Workforce Management Discovery

able accurate allocations approve available BAs better budget capture changes costs current data decisions different difficult easy enough estimates everyone Finance financial FTEs going hard heavy hours lack money months needs painful people person picture PMs PPM problem processes really reports resources SAP sometimes support system takes tool track year

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Method

We did this discovery

to understand the problems we need to solve so that we can better manage our work, people, and money.

We interviewed

- 2 Senior Directors

- 5 Directors

- 3 Program Managers

- 6 Project Managers

- 1 Portfolio Analyst

- 2 Financial Analysts

- 1 Systems Analyst

- 1 Communications Manager

- 1 Development Manager

- 1 Department Administrator

We asked.
We listened.
We conversed.
We collaborated.
We took notes.

Thank you, everyone.

We found 181 problems

1. Project managers don't keep the data
2. Project managers are not engaged wit
3. ROMS are difficult to run through.
4. Solving problems is not timely, too ha
5. Learning curve is difficult to overcome
6. Workflow management conflicts with (
7. Finance processes and Project Manag
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12. I can't get an accurate total cost of a
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18. No tool helps with estimation of proje
19. Our estimates contain too much guess
20. We could all be better at estimating an
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22. We need to have one place to go look
23. The frustrating part is never having a
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25. Hard to tell a project's story at any tin
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31. We need to put sunlight into dark corn
32. We don't scope costs well because ofl
33. We don't know the true costs of proje
34. We need to be able to play with the bu
35. When we have budget cuts, it's hard t
36. We don't document events that drive
37. When a budget increases, it's hard to
38. Multiyear projects can lose money at t
39. When the IS&T budget goes over, eve
40. For some projects, we can't see where
41. Rate changes retroactively, very diffic
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47. Contractor invoices do not match our
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50. I'm unsure what data other people re
51. Finance and PPM don't use the same
52. Sometimes review boards devolve int
53. System does not notify if allocations
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55. Senior managers want the answers w
56. Sometimes we don't know whom to ca
57. As a resource manager, I don't know
58. I don't know when a resource comes
59. Projects aren't aware when they lose
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65. Hard to discover what resources (peo
66. Difficult to find out about a resources
67. We get hundreds of requests from ea
68. It takes too long to resolve a data pro
69. I walk into meetings with no prior kno
70. We lack confidence in the data when
71. We don't kill enough wayward or valu
72. At IS&T you don't get approval for an
73. We're reactive.
74. I need to see what other projects peo
75. We lack data like a project's history.
76. In the current system budget, number
77. We capture only catastrophic events,
78. There is no way to look and learn from
79. The back-end financial structure isn't
80. Reports represent points in time, with
81. I want people to be able to gain skills
82. Because the data is inaccurate, we ca
83. Can not identify and eliminate waste
84. We don't have enough insight into ho
85. The system should learn over time to
86. It's not easy to track which project ch
87. Action items from RB meetings aren't
88. It would be helpful to have projects re
89. It's not easy to show who worked on
90. Unable to see the origin of data point
91. Budget data needs to be accurate, tra
92. We need more accuracy and transpar
93. The items in the RAID log are date en
94. When something isn't explainable and
95. Project data is scattered, so it takes a
96. For some projects, there's no real-tin
97. Scorecards are manually created and
98. Report generation relies on a single p

