commitment or fear of change, causes certain participants to become "drag" by pushing competing concepts or "add-ons," slowing progress at every step.

Poorly Defined Project Goals – Nothing drains a project's momentum quicker than unclear or ever-changing objectives. The drag created by jumping into design work prematurely, creating unrealistic project budgets, and not doing adequate strategic planning contribute enough "drag" to crash most projects before they ever take flight.

Loyalty Over Competence – How often have you come out of a presentation or project meeting asking "how did that person get hired?," only to find that they were selected for some reason other than being most qualified? Loyalty to a provider or vendor functioning outside their field of expertise, general incompetence, or simple failure to produce creates "drag," as others on the team work to compensate for the lack of ability and competence of the offending party. Worse yet, even once the problem is identified, the Owner's failure to remove the "drag" causes some of the "lift" forces to lose their motivation.

The physical forces involved in flight may not directly relate to your project, but the analogy still makes sense – you have "lift," the forces necessary to get the aircraft or the project off the ground, and you have "drag," the forces working against it. Cooperation and harmony of forces are vital as your project moves down the runway, gathers speed, and prepares to leave the ground, fly, and make a safe landing. Ensure that you and everyone involved are providing lift and not creating drag.

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RHarper Consulting Group provides development consulting, program management, and owner representation services focused on the senior living and mixed use sectors. In addition, Mr. Harper is also a listed mediator and arbitrator providing dispute resolution services for the construction and real estate industries.

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