

Aligning Expectations to Deliver Project Success

Using the Tradeoff Matrix to align expectations of Project Stakeholders



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Objectives

- 1. Gain insight into why project stakeholders have differing expectations.**
- 2. See how aligning expectations improves likelihood of project success.**
- 3. Learn how to develop a common mental model.**

Start Right, Stay Right

For every project you have a vision of where you want to go and what the world will look like when you get there.



Start Right, Stay Right

The reality is there is NO yellow brick road!



But there are many ways that can lead you to destinations you didn't plan on – if you're not careful.

Why do we need alignment?

Project Failure Rate

Changing
Requirements

Poor
Communication

70%

of projects do not deliver the
expected RESULTS

Poor Decision
Making

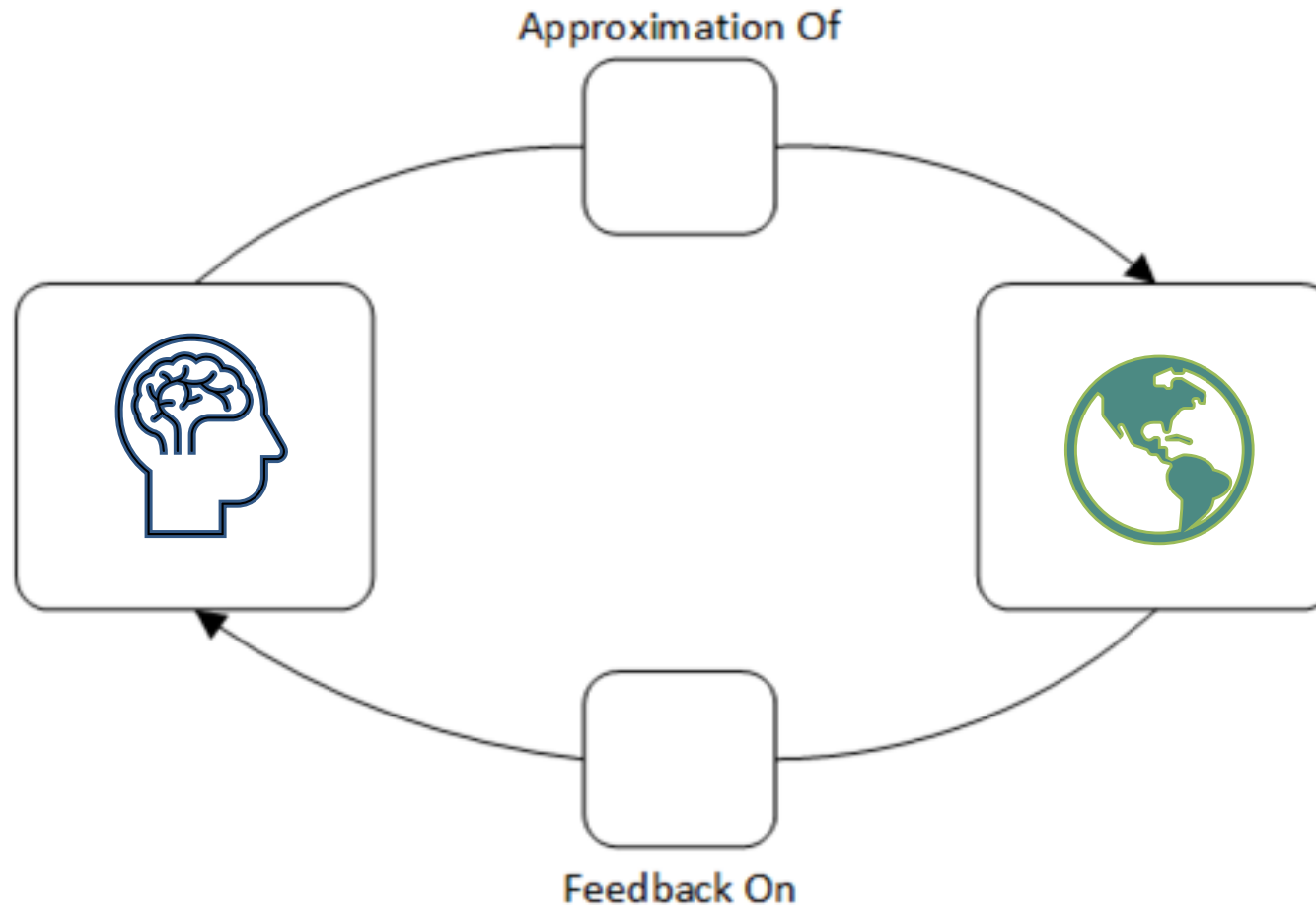
Unrealistic
Schedule or Budget

*Why does this
continue to happen?*

Why do we need alignment?

Mental models

“...problems result from a mismatch between how real world systems work and how we think they work.”

