KT Kepner Tregoe

Using Potential Problem Analysis in Projects

Managing projects against goals, budgets, and time restrictions are some of the ways that many organizations accomplish work. Implementing and using a project management methodology (like Kepner-Tregoe's Project Management) is the best way to increase your chances of success.

Potential Problem Analysis can serve as critical tool in diagnosing and planning for problems. The following table contains suggestions for using the Potential Problem Analysis to improve your projects.

When...	Use Potential Problem Analysis to...	Because...
Planning the project	Identify potential problems that could affect the project's success. Review the elements at the lowest level of the work breakdown structure that will be managed (these are sometimes called terminal elements or work packages). Identify those that are: • On the critical path • Require several people • Involve new or unproven technology • Rely on the use of scarce resources • Depend on the completion of several other terminal elements After completing the Potential Problem Analysis, be sure to revise the project plan to incorporate the actions from the analysis. In addition, you may want to use Decision Analysis to select which preventive actions and contingent actions to use.	The success of your project will depend on your ability to anticipate potential problems and plan the actions to minimize their effects.
Implementing the project	Think about potential problems before taking an action. Quickly ask "What could go wrong when we...?" "What could cause it?" "How can we prevent it?" "How can we minimize the impact?" "What will tell us it has happened?" When you have the answers to these questions, adjust your action accordingly.	The success of your project depends on how well it is implemented. During the implementation phase you will undoubtedly need to take actions that you did not anticipate. Quick application of "PPA thinking" will help avoid problems.