The Domino Effect

PROBLEMS ON ONE PROJECT HAVE A WAY OF RIPPLING THROUGH OTHERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SAVING ONE PROJECT CAN PREVENT KNOCK-ON EFFECTS ELSEWHERE.

BY MARK THOMPSON
FOUNDER

"This project's grown arms and legs," our client told us. "The original budget's shot and it's all taken far longer than planned. We've also got a couple of other ongoing projects. I want to ensure we don't make the same mistakes again on these. Any ideas?"

The project in question was entering its final commissioning and our client, a wells manager, had all hands on deck. But with two similar projects up and running, he wanted to understand what had caused the slippage in order to prevent a recurrence. He needed information fast but could ill afford to take the main project team off their primary objective—getting the job done. It's a problem we've seen time and again. You can't clone the team, but you need their hard-won knowledge on another project.

As ever, we took a pragmatic approach. We dispatched a small team to visit the field operator's offshore installation in the North Sea. As our advisors reviewed the project documentation, they asked discreet questions to get to the bottom of what had happened. With their industry-wide knowledge, our guys soon had a handle on things.

Analyzing the failing project by its historical phases, the team captured lessons as they went, rapidly translating the bygone events and decisions into the context of our client's other less progressed projects. They presented their findings to the other project teams, along with recommended remedies. Our method let us transfer crucial knowledge about the early stages of the distressed project—even while it was underway—allowing other crews

> It's a problem we've seen time and time again. You can't clone the team, but you need their hard-won knowledge.

to benefit from our insights and sidestep the same pitfalls. Meanwhile, we continued our analysis of the 'problem child' project right through to the end, only wrapping up when it had been delivered.

So what?

Our approach ensured the timely transfer of knowledge from a 'problem project' to concurrent similar projects. Our client was able to keep his team on task—ensuring operations started without further delay—while gaining a fully

documented objective review of the issues and impacts that had caused the overrun. By his estimation, our approach saved millions on the following two projects alone and more since.