

SECRETS TO GETTING UNSTUCK AND BACK ON TRACK (AND DOING IT IN LESS THAN 60 MINUTES)

By Nick Montoya

It is inevitable... all projects get stuck. Smart business leaders, project managers and entrepreneurs will eventually figure a way to get unstuck and back on track. However, while they are trying to get back on track, committee members may lose interest and project teams run the risk of not meeting commitments and overrunning budgets. Not to mention the high amount of stress and frustration that results, plus the risk of the competition beating you to the punch.

Many projects do not launch effectively or get stuck due to various factors. Do any of these sound familiar?

- ★ "We seem to be taking one step forward and two steps back. We can't get managers, stakeholders and team members all on the same page all at the same time!"

- ★ "Productivity is suffering due to infighting and turf issues."

- ★ "The project is done, but not yielding the desired results. We did not do a good job communicating to or educating our employees."

- ★ "We can't seem to get management to pay attention or support our new idea."

- ★ "Hidden agendas are rampant. We seem to be wasting so much time and energy."

- ★ "Complexity and bureaucracy make it impossible to succeed."

- ★ "We are always on the verge of missing commitments. Trying to manage global or distributed teams is frustrating and extremely difficult."

These factors are the same for large corporations and small businesses. Small business owners have an especially difficult time because they do not have a lot of practical experience in how to solve many of these problems.

To help Intel project managers get unstuck and back on track, I developed a simple process that has been used successfully at Intel for the last 15 years. It is called The Magic Megaphone. This process is also being used at small to medium-sized businesses with great success.

Besides Intel, many project managers, entrepreneurs, small business owners, corporate executives and universities have been helped by The Magic Megaphone in creating "MegaSuccesses."

The Magic Megaphone is a simple five-step process that takes less than 60

minutes to get projects off to the right start or unstuck. So what are the "magic" steps involved in this process?

STEP 1: MEGAMISSION

Answer this question: Why does your project (or business or goal) exist? We are not looking for a grandiose mission statement, but a short statement that defines what your project or business is really about. Many times, project leaders or business owners fail to ask this important question, and simply assume the reason.

STEP 2: MEGABENEFITS

In this step you translate the MegaMission into key benefits by asking these questions: What are the key benefits that are reflective of my MegaMission? What sort of difference will this project make when it is completed? How will my company, organization or department benefit when this project succeeds? After answering these questions, team members find they now have key "talking points" and are equipped to articulate the benefits and value of their project or business to others.



STEP 3: MEGATARGETS

Now answer the question: Who cares, or should care, about our project? Examples of who cares or who should care include customers, employees, managers, senior executives, team members, partners, stakeholders, beneficiaries and those who allocate vital resources to the project. From this list, pick the most important and focus the plan on that main MegaTarget. Too often, we try to be everything to everybody and then wonder why our businesses are failing. It could be that we have not identified our "key target" and developed a solid plan focused on that target.

STEP 4: MEGAMAGIC

Imagine it is three months later. You have just returned from meeting with your MegaTarget. The meeting went extremely well because the plan was executed flawlessly. You leave the meeting and escape to a secluded spot. You tap yourself three times on the head with a magic wand that instantly turns you into

a special "megaphoner" ant. Now you can crawl back under the door to your MegaTarget's office and listen to what is being said about your project's success.

What would you really like to hear your MegaTarget say? You want your MegaTarget to be so impressed that he or she says "WOW!" at the beginning of every comment made about your project or business. That "WOW!" is what we call your MegaMagic.

There is one rule in Step 4: Each MegaMagic statement must start with the word, "WOW!" If your team or staff was not fired up by this step, by the time they complete the MegaMagic they surely will be.

STEP 5: MEGAPLAN

Nothing will happen or change without action. Here's the question to ask your team: What actions are needed that will inspire your MegaTarget to say those "WOW!" statements about the MegaBenefits they will experience? The team is likely to come up with many ideas. Pick

the top three actions that will have the most influence and impact given scant time and resources. Each action should be assigned an owner and a due date for the next step.

These five steps are easily completed within an hour. At the end of that hour, you will have succeeded in:

- Motivating and inspiring your team.
- Accelerating project success.
- Getting everyone on the same page.
- Identifying key targets and stake holders.
- Creating a mission that is simple and direct.

Congratulations. You are now unstuck. The Magic Megaphone puts the fun and magic back into your projects and goals. After all, no law says projects cannot be fun, especially if you can launch them in a dynamic way in less than 60 minutes, and inspire a united team that is fired up to shoot for excellent outcomes. ■

Nick Montoya is a senior manager at Intel Corporation's Folsom, California site. He developed the Magic Megaphone, a simple five-step process for jump-starting projects. His coauthor, Roger S. Peterson, is a Sacramento business writer. Their book is available at magicmegaphone.com or on Amazon.com.