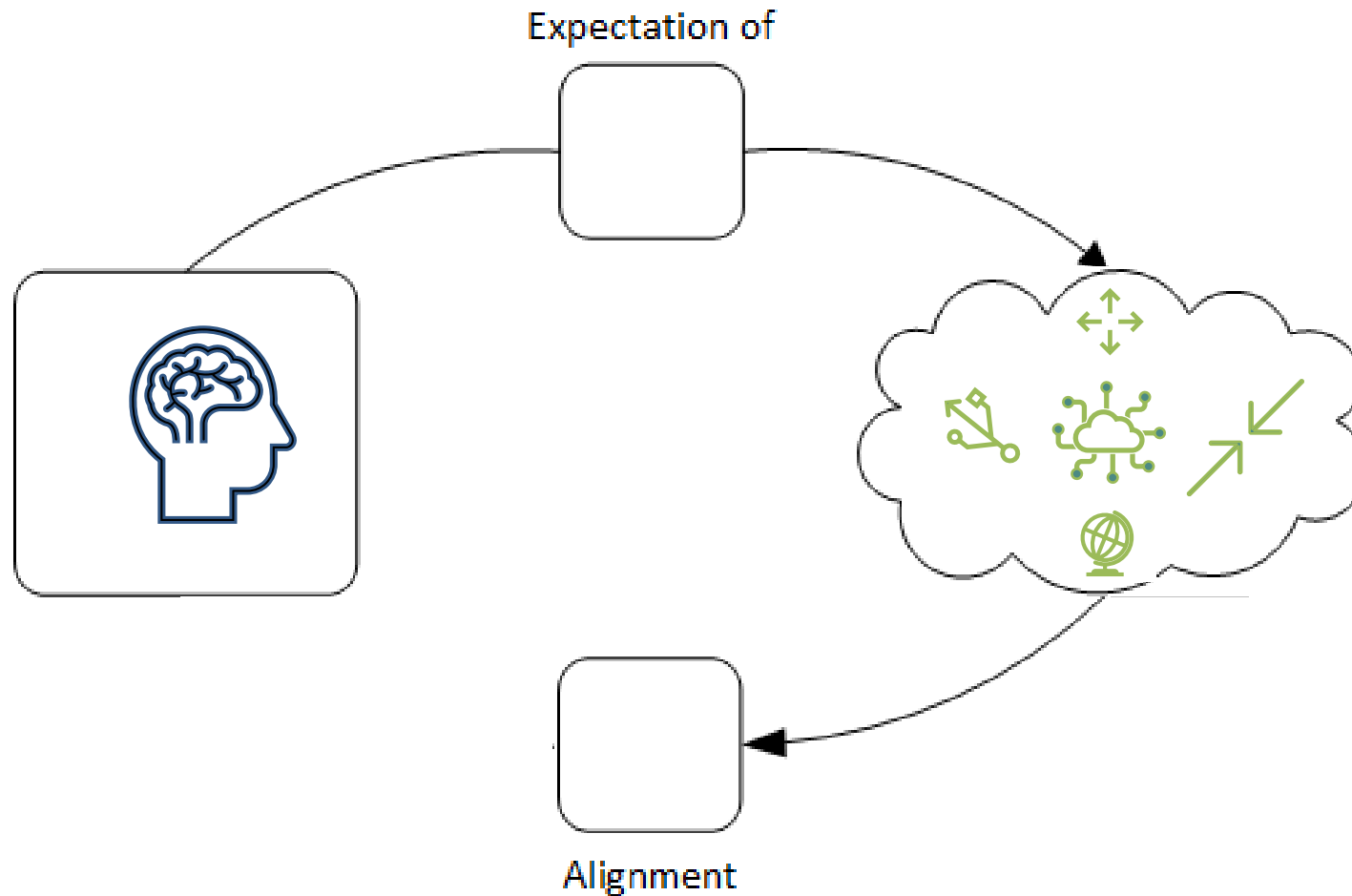


Source: Cabrera and Cabrera, Systems Thinking Made Simple, 2015

Why do we need alignment?

Mental models

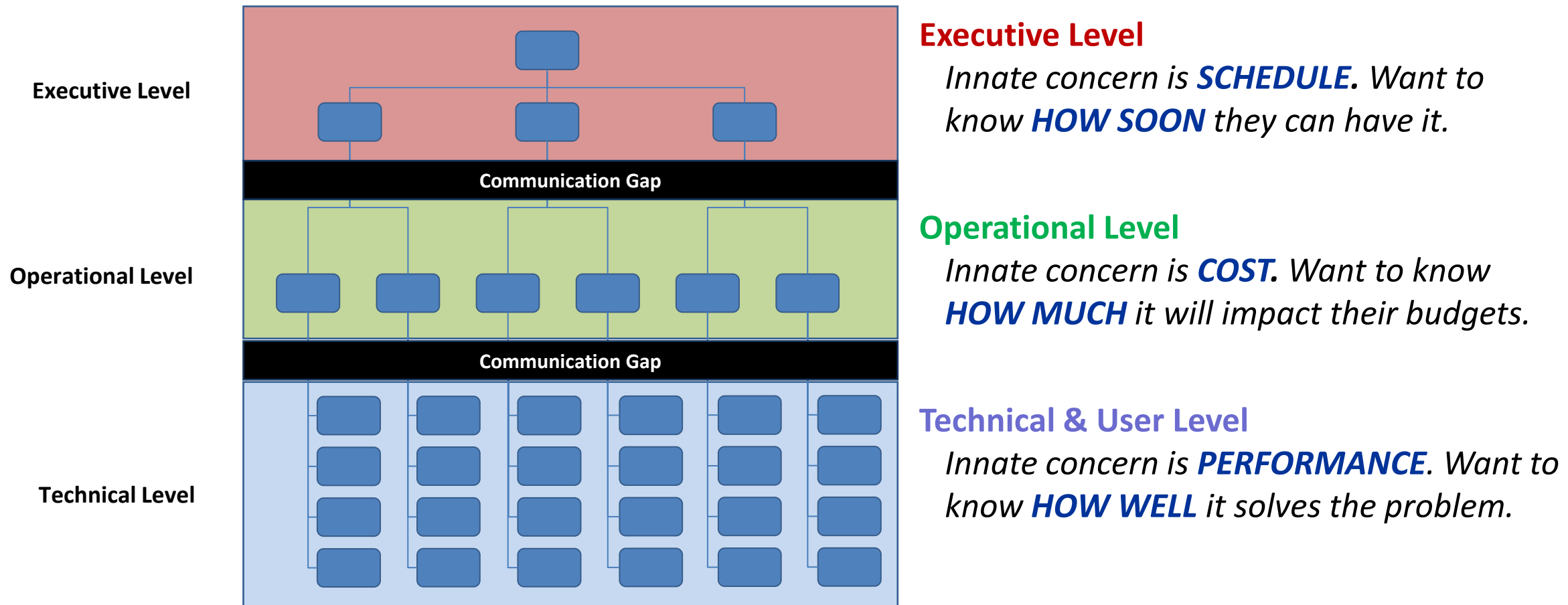
“... project failures result from a mismatch between how a solution works and how we *expect* it to work.”



