



# Texas Turnaround

“YOU’RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS,” HE SAID.  
“IT’S BACK ON AND WE NEED A TEAM IN  
HOUSTON NEXT WEEK. SOONER IF YOU CAN.  
IT’LL BE A BUSY THANKSGIVING.”



BY MARK THOMPSON  
FOUNDER

While our client’s tone was apologetic, the sudden turnaround was par for the course. The Macondo incident had led to a drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico. The ban was causing a series of start-stop projects as field operators and drilling contractors considered redeploying their fleet to new waters. Our client, the project’s director for a major drilling contractor, was preparing to send an ultradeepwater drillship from Mexico to the Mediterranean.

With the US industry in turmoil, he needed the rig ‘drill ready’ in the Med within six months. The extensive modifications required for the new drilling campaign would be hard enough in this timeframe. But the difficulties were compounded by the heightened reputational risk environment. With every drilling contractor under intense media scrutiny at that point, our client couldn’t afford a false step. He needed our help.

Within 48 hours of the call, our advance party of two advisors arrived at our client’s office in Houston. A multi-disciplined support team would follow on having been immediately notified.

Our advisors’ first task was to understand the overall project. The scope was extensive and little prep work had been done, as the transfer had come out of left field. (The drillship itself took its name from a deep ocean trench, which seemed appropriate as our team felt they were staring into an abyss). Items with long lead times were an issue. Plus, the rig was changing a management region which always brings its own challenges. Nonetheless, our team started to pull things together.

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Within the week, we had a full-strength project management and technical team of nine souls on the ground, split between the Houston office and the rig offshore.

Implementing our Project Risk Management (PRIMA) method, we defined the project, its risk profile and associated actions for management and mitigation. Working closely with our client to develop the scope, we identified local design, engineering and construction contractors that could execute the job safely while keeping the rig offshore.

To everyone’s delight—including the field operator’s—the newly modified rig sailed out of the Gulf of Mexico within four months of us mobilizing our team.

## So what?

Starting from a blank canvas, tricky modifications were completed safely and with all due speed. During the ban, the rig remained on contract (but not drilling) albeit at reduced earnings.

Making it ‘drill ready’ for its Mediterranean transfer within four months meant the rig resumed its full day-rate 60 days faster than envisioned, boosting our client’s revenue by \$9 million. Moreover, with our team managing the project, our client could keep his own internal resources focused on day-to-day operations.