

“Why Am I on This Team?”

Clearly Defined Roles and Accountabilities Are Key to Project Success

How well your team answers this deceptively simple question can have a direct impact on the success of your project. Yet, for many organizations, clarity around roles and accountabilities is frequently an underlying source of project frustration and even failure.

Opportunities realized or opportunities lost often link directly to how well an individual grasps his/her role and the level of commitment to accountabilities. Even the slightest vagueness here can hurt an entire team’s ability to meet its objectives.

This survey focuses on the relationship of clearly defined roles and accountabilities to project outcomes.

Key Survey Findings

It’s a rare IT organization that cannot improve its practices in this area.

All of our survey respondents acknowledge the importance of clarity around roles and accountabilities. While a majority indicate their teams are sufficient in these areas, most feel their processes to identify, document and communicate roles and accountabilities need improvement in order to yield more predictable outcomes:

- No survey respondents are 100% successful in meeting business expectations; a slight majority are usually “somewhat successful.”
- 75% of respondents feel their roles and accountabilities are very clear both strategically and tactically.
- 75% of respondents feel their contributions matter to the success of the project.
- A majority of respondents indicate the business objectives of their projects are communicated clearly.
- Over 50% of respondents state there is no single project role accountable for overall technical issues or meeting business success criteria.
- Only 40% of respondents describe their process to identify, document, and communicate roles and responsibilities is formal and clear.
- Wasting time and money are considered the most serious consequences of lack of clarity around roles and accountabilities.
- Only 1/3 of respondents feel that everyone on their team is ultimately held accountable for poor performance in their areas of responsibility.

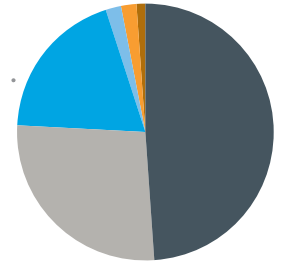
Survey of Chicago IT Executives

As part of Geneca’s ongoing effort to study the impact of people, processes and metrics on software project outcomes, we survey IT executives on a regular basis. These surveys improve our understanding of how organizations cope with project challenges and further our work in building successful stakeholder-based products.

This article is based on a pulse survey of IT executives attending a recent IT conference in Chicago.

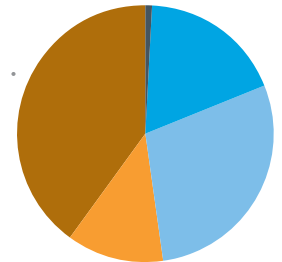
SURVEY RESPONDENT ROLES

Program Mgr/PMO/Portfolio Mgr	49%
IT Management	27%
Project Manager	19%
Enterprise Architect	2%
Process/Methodology Mgr	2%
IT Auditor	1%



COMPANY SIZE

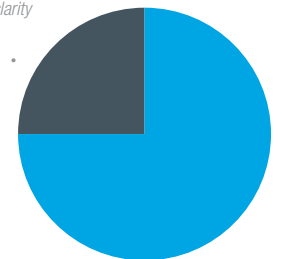
< \$50M	1%
\$50M-\$100M	18%
\$100M-\$500M	29%
\$500M-\$1B	12%
> \$1B	40%



CLARITY AROUND ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

The majority of respondents indicate that their teams have clarity around roles and accountabilities.

Roles/accountabilities very clear (strategically and tactically)	75%
Roles/accountabilities somewhat clear but details are fuzzy	25%



Accountability: The Heart of Project Success

Accountability is the dynamic that compels us to make good on our commitments.

An individual's ability to contribute to project success is directly related to the level of understanding of that fundamental question: "Why I am on this team?" Only by spelling out expectations and priorities before a project begins, can a clear line of accountability for delivering on the team's business objectives be created.

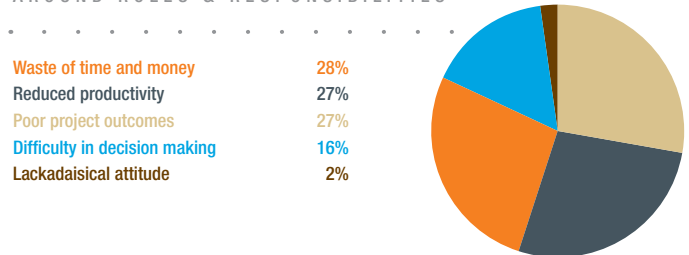
Without a clear articulation of roles, a team can be sent scrambling whenever a new idea or problem presents itself. Not only does this result in missed opportunities, rework and delays, it also creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and lack of predictability.

As an analogy, consider what would happen if players on a football team became confused about their role or what they're supposed to do with the ball. While this confusion is not a direct reflection on an individual's athletic ability, it will certainly impact the final score. The same can be said of a team of software professionals: Lack of clarity on roles and accountabilities can make or break the game. As seen by the top graph on the right, the consequences on team performance are far reaching.