Why do we need alignment?

Conflicting expectations

Different levels of the organization have differing concerns, *even when all agree on the desirability for the change the project brings*. This translates to **conflicting expectations**.



Why do we need alignment?

Start Right, Stay Right



- Align project team's and project stakeholders' definition of success.
- Create and harmonize important project start-up documents:
 - Project Roadmap
 - Communication Plan
 - Risk Management Plan
 - Change Control Plan
 - Adaptive Project Plan
- Create a common plan to Stay Right with the "Project Guidebook."
- Manage Expectations.

The Project Guidebook is the foundation to align and manage expectations.

The Challenge

Aligning Expectations for All Stakeholders

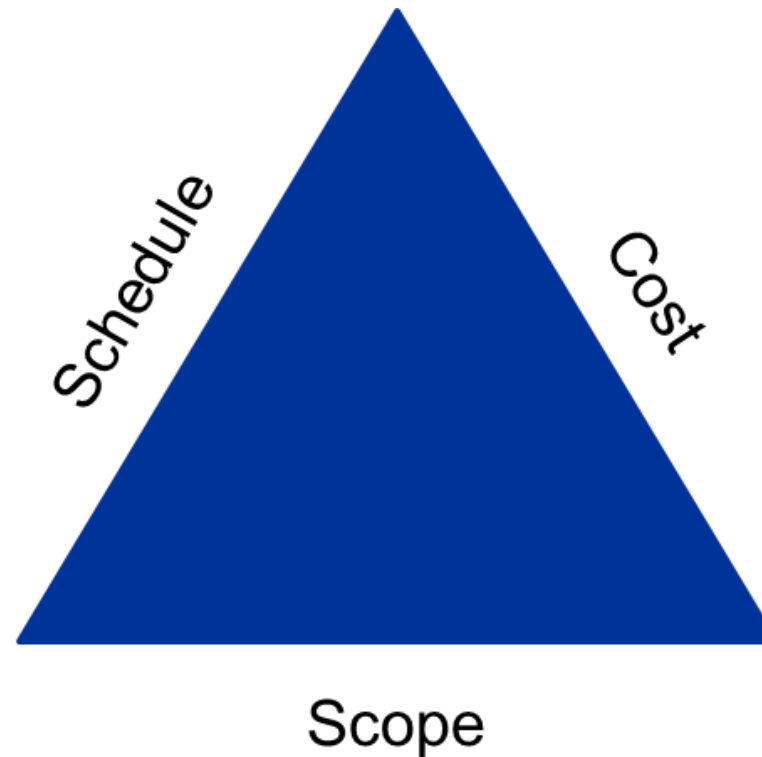
- **Getting them to fully understand the issues**
 - They want it **Better (Performance), Faster (Schedule), Cheaper (Cost)**.
 - You can't have it all – you'll need to **prioritize your Drivers**.
 - **Saying YES to one will mean saying NO or NOT SO MUCH to another.**

- **Educating them on the tradeoffs**
 - **To optimize the whole, you may need to sub-optimize the parts.**
 - **Everyone needs to understand and agree up front to avoid problems.**
 - **This is why we have historically used the Triple Constraints.**

*To gain alignment, we use a tool called the **TRADEOFF MATRIX** to identify and prioritize the **PROJECT DRIVERS**.*

Project Drivers

The Traditional PM Triple Constraints



In order to hit the mark on one dimension, the project may need to give on one or more of the others.

