

PRE-MORTEM ANALYSIS

Proactive failure analysis — imagine the project has failed, then ask why

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1. SESSION INFORMATION

Project Name		Session Date	
Facilitator		Duration (hrs)	
Participants	<i>List all participants and roles</i>		
Project Phase	<i>e.g. End of Planning / Start of Execution</i>	Method	<i>e.g. Silent brainstorm</i>

2. THE PRE-MORTEM PREMISE

Facilitator reads aloud to the team:

"It is now 12 months from today. Our project has been completed — and it has failed spectacularly. The budget was exceeded. The schedule overran. Key deliverables were rejected. Stakeholders are deeply dissatisfied.

Your task: write down every reason you can think of for this failure. Be specific. Be honest. Hold nothing back."

3. FAILURE MODES BY CATEGORY

#	Category	Potential Failure Mode	Prevention Action
1	Scope & Requirements		
2	Scope & Requirements		
3	Schedule & Timeline		

4	Schedule & Timeline		
5	Budget & Cost		
6	Budget & Cost		
7	Team & Resources		
8	Team & Resources		
9	Stakeholder & Communication		
10	Stakeholder & Communication		
11	Technical & Quality		
12	Technical & Quality		
13	External & Compliance		
14	External & Compliance		
15	Governance & Process		

4. TOP RISKS — TEAM VOTE

After brainstorming, each participant votes their top 3 concerns. Tally votes. List the top 5 most-voted failure modes here.

#	Top Failure Mode (as voted)	Votes	Risk ID → T-15
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1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

5. PREVENTION ACTIONS & OWNERS

#	Action / Countermeasure	Owner	Deadline	Priority
1				H/M/L
2				H/M/L
3				H/M/L
4				H/M/L
5				H/M/L
6				H/M/L
7				H/M/L
8				H/M/L

6. WORKSHOP OUTCOME & NEXT STEPS

Key Insights from Session

Summarize the most important insights that emerged from the workshop...

Risks Added to Register (T-15)

List risk IDs added or updated in T-15 as a result of this session...

Follow-up Actions

List any actions that require follow-up, with owners and deadlines...

From the book: Project Management: From Initiation to Closure

A pre-mortem is the single most effective one-hour investment a project team can make. It surfaces the risks that no one wants to say out loud — the ones most likely to kill the project.

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