

# **Drinking from The Poisoned Chalice: Rescuing a Failed Project**

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- What do we mean by failure?
  - Simply not functioning!
  - Late
  - Over budget
  - Users unengaged
  - Outcomes not achieved
  - Benefits undelivered
- Is this YOU?

You are NOT alone!

- 80% of SAP clients disappointed in:
  - Benefits attained
  - Measurability of benefits
  - User competency
- 90% of IT projects do not return real benefit
- 40% fail completely

### Sources

Gartner Group  
META Group  
Telegraph

- McKinsey
  - two thirds of CIOs admitting budgets don't have to be defended
- Morgan Stanley
  - between 2000 and 2002 companies threw away over \$130 billion of their IT capital expenditure
- HBR
  - 'IT doesn't matter'

- The Problem
  - Major Financial Services Institution
  - Population 100,000 plus
  - < 3000 global locations
  - LMS (content, delivery, records)
  - Existing solution (in-house) not scalable
  - Delivering regulatory, skills & developmental programmes
  - Growing business
  - Business need
    - more delivery, less cost, business critical

- The Solution
  - Proprietary system
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party hosted
  - Customised to fit house style and needs
  - Lifetime cost £20m approx
  - Benefits anticipated
    - Two year payback
    - Scalability
    - Accessibility
    - Future-proofed

## A Study of Failure

- So far so good?
- Launched to 50% of the business

Switched off after three days!

Users reverted to old system!

# A Study of Failure

- So, what went wrong?
  - Project Management
    - Expectations, Deliverables, Key Skills (Capabilities, Knowledge, Relationships, Focus), Ambition, Project Control, No Executive Sponsorship
  - Process Management
    - Content Transition & Management, User Processes, Performance Reporting
  - Technical Issues
    - Multiple user system builds, Networks & Connectivity, Data Structures, Testing/assessment engines, System Performance Management
  - Stakeholders
    - Engagement:
      - Users, Managers, Learning materials suppliers, Learning experts
  - System
    - Functionality loss to users



## A Study of Failure

- How could this be allowed to happen?
- It happens all the time!
- Key Issues:
  - Executive Sponsorship
  - Project Team skills
  - Complexity of customisation
  - Technical dominance of Project Team
  - No ‘reality’ check on internal system capability
  - Failure to engage key stakeholders
  - Focus on objectives

- Initial Action – Assessment:
  - Get in and meet the project team
    - How are they feeling?
      - Bruised, abused, disorganised, directionless, overwhelmed
  - Use the system
    - How bad is it?
      - Slow, unresponsive, difficult to navigate, inaccessible, unstructured, inaccurate
      - Core requirements not met, benefits not realisable
      - Otherwise it's fine!

- Proper Reaction:

**Objective, honest appraisal!**

## The Poisoned Chalice

- Why?
- A ‘no win’ situation
  - The project reputation is so poor that even IF you make it work, the users won’t believe it
  - If you make it work, the original Project Team will hate you
  - If you don’t make it work, you will get ALL the blame, while exonerating the original team!

- “Would you tell me please, which way I ought to walk from here?” [Said Alice]
- “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to” [Said the Cheshire Cat]
- “I don’t much care where” [Said Alice]
- “Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk” [Said the Cheshire Cat]
- “So long as I get *somewhere*” [Said Alice]

- Dimensions of any project
  - Objectives
  - People
  - Processes
  - Materials (inc. money)
  - Information
  - Management
- The basis of a considered reaction?

- What about the people!
  - Was it incompetence?
  - Or was it:
    - Leadership?
    - Resourcing?
    - Ambition?
    - Capability (Skills, knowledge)?
    - Organisational Politics?

Pour encourager les autres?

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    - Organisational Politics?

Organise the team to create a new plan!

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That way they will own it



- A Considered Reaction
  - The Universal Scientific Solution!
  - Start with a list!
    - What is wrong?
    - Why is it wrong?
    - How can it be fixed?
    - Who can fix it?
    - When can it be fixed by?
    - Where can responsibility for action be located?
    - What resources (skills, money, software) are required?
    - Who are the Stakeholders (Users, Suppliers, Sponsors)
    - Who can sanction it?