The Fourth Dimension—Quality

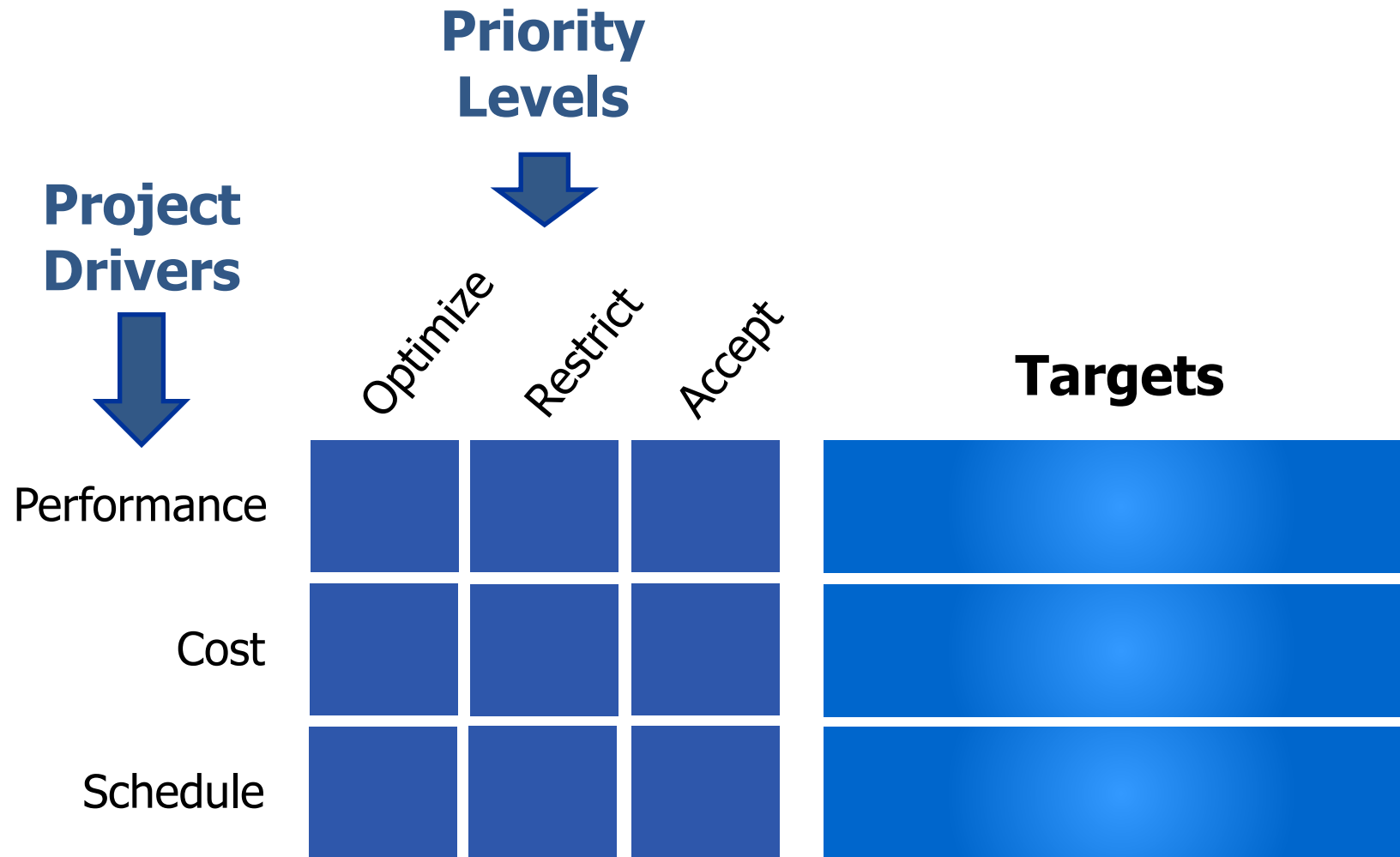
Quality is made up of two parts

- **Adherence to Specifications:**
 - This is what we check in QA and unit testing.
- **Excellence—the WOW factor, sizzle:**
 - This can be non-functional requirements.
 - This is what we check in user acceptance testing (UAT).

Quality itself is rarely the main driver. When it is critical (life/safety) it must be detailed as a requirement.

In the Tradeoff Matrix, we combine Scope (capabilities) with Quality and call it “Performance.”

Project Tradeoff Matrix



For each Driver, we will indicate the Priority with "X."

The Rules

How is the Tradeoff Matrix used?

Only one driver may be “Optimized.”

- This is the **Primary Driver**, which is changed only in extreme circumstances.

Only one driver may be “Restricted.”

- This is the **Secondary Driver**, last to change **IF** changes must be made.

Thus, the remaining driver is “Accepted.”

- When something needs to slide, this will go first, so we plan for this to change.

So What, Now What?

“There are no IT projects, only business projects that involve IT... Every project needs to have a business objective. Otherwise, what’s the point?”

—Bob Lewis

- **The Business Objective (Needs) must be defined and articulated before you can align project expectations.**
- **The Objective must support the Business Strategy.**
- **It is represented in the Tradeoff Matrix by the Targets.**

Without a well-articulated objective, stakeholders WILL NOT be able to prioritize!

US Apollo Program



“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth.”