99. Reports are customized too often.
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101. Reports are labor intensive when they
102. There's no easy way to see who's wor
103. The data senior management wants in
104. Tory and Israel need more data than
105. Reports are not real-time.
106. Reports are not self-service.
107. It's very hard to track the moving par
108. Have to make the Scorecard manually
109. Scorecards aren't real-time.
110. I need to see individual value per hou
111. Governance is overbearing.
112. The labels and language we use for pi
113. Finance still manages budgets the wa
114. Project managers should approve tim
115. Project managers should approve tim
116. We send data and they do something
117. Project managers need to think bigge
118. It's hard to say No.
119. MIT culture is process-lite.
120. Need to be able to enter projects.
121. As the PM, you've got to make the cal
122. I don't care what the tool, methodolo
123. PPM and Finance should collaborate
124. We execute to the letter of the reques
125. Our process needs to be more rapid.
126. Two questions we need to ask and an
127. Resource management is the biggest
128. Hard to track resources across projec
129. We have to fix time entry after the fac
130. We don't have a single source of truth
131. It's painful to look up estimates and a
132. Project and support costs are stored in different systems, PPM and SAP, which creates more w
133. Project managers have to calculate all their data. They shouldn't have to do that.
134. Working with data currently is labor intensive.
135. We have to pull data from the current tool and do forecasting in Excel.
136. We don't have SLAs in some of our processes. Sometimes a Mulesoft deployment takes an hour
137. A primary problem is that we have multiple tools.
138. The current way of getting it done is all spreadsheets and duct tape.
139. We don't track full-time employees time.
140. We can't track resources, can't track all types of time.
141. Can't see the whole picture because we don't track FTEs
142. We need to capture FTE data.
143. Our SAP contractors don't enter their time. If you want up-to-date expenditure, it's not in the s
144. We're not tracking when FTEs put in extra hours.
145. Timecards are approved without project manager verification.
146. Team members stuck on projects for years.
147. We don't have enough resources to do all the work.

148. Resourcing is difficult to manage.
149. Can't tell who is working on what.
150. It's not easy to find who's available for work and whether they have the required skills.
151. We don't have a good way to track work by people who work ad hoc, grabbing things as they co
152. People are staffed on the same projects for years at a time.
153. We have too few people to do too much work.
154. The PMs all end up doing BA tasks. We don't have enough BAs here.
155. It's hard to see who's really available.
156. Testing resources were cut. It usually falls on the PMs and the BAs
157. I wish FTEs had a cost.
158. You have to watch your reputation. 6 months later, you don't want to hear that you're the proje
159. We don't have real resource management now.
160. Resource managers don't know where their resources are allocated and that they have to leve
161. I'm the only one who knows how to do anything in the system.
162. Resources are difficult to track. I need to be able to see who's working on what.
163. People will be resistant to entering their time.
164. We need data for FTEs.
165. We have no way to track allocations.
166. We don't have any idea when someone is over-allocated.
167. People don't want their cheese to be moved.
168. There isn't a single source of project/resource/financial data.
169. Too much inaccuracy in the data.
170. There is no agreed-upon data structure.
171. Allocations are not accurately captured.
172. Unclear on what data needs to be seen by others.
173. Data in our current monthly reports is wrong.
174. Data in our current financial reports is wrong.
175. The data is disconnected. There's SAP, there's Mendix, and there are spreadsheets.
176. Project data lacks enough granularity.
177. The data isn't accurate.
178. We do not have the data we need for being audited.
179. Time is not being calculated correctly.
180. The decision matrix for RB meetings is stored in Dropbox and not accessible as data.
181. Our data is missing ongoing costs and lifecycle costs.

We analyzed 181 problems

by roles (8)

Problem	Project Manager	Team Member	Resource	Project Analyst	Financial Analyst	Program Manager	Director	Senior Leader	Total
We need more accuracy and transparency.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
There isn't a single source of project/resource/financial data.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
The data isn't accurate.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
We're reactive.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	8
We don't track full-time employees time.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
We can't track resources, can't track all types of time.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
We need to capture FTE data.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
We need data for FTEs.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Reports are not real-time.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Reports are not self-service.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	7
The labels and language we use for projects are inconsistent.	x	x	x	x	x	x			6
I don't care what the tool, methodology, process is. Just let me know and stick with it.	x	x	x	x	x	x			6
The decision matrix for RB meetings is stored in Dropbox and not accessible as data.	x	x		x		x	x	x	6
Can't see the whole picture because we don't track FTEs.	x		x	x		x	x	x	6
Hard to track resources across projects.	x		x	x		x	x	x	6
There's no easy way to see who's working on what.	x		x	x		x	x	x	6
Can't tell who is working on what.	x		x	x		x	x	x	6
We don't have real resource management now.	x		x	x		x	x	x	6

by categories (15)

