



Lessons Learned in Project Execution

Insights from our engagement with the Arizona Department of Education (AZED)

In complex technology projects, the interplay among budget, schedule and team capacity can make or break long-term success. During a recent project with AZED, we encountered real-world challenges that offered valuable lessons and insights that now inform how we approach every engagement.

01

AGGRESSIVE TIMELINES CAN BACKFIRE

The original seven-month timeline accelerated development efforts, but led to early overuse of resources and a rapid budget burn. While initial milestones were met, the cost of speed came due later.

Lesson: Pacing matters. Projects need enough runway to allow for sustainable delivery without sacrificing quality or morale.

02

BUDGET PHASING ENABLES FLEXIBILITY

When the timeline was extended multiple times, the budget couldn't stretch far enough to cover new phases without additional funding.

Lesson: Plan for the long game. A phased funding model allows for adjustments without jeopardizing future deliverables.

03

PEOPLE POWER THE PROJECT

Ambitious project timelines challenged team bandwidth and led to increased workload intensity. Over time, this sustained pressure affected team performance and posed the risk of burnout.

Lesson: Sustainable staffing plans preserve morale, retention and velocity, especially when project timelines shift.

04

CHANGES NEED STRUCTURE

Each time the timeline changed, the team had to replan, realign and adjust delivery. But without added resources or time buffers, it became harder to maintain consistency.

Lesson: Timeline changes are inevitable. Building in contingency at the outset allows you to respond, not react.

05

SCOPE, SCHEDULE, RESOURCES: PICK ALL THREE

Success hinges on aligning what needs to be done, how long it will take and what's available to get it done.

Lesson: These elements must be set realistically and revisited frequently to avoid downstream risk.



IN PRACTICE: WHAT THIS MEANS FOR OUR CLIENTS

At Mainstream Technologies, we've transformed these experiences into proactive planning tools. We now guide clients through early risk assessment, phased resourcing models and realistic delivery timelines that support both project success and team wellbeing.

Because building great software starts with building smart expectations.



Technology Health Check

Is your technology supporting or hindering your business growth?

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR CURRENT TECH STACK

HARDWARE & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Are your servers, workstations and devices up to date?
- Do you experience frequent downtime or performance issues?

SOFTWARE & APPLICATIONS

- Are you using modern, cloud-based solutions where possible?
- Do all your applications integrate smoothly, or do you rely on manual workarounds?
- Are there outdated or redundant systems that could be consolidated?

SECURITY & COMPLIANCE

- Do you have strong cybersecurity measures (e.g., firewalls, encryption, MFA)?
- Are your systems compliant with industry regulations (e.g., HIPAA, SOC 2)?
- Do you conduct regular security audits and employee training?

SCALABILITY & PERFORMANCE

- Can your current technology support future growth and increased demand?
- Are there performance bottlenecks slowing down your team or processes?

IT SUPPORT & MAINTENANCE

- Do you have a structured IT support plan with clear response times?
- Is your IT team proactive in identifying and fixing potential issues?

STEP 2: IDENTIFY GAPS & PRIORITIZE IMPROVEMENTS

1. What areas above need the most attention?
2. What inefficiencies could be eliminated through automation or integration?
3. What security vulnerabilities need immediate action?

STEP 3: TAKE ACTION

- ◆ If you checked multiple problem areas, it might be time for a full technology strategy review.
- ◆ Consider engaging with IT professionals to create a roadmap for optimization.