—John F. Kennedy
May 25, 1961

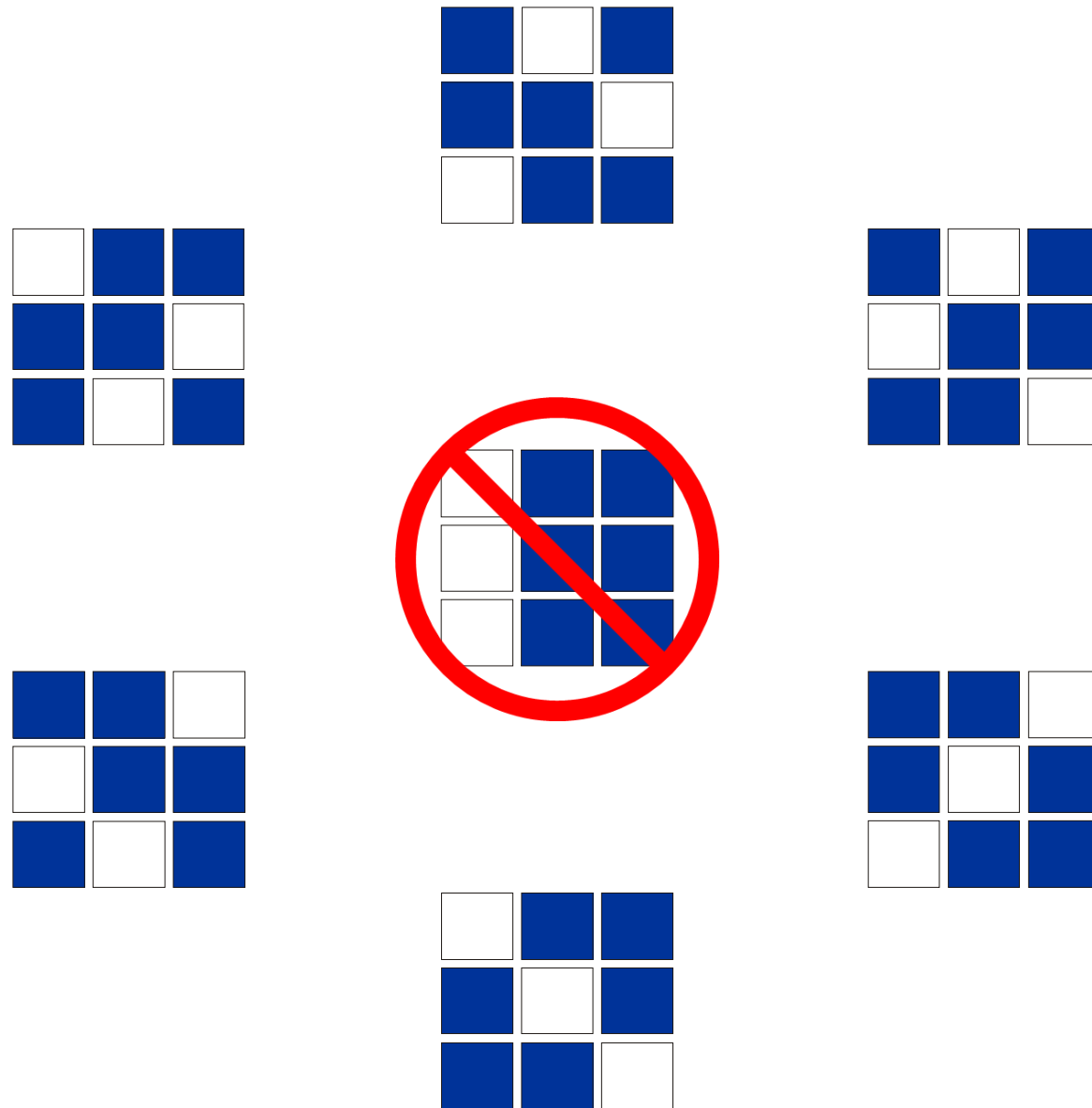
	Optimize	Restrict	Accept
Performance	X		
Cost			X
Schedule		X	

...man on the Moon and returning him safely...

... commit itself... (assumed)

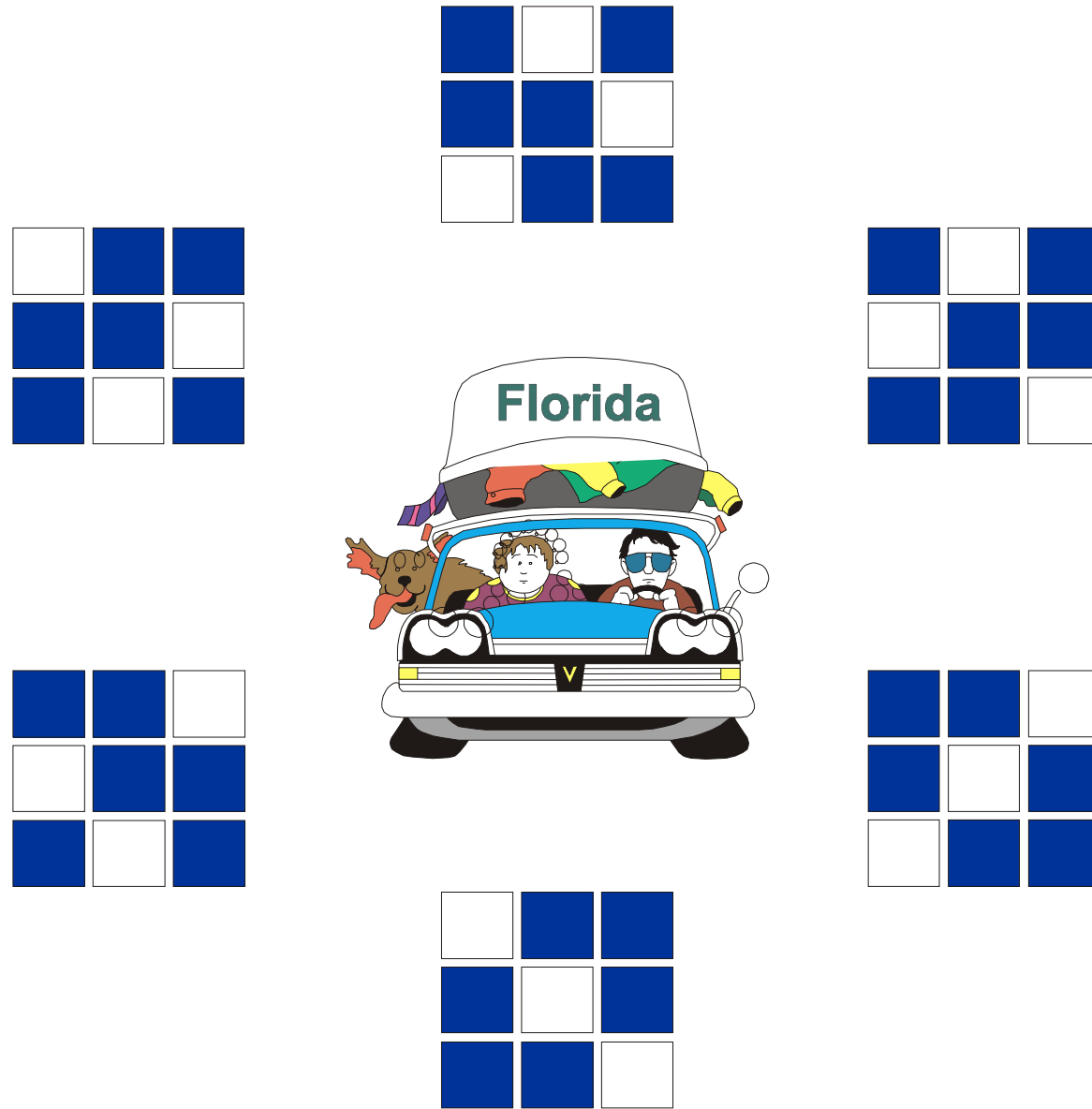
... before this decade is out...