Problem	Data	Resources	Efficiency	Workflow	Reports	Traceability	Learning	Decisions	Communication	Financials	Budget	Story	Estimating	Complexity	Engagement
Project managers don't keep the data up-to-date. We have to chase them down for info.	x		x												x
Project managers are not engaged with the current tool.															x
RDMS are difficult to run through.			x						x					x	
Solving problems is not timely, too hard to do.			x			x	x	x						x	
Learning curve is difficult to overcome with each new PPMO process change.			x				x							x	
Workflow management conflicts with existing processes people use to get things done.			x	x										x	
Finance processes and Project Management processes are not aligned.			x	x										x	
Saying No is heavy for large things, which makes sense. But it's still heavy for small things and doesn't need to be heavy.			x	x										x	
Too many tools.			x											x	
Language used throuot the PPMO process is confusing and conflicting.			x											x	
Lacking good data, we can't see what's really going on and we can't plan well.	x											x	x		
I can't get an accurate total cost of a project.	x									x	x		x		
We don't capture ongoing costs.	x									x	x		x		
We don't plan for or track support costs after a project completes.										x	x		x		
Project managers put in software costs per month but the invoices may not come in for several months, throwing off the project budgets.	x										x		x		

We prioritized 25 problems

1	It's hard to tell who's working on what and who's available.
2	We can't pick resources by skills, experience, or domain knowledge.
3	Project managers don't approve timesheets.
4	We don't have enough resources to do all the work, especially for BA and QA work.
5	I'd love to see what's going on without having to ask someone for it.
6	Manually updating several scorecards per project takes too much time and they often are incorrect.
7	Reports show points in time, not trends. We can't learn without historical data and interactive reports.
8	Scorecards don't give me the full picture.
9	None of our tools helps much with estimating.
10	Our estimates contain too much guessing. We could guess the future better if we knew the past.
11	We don't scope costs well because often we do it before we really know what we're doing.
12	Finance and PPM don't use the same language and don't do same things the same ways.
13	Our process needs to be faster, consistent, and repeatable.
14	Root-cause analysis takes too long.
15	Prioritization is hard.
16	The system doesn't tell me when I need to review something or do something.
17	Data is not complete, accurate, traceable, or real-time. We don't have a single source for data/truth.
18	It's not easy to track which projects went through which review board, which decisions were made by whom when, and what's the status of action items.
19	For some projects, we can't see where the money really went.
20	We are at risk for audit.
21	We don't plan for or track support costs.
22	We see the problem too late. People are afraid to surface problems.
23	At IS&T you don't get approval for anything. You just don't get anyone who says No. You have to move forward and it's your neck on the line.
24	We need to put sunlight into dark corners. It's impossible to question things. It shouldn't be.
25	We execute to the letter of the request, without really solving the problem.

We focused on 6 categories

Data

Resources

Reports

Estimating

Efficiency

Culture

Problems

Data

- Data is not complete, accurate, traceable, or real-time. We don't have a single source for data/truth.

- It's not easy to track which projects went through which review board, which decisions were made by whom when, and what's the status of each action item.

- For some projects, we can't see where the money really went.

- We don't plan for or track support costs. 70% of our work is support.

- We're at risk if we get audited.

Resources

- It's hard to tell who's working on what and who's available.

- We can't pick resources by skills, experience, or domain knowledge.

- Project managers don't approve timesheets.

- We don't have enough resources to do all the work, especially for BA and QA work.

Reports

- I can't see what's going on without having to ask someone for it.

- Scorecards don't give me the full picture.

- Manually updating several scorecards per project takes too much time and they often are incorrect.

- Reports show points in time, not trends. We can't learn without historical data and interactive reports.

Estimating

- None of our tools helps much with estimating.

- Our estimates contain too much guessing. We could guess the future better if we knew the past.

- We don't scope costs well because often we scope costs before we really know what we're doing.

Efficiency

- Finance and PPMO don't use the same language and don't do the same things the same ways.

- Root-cause analysis takes too long.

- Prioritization is hard.

- The system doesn't tell me when I need to review something or do something.

- Our process needs to be faster, consistent, and repeatable.

Culture

- We see the problem too late. People are afraid to surface problems.

- At IS&T you don't get approval for anything. You just don't get anyone who says No. You have to move forward and it's your neck on the line.

- We need to put sunlight into dark corners. It's impossible to question things. It shouldn't be.

