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People Promoting The Parade of Pointless Projects

Let's face it, some development projects have extremely low probabilities of success. Projects that are like zombies in your portfolio, sucking the life out of your organization. Here are a few examples of Pointless Projects:

- Cost-cutting, slashing product costs without considering the impact on customer value.
- Value destruction, removing customer value from a successful product to create a low-cost variant.
- Me-too products, hastily responding to the competitor's latest move.
- Metric manipulation, projects pushed through the pipeline to meet some arbitrary metric.
- Creating proprietary interfaces to force your customers to use your consumables, spare parts, or repair tools.
- AI check-the-box, nobody knows how it should be used, but it makes the portfolio look trendy.

These projects might be "successful" in the sense that they are completed on time and within budget, but they're distracting the organization from the real work of creating value for customers. A waste of resources that could be better spent elsewhere.

How come we so often find these types of projects in many organizations' portfolios?

Let me illustrate this with two examples:

I was once presenting a" Voice of the Customer study" for a global company at the annual sales conference. One of my findings was that" Low price" was the fifth most important customer need. This made the US sales manager so mad that he turned red in the face and stood up, shouting that I was a complete moron. Every lost business deal he claimed was due to customers

complaining that the price was too high. For him, cost-cutting projects were necessary for the company's survival.

Was he wrong? Of course, I was saved by a very clever CEO, who said, "This company shall always have the most expensive products. We are not a low-price company. The only thing I am willing to discuss is how this company can excel on the four other Customer Needs that are more important than" Low price".

Numerous companies I have worked with are frustrated that their development projects never finish on time or within budget. At one company I worked for, the CEO sent a message to all in R&D that, from now on, he would treat all estimates as "contracts signed in blood." From his point of view, the problem was that the R&D people didn't take the budgets and time schedules seriously.

Was he wrong? Of course, he himself had contributed to pushing so many development projects into the pipeline that R&D was facing an impossible task. Delays were inevitable. His idea to maximize output was to fill every engineer's calendar to at least 100%.

The conclusion is that the Parade of Pointless Projects exists because people, management, and the system promote them. Today, systems of metrics, promotions, bonuses, and status add an extra layer of problems to the picture, favoring an increase in the Parade of Pointless Projects.

If you want to fight the Parade of Pointless Projects, join the movement #creatingwowproducts

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