A Simple Example



A Simple Example

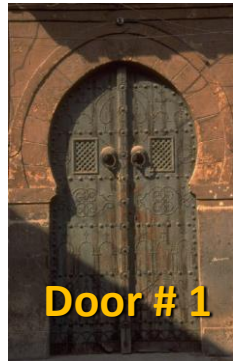
The Vacation



Vacation

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



Objective: To enjoy a family vacation that will provide everyone with memories that last a lifetime but will not put you in deep debt.

	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance	X			Memories that last a lifetime
Cost		X		Not put you in deep debt
Schedule			X	Assumed (but always a deadline)

Vacation

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



Objective: To enjoy a family vacation in Florida that begins on February 21 and returns on March 2.

	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance		X		Enjoy a family vacation in Florida
Cost			X	Assumed (but always a limit)
Schedule	X			Begins on 2/21 and returns on 3/2

Vacation

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



Objective: To take a family vacation this spring that will not exceed \$5,400 set aside in savings.

	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance			X	Assumed (but always an MVP)
Cost	X			Not exceed \$5,400
Schedule		X		This spring

Using the Matrix

When

- **Do this EARLY – before kickoff. This is when the objective needs to be articulated and clarified, then communicated to the team at kickoff.**

Who

- **Limit the audience to the Core Team: Sponsor and Director (decision makers), PM and BA (project leaders), and functional and technical leads (project advisors). The rest of the team will be brought aboard during the kickoff.**

What

- **Prioritize Drivers based on the objective and according to the rules. Add targets to give the dimensions some context and limits.**

Project Leadership Role

- **Help them make the RIGHT decision.**
- **Identify inconsistencies.**
- **Get them to OWN their choices.**

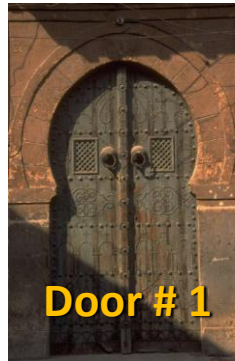
How?

- **Talk them through the ramifications.**
- **This is part of what BAs call Strategy Analysis.**

Door #1

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance	X			Memories that last a lifetime
Cost		X		Not put you in deep debt
Schedule			X	Assumed (but always a deadline)

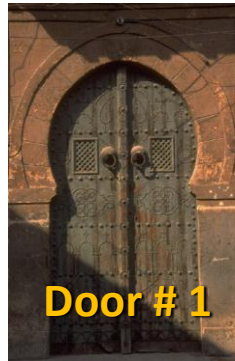
– **Questions:**

- **What sort of memories? What does your family like?**
- **What are your “Must See” attractions?**
- **Can you compromise on accommodations? Food?**
- **Do you have a budget? What constitutes “deep debt?”**
- **When are you available to go? How much notice do you need?**

Door #1

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance	X			Memories that last a lifetime
Cost		X		Not put you in deep debt
Schedule			X	Assumed (but always a deadline)

– **Ramifications (based on answers above, of course):**

- **Making memories the main thing means understanding of where to go and what to do based on likes and dislikes and doing it.**
- **Cost as secondary means it may involve some debt, but within reason.**
- **Schedule slides first, so trip may not coincide with peak travel, might need to wait for off season or be flexible with travel to accommodate attractions.**

Door #2

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance		X		Enjoy a family vacation in Florida
Cost			X	Assumed (but always a limit)
Schedule	X			Begins on 2/21 and returns on 3/2