- We execute to the letter of the request, without really solving the problem.

Recommendations

System principles

- No tool can solve all the problems. And some problems can't be solved by any tool. It's people, processes, and tools. It's a system.

- First, define the objectives. Then design the reports. Then define the data.

- People must understand the system and the value of putting in good data. They need motivation.

- Collect the data you need to meet the objectives. Don't collect data you won't use.

- Information should be self-service.

- Preserve historical data. Learn from it.

- Our data must be complete, accurate, traceable, and real-time.

- The system should support continuous improvement. A good system is designed to expose problems.

- A good system is easy to use.

Data

- First, define the objectives. Then design the reports. Then define the data.

- Lock Finance and PPMO in a room with Olu.

  - Define the data model relationships. Define accuracy goals. Define latency goals.

- Interview Finance to find out how to decrease our audit risk to an acceptable level.

- Collect data about people, both full-time and contractor:

  - What they're doing (projects), what they've done (projects), what they can do (skills), what they know (domains), and when they're available.

- Collect data across the product lifecycle: discovery, design, build, release, and maintain. Plan and track support costs.

- Treat decisions and reasons for decisions as data.

- People must understand why we're collecting data. Train the managers to train their teams, on both the system and the value of putting in good data. If people aren't motivated, we're not getting good data.

Processes

- Map the current processes.

    - Identify opportunities for notifications in our processes. Set them up in the system.

- Change our project planning and time tracking processes to include support costs, during build and maintenance phases.

- Change the timesheet review/approval process to include project managers.

- Hire or repurpose and train existing staff for BA and QA work.

    - Currently, project managers spend 20% of their time on BA and 20% on QA.

- Interview Finance and PPMO to find out the problems in terminology and process. Lead a workshop to find solutions.

Reports

- Use a BI tool for reporting. Make templates so that reports are live. Allow users to drill down from reports. Make reports available to everyone.

- Create Projects, People, Budget dashboards and detail views.

Estimating

- Make sure we have the data we need for estimating. Teach people how to estimate. Track metrics for estimating. Learn continuously.

- Change our estimating and project discovery process so that estimates evolve as we learn.
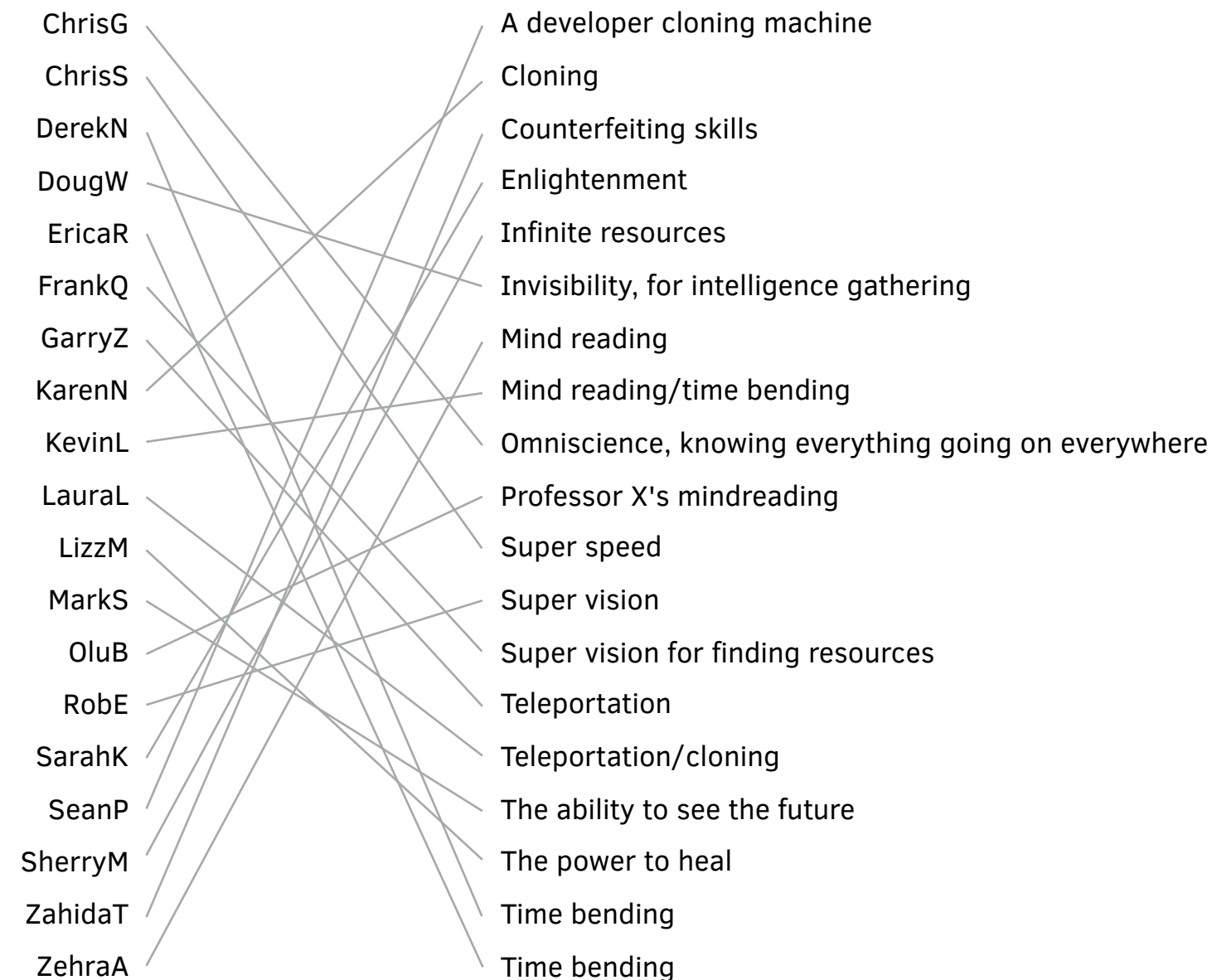
Culture