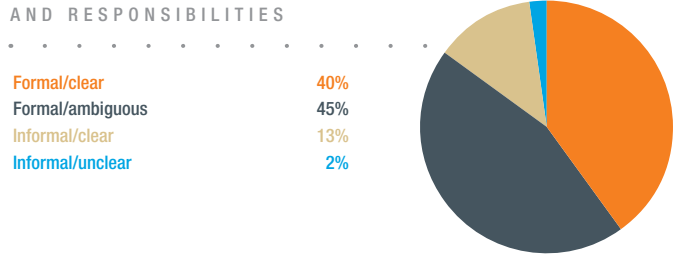
While most survey respondents indicate they have a formal process for indentifying, documenting and communicating roles and accountabilities, the process is often ambiguous and does not directly link to business objectives. One way to address this challenge is to have a single person/role accountable to the business and a single person/role accountable for technical issues.

However, as can be seen from the graphs at the right, most companies do not understand the value of these roles. While we typically acknowledge the value of roles such as Project Manager, Architect, Developer, Business and Quality Analyst, having a specific role that is accountable for technical and business objectives goes a long way in insuring project success.

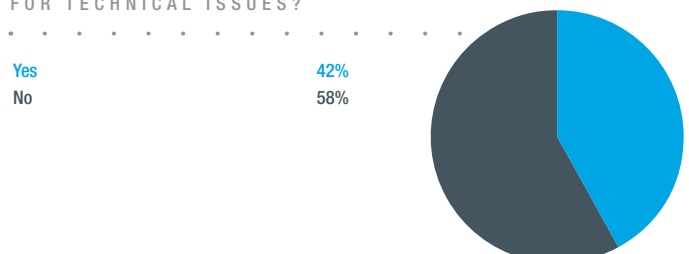
CONSEQUENCES OF LACK OF CLARITY AROUND ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



THE PROCESS TO IDENTIFY, DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



IS THERE A SINGLE PERSON/ROLE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE BUSINESS AND FOR TECHNICAL ISSUES?



Activities vs. Business Commitments

One of the most influential factors of project success is tying roles and accountabilities to business commitments.

As seen by the graphs at the right, most respondents believe their teams understand the business value of their project and have clarity on roles. However, a majority also indicate their projects do not consistently meet business expectations.

A reason for this inconsistency is that while a team may believe it is doing a good job in defining responsibilities, it is linking those responsibilities to *activities* rather than *the delivery of value*. Another contributing factor is clarity around roles without consensus on business objectives.

In situations like these, the true measure of value is to gauge activities and progress against business objectives. Characterizing roles and accountabilities in this way drives achievement of *business commitments*.

Conclusion: What You Can Do

The root causes for disappointing project outcomes should be looked at from the perspective of process, roles, and metrics. Improvement in these areas has the most influence in eliminating project delays, incorrect estimates, unclear status, rework and unpredictable outcomes.

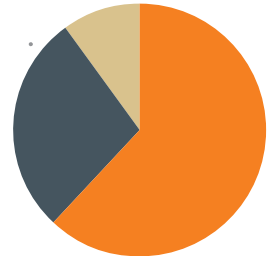
As a first step in tackling the challenges of role definition, we recommend that IT executives address the following potential problem areas:

- Is there a common view of everyone's role in achieving agreed to project objectives?
- Your solution is delivered, but technically flawed. Do you have a single person and role on the project accountable for technical soundness?
- You deliver a solution that works, but is missing key features required by the business. Is there a single individual and role that is accountable for making sure the solution is a complete one?
- Are your project managers accountable for transparency and creating a common vision of your project's progress and success criteria? Are they making the health and status of your project visible and managing individuals within your organization? Are the responsibilities for this role consistent across all projects and project managers?
- Do you have specialized groups of skills such as the DBA group, Architect group, and Analysts? If so, are they set up as shared services? In other words, how are they measured? Are they protecting the organization from bad habits or are they measured on their ability to enable their teams to deliver business solutions more effectively?
- Are your specialized teams identifying and developing best practices that can be used to drive value toward greater objectives of the business?
- When launching a new project, how do you view the leadership assignment? Is there a single role such as a Project Manager?
- Do you have a team accountable for different aspects of projects success? Is this consistent across all projects?
- Is there a clear view of project progress and health? Does everyone understand it equally?
- Is Quality Assurance a group that participates after development? Does UAT get planned when the project is 50% underway or at the beginning?

Whether your focus is custom software development or the implementation of packaged solutions, looking below the surface of your practices to define roles and accountabilities helps to identify and root out the habits that hinder performance once and for all. Introspection in these areas can lead to a stronger, better performing IT organization that can predictably deliver business value.

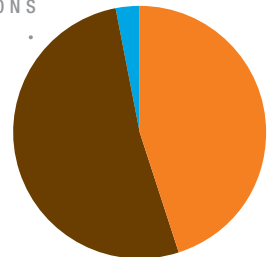
UNDERSTANDING OF PROJECTS' BUSINESS VALUE

Business value very clear (concept and details)	62%
Business value clear in general, but not in the details	28%
Business value mostly unclear	10%



HOW SUCCESSFUL IS YOUR TEAM IN MEETING BUSINESS EXPECTATIONS

Successful for the most part	45%
Somewhat successful	52%
Not sure	3%



About Geneca

Chicago-based custom software development firm, Geneca, helps its clients meet their business challenges by bringing predictability to the software development process. Getting PredictableSM, Geneca's pioneering approach to Requirements Definition and Management, has an outstanding success rate in helping its clients drive clear business alignment by identifying project objectives and success criteria. Learn more about Getting PredictableSM and Geneca's other software services at www.geneca.com.

Additional copies of this survey are available at www.geneca.com.



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