

Why March is the **MOST DANGEROUS MONTH** & What to Do About It



March is typically considered a lucky time, thanks largely to St. Patrick's Day and its associated charms. In reality, it's the most dangerous month of the year for most organizations, departments and teams. The fact is what happens in the next 30 days will almost certainly determine your success for the rest of the year.

To see why, take a few moments and jot down the top 5 - 10 projects you have going on right now. Then take a look at your list. You'll see that the projects each fit into one of three categories:

- Those that have taken off and are succeeding;
- Those that are 'just ok', and
- Those that are going nowhere.

Whether they're revenue targets, hiring goals, fund-raising activities, or customer service initiatives, you should know by now which projects have traction, which haven't, and which you're not sure about.

The end of the first quarter is a key turning point for leveraging limited resources.

In most organizations, mediocre or dying projects continue to leech resources away from the successful projects, dragging them down and sapping everyone's time, energy and enthusiasm. But you can prevent that by conducting a critical review now and placing your limited resources where they're needed most to ensure higher quality results. Here's how:

1. Review all significant current projects and ask yourself:

- *What are our top 5 initiatives for this year?*
- *Which are Green (clearly successful)?*
- *Which are Red (clearly unsuccessful)?*
- *Which are Orange (stalled or unsure)?*

Another way to view your key project list is through the spectrum of the limited resources available to you. Ask:

- *What should we do more of in Q2?*
- *What should we do less of in Q2?*
- *What should we do differently in Q2?*
- *What should we continue to do the same in Q2?*



2. Cut those activities with no traction.

In most organizations, Q2 is spent in semi-denial. Executives slice and re-slice the data of failing projects and initiatives, cajole everyone to try harder and hope things will turn out better in the second half of the year.

Use the month of March to do what high-performing leadership teams do – get out of denial and put a stop to those activities that are yielding no return – even if they were originally your idea. You have limited resources, and you need to focus them where they'll produce results. Doing so will inspire a palpable sense of relief throughout the organization.



3. Set Clear Short-Term Goals for 'Blah' Activities.

These are often the hardest initiatives to know what to do with – those which haven't really taken off yet, but which are showing some return, albeit miserly. With these activities, you're probably getting depressingly regular assurance from the key player(s) that they will break through shortly – whether it's a salesperson with not enough sales, but a big list of 'nearly there's', or a project team hopelessly behind schedule but 'on the verge of a breakthrough'.

With these 'orange' activities, you need to set very clear, non-negotiable short-term goals. The key is to draw a line in the sand in the near future at which point the project will be shut down and resources will be redirected *unless* those non-negotiable targets are achieved.

It's fine to reframe the targets, but do it for at most another 3 months. Make it clear that if the new goals are not attained, you'll pull the plug and redirect the project resources elsewhere.

Your primary goal must be to move into Q2 with a clear focus on success, rather than being distracted and drained by failure and mediocrity.

May the luck of the Irish be with you!