- Find out why people are afraid to surface problems. Report back to management.

- Interview folks to understand why so much responsibility falls on project managers. Report back to management.

- Find out why people have a hard time questioning things, both down and up. Report back to management.

- Interview people to find out why we fulfill requests without solving problems. Report back to management.

System

- Analyze the gaps with proposed tools. Understand that one tool won't fix it. It's people, processes, and tools. It's a system.

- Have someone design the system. Nudge, nudge. Say no more. E.g., time entry/ approval via a Slack bot.

Superpowers

We asked each interviewee what superpower they needed
to do their jobs (even better).

ChrisG	A developer cloning machine
ChrisS	Cloning
DerekN	Counterfeiting skills
DougW	Enlightenment
EricaR	Infinite resources
FrankQ	Invisibility, for intelligence gathering
GarryZ	Mind reading
KarenN	Mind reading/time bending
KevinL	Omniscience, knowing everything going on everywhere
LauraL	Professor X's mindreading
LizzM	Super speed
MarkS	Super vision
OluB	Super vision for finding resources
RobE	Teleportation
SarahK	Teleportation/cloning
SeanP	The ability to see the future
SherryM	The power to heal
ZahidaT	Time bending
ZehraA	Time bending

Appendix

Here are all 181 problems that we collected from the interviews:

We need more accuracy and transparency.

There isn't a single source of project/resource/financial data.

The data isn't accurate.

We're reactive.

We don't track full-time employees time.

We can't track resources, can't track all types of time.

We need to capture FTE data.

We need data for FTEs.

Reports are not real-time.

Reports are not self-service.

The labels and language we use for projects are inconsistent.

I don't care what the tool, methodology, process is. Just let me know and stick with it.

The decision matrix for RB meetings is stored in Dropbox and not accessible as data.

Can't see the whole picture because we don't track FTEs.

Hard to track resources across projects.

There's no easy way to see who's working on what.

Can't tell who is working on what.

We don't have real resource management now.

Resources are difficult to track. I need to be able to see who's working on what.

We can't see what everyone is working on, we don't know if we can take on new work when we're asked to.

We need to have one place to go look and see everything that's going on, what everyone is working on.

Report generation relies on a single person, which makes it slow to get information.

We don't have a single source of truth/data.

False idea with "free people" vs costly resource which hides the real cost of a resource.