– **Questions:**

- **Do you have tickets already? How are you travelling?**
- **Do you have hotel reservations? Other accommodations?**
- **Are there particular things you would like to do? Are they available?**
- **Do you have a budget? Is there a maximum?**

Door #2

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance		X		Enjoy a family vacation in Florida
Cost			X	Assumed (but always a limit)
Schedule	X			Begins on 2/21 and returns on 3/2

– **Ramifications (based on answers to above, of course):**

- **Schedule primary means preferred transportation or accommodations may be unavailable or expensive.**
- **Performance secondary means that you may need to accept some activities as unavailable or full, but not as too expensive.**
- **Cost last means that you will spend what is needed to have vacation when and where you want (within maximum if there is one).**

Door #3

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance			X	Assumed (but always an MVP)
Cost	X			Not exceed \$5,420
Schedule		X		This spring

– **Questions:**

- Do you have transportation? Is that included in the budget?
- How short is short? Is a long weekend sufficient?
- Can you wait until off season? How much notice do you need?
- Is Orlando expected or would elsewhere in FL work? How about other states?
- Do you need to know your destination ahead of time or can you take what's available?

Door #3

Destination: Orlando Attractions

Origination: Rochester, NY



	Optimize	Restrict	Accept	
Performance			X	Assumed (but always an MVP)
Cost	X			Not exceed \$5,420
Schedule		X		This spring

– **Ramifications (based on answers to above, of course):**

- **Budget primary means this could limit travel and accommodation options.**
- **Schedule secondary means that short notice or advanced, non-refundable reservations may be required.**
- **Performance last might mean destination is uncertain or less popular, or certain activities are not within reach.**

What if Priorities Change?

Even though you do a good job prioritizing drivers based on the initial objective, you may find that during discussions they need to be adjusted:

- You may discover that Schedule is actually more important than Performance, OR that
- Cost will be the true governing factor.

That's OK!

This is the time to get it right.

	Optimize	Restrict	Accept
Performance	X	X	X
Schedule	X	X	X
Cost	X	X	X

Really?

Stay Right

**At this point, we have only done Start Right.
To arrive successfully, we need to Stay Right.**

We don't just do these techniques to check them off.

Project Leadership Role

- **Managing Expectations is a key component to maintaining alignment.**
- **Things change, and we must address this as the project progresses.**

Manage expectations so they don't manage you.

How?

- **COMMUNICATE!**
- **Anticipate, then talk them through the changes.**
- **Have a Plan.**

Stay Right

Three of the most common issues related to project failure.

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Changing Requirements / Needs | Situation |
| 2. Poor Communication | Action |
| 3. Inconsistent Decision Making | Result |

Fact: Needs will change !!!

