# 4. Hints and Tips

Doing the thinking up front will save time and effort later on. The Project Initiation stage is vital to the success of any project, so that a clear understanding is reached about what the project is expected to produce.

Be obsessive about defining and communicating deliverables. These are the 'nuts and bolts' of the project – the tangible steps on the way to meeting the objectives of the project. Being able to 'tick off' deliverables along the way will help team morale, as well as demonstrating to the Board that something is happening.

Keep the schedule alive. Constantly monitor, and possibly use MS Project to illustrate the progress of tasks. Re-schedule where necessary, but remember to tell everyone timescales have changed! Follow the rules on escalation and gain approval if any changes are needed that may affect the delivery date and key milestones of the project – early warning is better than late apologies.

When things go wrong, remember the standard constraints… don't sacrifice quality and always consult with the project sponsor and project board to gain advice and direction. Every project has to work within 6 constraints, as illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 1*: Standard Project Constraints*
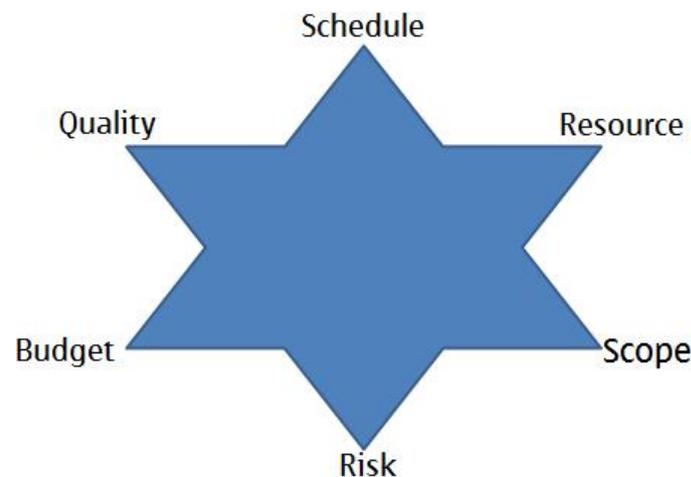
Changing any one of the constraints will impact the other five. Your aim is to apply the constraints to meet the unique needs of the project you're managing. You should be working with your stakeholders to make conscious decisions about the 6 constraints.

For example, if you're running a project that must hit a specific date, then if by going through the constraints with your stakeholders they determine that the date must be held but your budget can't be increased, then clearly they must make compromises around some or all of scope, quality, resource, or risk. It could be that through negotiation you agree that scope will be reduced and the quality bar will be lowered. Essentially the six constraints are a tool you can use to manage your stakeholders and their expectations.

Don't neglect the soft issues, such as:
- Briefing and communication
- Consultation
- Training
- Documentation
- Testing (IT projects)
- Planning for cut-over to service
- Data conversion (IT projects)
- Initial user support (IT projects)

Don't forget that this Handbook only covers the application of the ISD methodology to Project Management. There are lots of other things to take into account when creating a project plan, such as financial regulations; personnel

regulations, internal and external auditor requirements, legislation and regulatory requirement (FOI/DPA) etc. Don't assume that we will continue to do things the way they been done in the past: there will sometimes be a need to carry out a Business Process Review, which is another subject altogether!

The Role of the Project Manager: is to facilitate the means for planning, providing direction, monitoring the project, providing control and co-ordination.

Figure 2: *The Role of the Project Manager*

Planning   Directing

Controlling   Monitoring
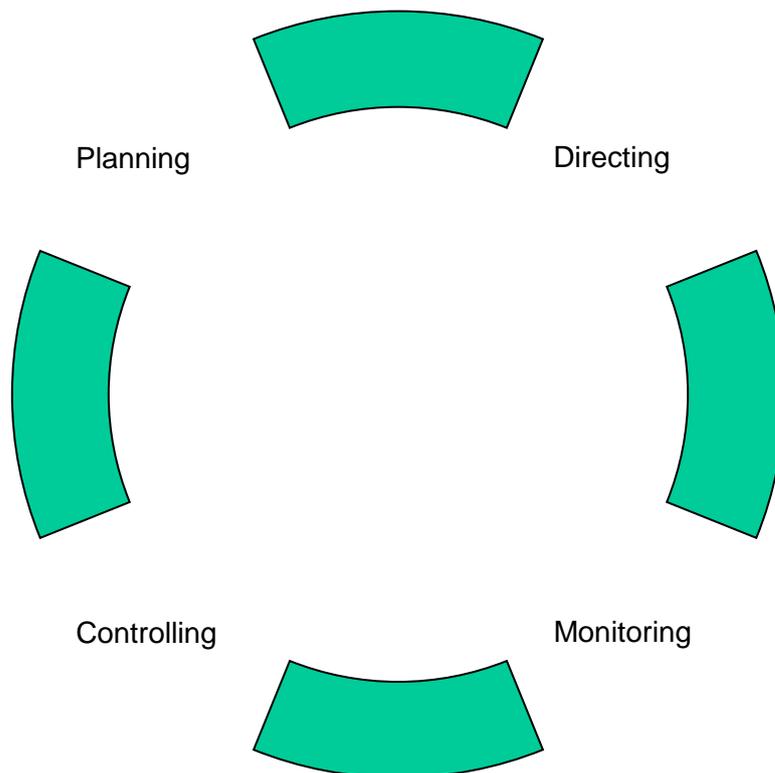
Measure your success: The project schedule acts as a measurement of time, the budget measures costs, and quality is measured by customers' requirements being met and business benefits being met. Use key performance indicators to measure your success criteria, making these clear and unambiguous.

Top 5 Success factors for a project:

1. Communication:
   a. Provide appropriate level of communications (don't overdo it or ignore people)
   b. Speak the same language as your audience
   c. Perform Stakeholder analysis to understand who your audience are, their interest and how you should communicate to them
   d. Communicate in simple terms so everybody understands your message.
   e. Provides clear understanding of the project objectives and key benefits needed (where we are going and how we will know when we get there)

f. Benefits of good communication are that it prevents any blockages occurring due to misunderstandings which may result in conflict (this lowers risk levels)

2. Risk Identification:
   a. Identify risks using project plan assumptions & stakeholder engagement
   b. Mitigate, accept or remove the risk
   c. Re-assess risks after mitigation to ensure this has not introduced further risks
   d. Benefits of risk identification are that it prevents failure of tasks and reduces any impact on the project

3. Leadership Style:
   a. Appropriate style applied to types of team / people
   b. Gets the most out of the team by understanding their motivations
   c. Provides appropriate support to the team
   d. Benefits are that the team work effectively and efficiently which is unlikely to cause delays to tasks.

4. Scheduling & Estimating:
   a. Accurate scheduling and estimating reduces likelihood or resource conflicts
   b. Tasks are complete in right order
   c. Internal / external dependencies are known & potential impacts are reduced
   d. Good estimating ensures more accurate & achievable timescales
   e. Creating the right sized work packages within the schedule makes the project easier to manage
   f. Remember to add in time for planning & transition
   g. Benefits are that task are completed in right order & delivered in a timely manner.

5. Direction & Advice:
   a. Funds made available when needed
   b. Direction given to ensure you continue to meet business case
   c. Advice given to clarify goals and resolve issues
   d. Benefits are that you are more likely to meet business needs and business benefits

Remember this all hinges on your personal drive, motivation and leadership; having the right team with the right skill set and expertise for the project and having well defined roles within the project.