Budget data needs to be accurate, transparent, and traceable.

I can't get an accurate total cost of a project.

We don't know the true costs of projects.

Tracking our support costs is difficult.

There is no way to assign support work to projects.

Too much inaccuracy in the data.

Data in our current financial reports is wrong.

Time is not being calculated correctly.

Solving problems is not timely, too hard to do.

For some projects, we can't see where the money went.

The back-end financial structure isn't set up to support root cause analysis.

Finance points out that a project is overspending. It takes us 2 to 3 iterations to get to the root cause.

We don't document events that drive budget changes and aren't able to report out on that.

When something isn't explainable and there's no trail, that's a problem.

Can not identify and eliminate waste in project by using data.

We don't have enough insight into how we spend money.

The system should learn over time to answer the types of questions asked by senior management.

We could all be better at estimating and working with variances.

We lack data like a project's history.

At a glance, I want to know which milestones are done for a project.

We don't capture why decisions get made.

Allocations are not accurately captured.

Our SAP contractors don't enter their time. If you want up-to-date expenditure, it's not in the system.

We're not tracking when FTEs put in extra hours.

We don't have enough resources to do all the work.

We have too few people to do too much work.

I'd love to see what's going on without having to ask someone for it.

It takes too long to resolve a data problem.

Project data is scattered, so it takes a while to figure out a project's status.

The frustrating part is never having a complete picture.

We capture only catastrophic events, which doesn't give us enough data for metrics and improvement.

Unable to see the origin of data points.

Data in our current monthly reports is wrong.

Senior managers want the answers when they ask the questions. We can't do that now.

Hard to tell a project's story at any time.

It's very hard to track the moving parts in a budget.

Scorecards aren't real-time.

There is no way to look and learn from past data, no history.

Our estimates contain too much guessing. We could guess the future better if we knew the past.

We don't know soon enough when something is amiss.

Financial data and reports aren't standardized.

Project data lacks enough granularity.

Our data is missing ongoing costs and lifecycle costs.

The system doesn't tell me when I need to do something.

Contractor invoices do not match our records.

We have to fix time entry after the fact constantly. The process is painful.

Hard to address timecard discrepancies.

I wish FTEs had a cost.

Because the data is inaccurate, we can't learn from it.

Too many tools.

Language used throughout the PPMO process is confusing and conflicting.

A primary problem is that we have multiple tools.

Costs are stored in different systems, PPMO and SAP, which creates more work and decreases accuracy.

Working with data currently is labor intensive.

In the current system budget numbers get overwritten, so we can't compare current numbers to their originals.

Finance processes and Project Management processes are not aligned.

Finance manages budgets the way they used to. PPMO needs to manage differently and they haven't adjusted.

The current way of getting it done is all spreadsheets and duct tape.

Finance needs to be strict to the fiscal year, but projects and project managers don't follow these.

PPM and Finance should collaborate more often.

For some projects, there's no real-time view. The PM sometimes waits weeks or months for the data to appear.

The items in the RAID log are data and should be in the database.

The PMs all end up doing BA tasks. We don't have enough BAs here.

Saying No is heavy for large things, which makes sense. But it's heavy for small things and doesn't need to be.

Scorecards are manually created and never updated correctly.

Action items from RB meetings aren't traceable.

We don't scope costs well because often we do it before we really know what we're doing.

Project managers need to think bigger. They need to make sure we're doing the right thing, adding value.

Our process needs to be more rapid, consistent, and repeatable.

When a budget increases, it's hard to figure out the scope creep.

The ROM could do a better job telling a story.

The data senior management wants in reports isn't there. It has to be estimated.

Tony and Israel need more data than they did in the past.

Communication between teams is an issue.

It's not easy to show who worked on what.

Resourcing is difficult to manage.

We have no way to track allocations.

We don't have any idea when someone is over-allocated.

System does not notify if allocations changed.

It's painful to look up estimates and actuals in two different places.

We send data and they do something else. We all need to be working from the same data.

PMs put in software costs per month but invoices don't come in for several months, throwing off the budgets.

There is no agreed-upon data structure.

The data is disconnected. There's SAP, there's Mendix, and there are spreadsheets.