**Project failure can be avoided through
Change Control and Communication.**

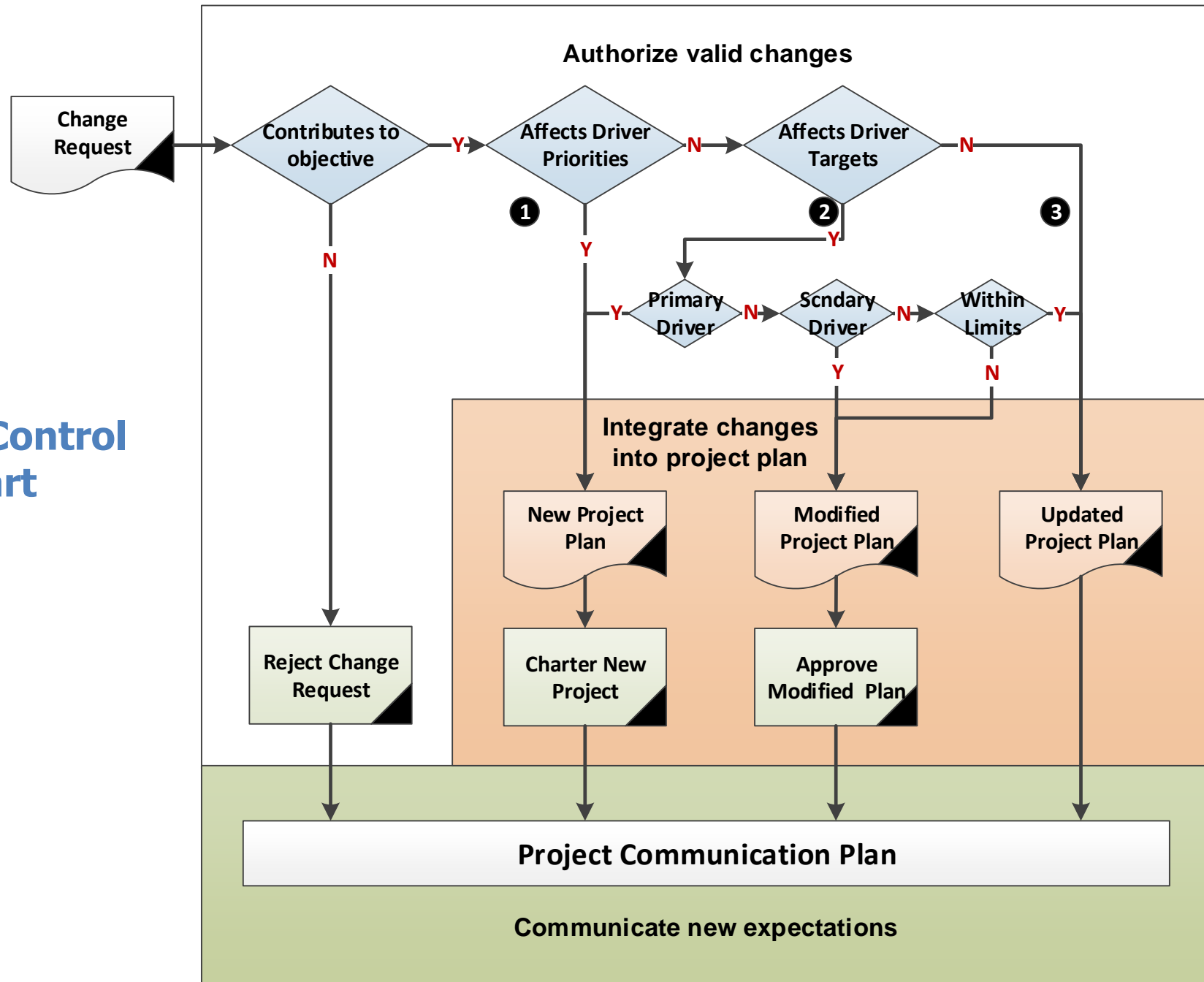
Change Control with Drivers

Once the project is underway, controlling and managing change is central to keeping the project on track. The Tradeoff Matrix helps focus Change Control.

- **Changes to the Accepted driver are reported as made but can be expected and should not negatively affect project status AS LONG AS WITHIN LIMITS. This is where you build your contingency.**
- **Changes to the Restricted (secondary) driver will modify the plan, must be approved, and may negatively affect project status. This is part of your mitigation and avoidance strategy.**
- **Changes to the Optimized (primary) driver are made ONLY in extreme circumstances, and with high level discussion and approval. These changes immediately affect project status.**
 - *More importantly, this may result in an entirely different project, which would require a new project plan.*

Change Control with Drivers

Change Control Flow Chart

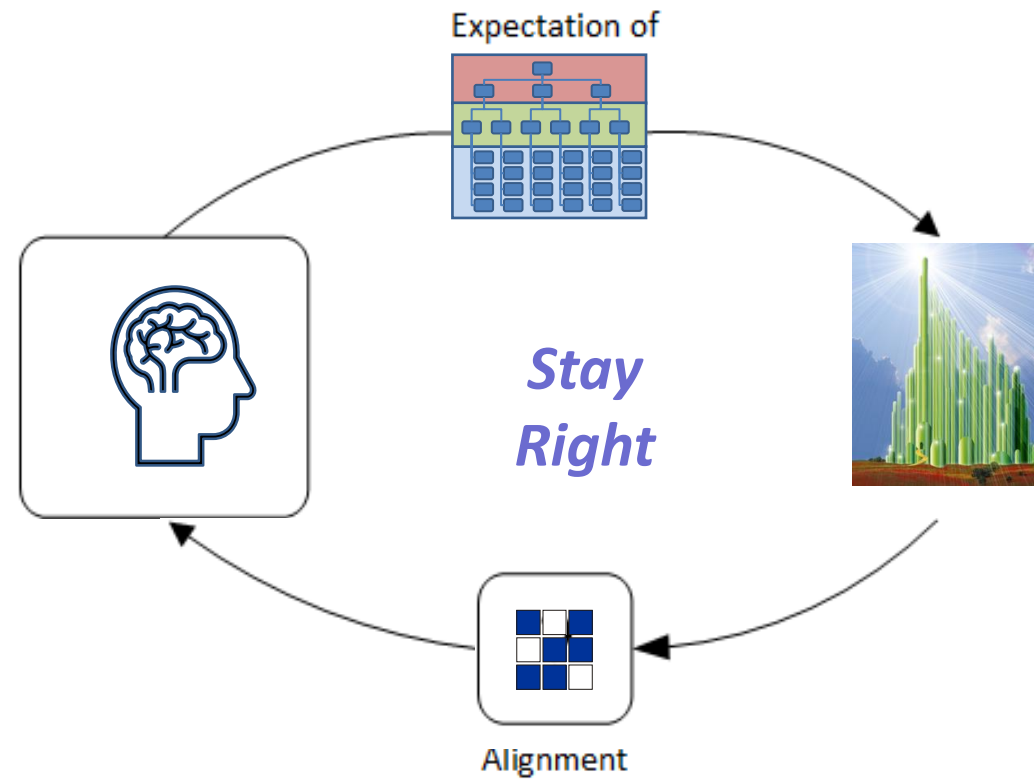


What could go wrong?

- **Failing to get the sponsor's input**
 - They need to understand that project failure is **THEIR** failure, not just yours
 - They will either know it will succeed OR kill it early themselves
- **“Secretly” optimizing more than one driver**
 - By making the targets too exact or restrictive
 - By refusing to admit things will probably change
- **Neglecting to talk through ramifications and results**
 - Might not get the priorities correct
 - Must in order to create your risk management approach and plan
- **Mismatch between project and company culture**
 - “Culture eats strategy for lunch” – Drucker
 - Groups will tend to the mean, or status quo

Closing the Loop

“... project success results from *ALIGNMENT* between how a solution works and how we *expect* it to work.”



Thank You

Comments and Questions

*For any further questions, or help getting started,
contact me at greg.busby@norveld.com.*