

OCTOBER 2025

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING AND DELIVERING A
COMPLEX IT PROJECT

MAXIMIZING THE SUCCESS OF A COMPLEX IT PROJECT



Lorange Leclair & cie

Mathieu Gélinas

Partner

Claude Lorange

Senior Partner

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING AND DELIVERING A COMPLEX IT PROJECT

Preparing a complex IT project is a decisive stage that determines its success, whether it involves an enterprise system, a cloud integration initiative, or a full digital transformation. The stakes are high: multi-million-dollar budgets, deep technological and organizational interdependencies, multiple stakeholders, tight timelines, and often regulatory requirements. To maximize the likelihood of success, ten guiding principles should anchor any organization embarking on such an undertaking.

1. Ensure a competitive and transparent selection process

The cornerstone of any successful IT project lies in choosing the right business partner. A structured, fair, and well-documented procurement process ensures not only compliance but also the credibility of the initiative.

Evaluation criteria should be weighted according to strategic priorities: technical expertise, business domain understanding, methodological robustness, and proven ability to deliver in comparable environments. Transparency in the selection process reduces bias, fosters stakeholder trust, and increases the probability of selecting a partner aligned with the organization's culture and objectives.

2. Establish financial mechanisms that foster vendor accountability

Contractual and financial arrangements are powerful governance levers and must balance flexibility with accountability. Leveraging fixed-price deliverables or time-and-material caps helps limit scope creep and cost overruns. Moreover, implementing

financial holdbacks or performance-based incentives tied to milestone achievement aligns the vendor's interests with those of the client and encourages performance excellence.

3. Preserve the integrity of business requirements

A project only delivers value if it faithfully meets the business needs that justified its existence. However, scope drift and requirement dilution are ever-present risks in complex IT projects. To prevent this, organizations must establish a rigorous requirements management framework that includes traceability, regular validation, and controlled updates. This discipline protects the project's relevance and minimizes costly mid-course corrections.

4. Implement a robust governance structure at both project and enterprise levels

Technological complexity often brings with it a proliferation of committees and decision layers. Effective governance is therefore critical. A business committee ensures user representation, a steering committee provides strategic direction, an integration committee maintains coherence between IT and business functions, and an oversight committee monitors progress, finances, and quality. Such governance reinforces legitimacy, accelerates issue resolution, and promotes transparency in resource management. Weak governance remains one of the leading causes of project failure.

5. Strengthen integration controls between business processes and IT systems

Integration is often the Achilles' heel of IT projects. Success depends on the system's ability to fit seamlessly into the existing ecosystem.

Using interoperability standards (APIs, web services), implementing automated integration tests, and holding cross-functional workshops between business units help reduce integration risks. It is within these multidisciplinary exchanges that durable solutions emerge and organizational silos begin to fade.

6. Ensure stability of key vendor resources

The continuity of expert resources is a determining factor for success. Complex projects rely on a core group of specialists whose knowledge of systems and business processes

is invaluable. High team turnover leads to productivity loss, schedule slippage, and weakened technical coherence.

Contractual provisions can require the continuous presence of critical resources and define clear replacement protocols—protecting project memory and ensuring service continuity.

7. Keep certain activities close to end users

While technical execution can be outsourced, some dimensions must remain internal, including:

- Organizational change management
- Production deployment and business continuity oversight
- User acceptance testing

Proximity to end users is essential to foster adoption and minimize resistance to change. By retaining ownership of these sensitive aspects, the organization maintains control over the human interface between technology and operations.

8. Maintain data responsibility within the organization

In an environment where data is a strategic asset, delegating its governance to third parties poses significant risk. Administrative keys, security rights, and quality controls must remain under direct corporate control. This safeguards independence from vendors, mitigates regulatory risks, and ensures the long-term preservation of information assets beyond the project's lifespan.

9. Develop a clear and consistent communication strategy

In a complex project, communication is both a management tool and a vehicle for engagement. It must be planned, audience-specific, and delivered consistently. Executives require strategic indicators, middle managers need operational details, and users expect messages that reassure them about the project's impact on their daily work.

A well-managed communication strategy prevents misunderstandings, curbs rumours, and sustains collective engagement.

10. Plan and actively manage project risks

Proactive risk management is a non-negotiable pillar of success. Risks should be identified at project initiation, classified by probability and impact, and associated with mitigation and contingency plans.

They must also be integrated into governance cycles and monitored continuously.

Cross-functional collaboration, open discussion, and shared solutions make risks manageable—after all, nothing unites teams better than a good old Excel risk register filled with challenges to conquer

Conclusion: From complexity to organizational maturity

These ten principles do not constitute a universal recipe but rather a proven framework. Applying them strengthens organizational maturity in project management, fosters collaboration, and enhances a company's ability to leverage technology as a sustainable strategic enabler.

Success in a complex IT project does not mean eliminating complexity, it means mastering it intelligently. To do so, organizations must rely on:

- clear governance,
- exemplary contractual discipline,
- deep process knowledge,
- and open communication among all stakeholders.

When a project is well-prepared, well-managed, and well-communicated, it becomes not only a driver of operational efficiency but also a collective source of pride, a tangible demonstration that strategic vision, execution excellence, and human cohesion can indeed coexist.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Claude Lorange, ing., is one of Canada's most respected voices in strategic IT procurement and large-scale outsourcing. Over three decades he has negotiated nine-figure service agreements, architected sourcing strategies for both public- and private-sector clients, and rescued complex programmes that were sliding off the rails.

Before founding Lorange Leclair & Cie in 2006, Claude held multiple vice-president roles at a global IT outsourcing and advisory powerhouse, giving him a 360-degree view of vendor motivations and client imperatives. That dual perspective underpins his reputation as a deal-maker who can create win-win economics while protecting his clients from the fine-print surprises that derail so many technology projects.

An electrical-engineering graduate of Polytechnique Montréal, Claude pairs analytical rigour with the storytelling chops needed to rally executives, suppliers and project teams around clear, actionable objectives. Whether he is drafting a cloud RFP, chairing a steering committee, or briefing a board, Claude brings the same hallmark qualities: strategic clarity, operational discipline, and a knack for turning divergent interests into aligned momentum.



Mathieu Gélinas is a seasoned executive in the management of complex technology programs and projects, recognized for his ability to translate strategy into tangible results.

With over twenty-five years of experience in IT portfolio management, outsourcing, and project management office (PMO) leadership, he has successfully delivered numerous large-scale initiatives that combine operational discipline, inspirational leadership, and strong business acumen.

Before assuming global service and program management roles, Mathieu contributed to enhancing the performance of multiple organizations by leading multidisciplinary teams across several continents.

Results-driven, he is known for his strategic vision, deep mastery of IT governance, and pragmatic approach to organizational transformation.