Rate changes retroactively, very difficult to account for this.

Rate changes for people should impact project budgets immediately, not months later, causing overruns).

Finance and PPMO don't use the same language.

Project managers don't keep the data up-to-date. We have to chase them down for info.

Learning curve is difficult to overcome with each new PPMO process change.

No tool helps with estimation of projects.

We have to pull data from the current tool and do forecasting in Excel.

MIT culture is process-lite.

We do not have the data we need for being audited.

We lack confidence in the data when we make decisions.

Lacking good data, we can't see what's really going on and we can't plan well.

We get hundreds of requests from across the Institute. Prioritizing the work resources takes a lot of time.

For whatever reason, we see the problem too late. People are afraid to surface problems.

Reports represent points in time, without a way to look back over time.

There isn't a full picture of planning, tracking, and execution.

Scorecards do not capture enough information to give me the full picture.

We can't point to what work is being done.

We need to be able to play with the budget, to track better so we can forecast better.

When the IS&T budget goes over, everyone or random people get punished. Because we can't trace problems.

Hard to discover what resources (people) are available.

Difficult to know a resource's skills, knowledge, experience, and past projects when picking team members.

Project managers should approve timesheets.

Project managers should approve time before resource managers do.

Timecards are approved without project manager verification.

It's not easy to find who's available for work and whether they have the required skills.

It's hard to see who's really available.

Reports are customized too often.

Reports are generated manually, which takes a lot of time.

Reports are labor intensive when they could be automated.

Have to make the Scorecard manually from data in several places.

Project managers are not engaged with the current tool.

Workflow management conflicts with existing processes people use to get things done.

ROMS are difficult to run through.

It's not easy to track which project changes went through which review board.

It would be helpful to have projects request meetings with RBs in a trackable way.

I worry about what I don't know. What are the upcoming milestones I should be paying attention to?

Sometimes review boards devolve into critiques, even into petty criticism.

Multiyear projects can lose money at the end of each year.

It's hard to say No.

We don't capture ongoing costs.

We execute to the letter of the request, without really solving the problem.

Two questions we must answer for projects: Who are really trying to serve? What really should we be delivering?

I need to see individual value per hour.

We don't kill enough wayward or value-losing projects.

We don't plan for or track support costs after a project completes.

We need to put sunlight into dark corners. It's impossible to question things. It shouldn't be.

Resource management is the biggest pain point, because we're a matrix organization. I got to WRB and they say use this person. I go to that person's manager and they say that person's not available.

Project managers have to calculate all their data. They shouldn't have to do that.

I'm unsure what data other people really want to get from the tool. I don't want to put in data they're not going to use.

The current tool doesn't have the whole picture, so I don't spend much time in it.

Unclear on what data needs to be seen by others.

I need to see what other projects people are working on and the milestones for those projects, so I can predict when I might lost some time from my resources.

Projects aren't aware when they lose resources' hours to other projects.

Testing resources were cut. It usually falls on the PMs and the BAs.

You have to watch your reputation. 6 months later, you don't want to hear that you're the project manager who can't make good technical decisions or doesn't manage resources well.

Governance is overbearing.

Sometimes we don't know whom to call when a system goes down.

We don't have SLAs in some of our processes. Sometimes a Mulesoft deployment takes an hour, other times it takes a day.
At IS&T you don't get approval for anything. You just don't get anyone who says No. You have to move forward and it's your neck on the line.

People will be resistant to entering their time.

People don't want their cheese to be moved.

I want people to be able to gain skills by working in other areas and on other projects.

As a resource manager, I don't know when allocations have changed.

I don't know when a resource comes off a project, so I can put them on something else.

Team members stuck on projects for years.

We don't have a good way to track work by people who work ad hoc, grabbing things as they come in.

People are staffed on the same projects for years at a time.

Resource managers don't know where their resources are allocated and that they have to level them.

Need to be able to enter projects.

I'm the only one who knows how to do anything in the system.

When we have budget cuts, it's hard to see who is working on what and where we might be able to cut.

I walk into meetings with no prior knowledge and am expected to make decisions.

As the PM, you've got to make the call on quality. PMs can be biased toward delivery over quantity.