- A Considered Reaction
  - The Universal Scientific Solution!
  - Turn the list into a plan
    - Desired, Achievable Outcomes
      - Standards, Measurement, Success Definitions
    - Risks
      - Rigorous Assessment
    - Workstreams
      - Regular, Measurable, Deliverables
      - Users, Content, Stakeholder Engagement, Technical, Process
    - Project Management Plan
      - Measuring, Reporting, Reviewing
    - Accountability
    - Resources
      - Timing, Allocation

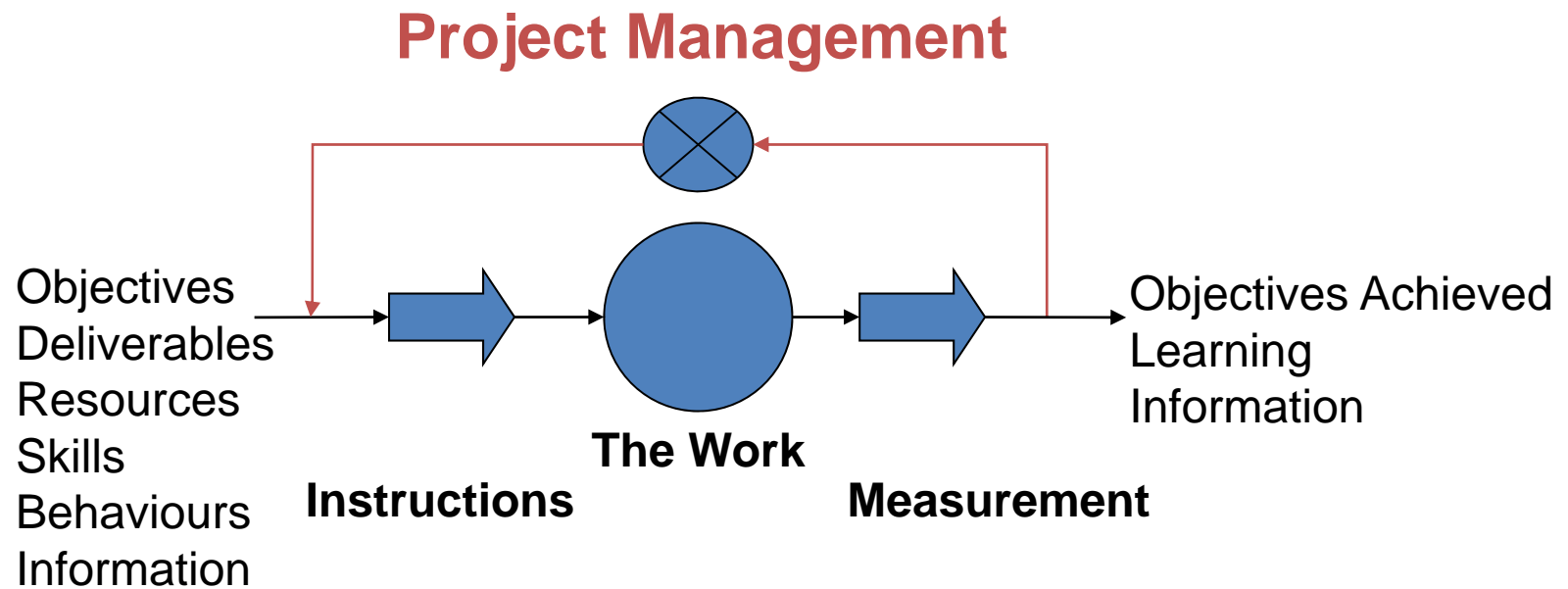
- The Project Rescue Plan
  - Project Manager
    - The Integrated Rescue Plan
  - Six Workstreams
    - Stagegates, Deliverables, Milestones
    - Weekly Project Review Meetings
    - Dedicated Resources
      - Workload sized & people chosen by Workstream Leaders
    - Workstreams:
      - User, Technical, Measurement & Reporting, Stakeholder Management, Processes, Content

Ensure that the sponsor supports the plan

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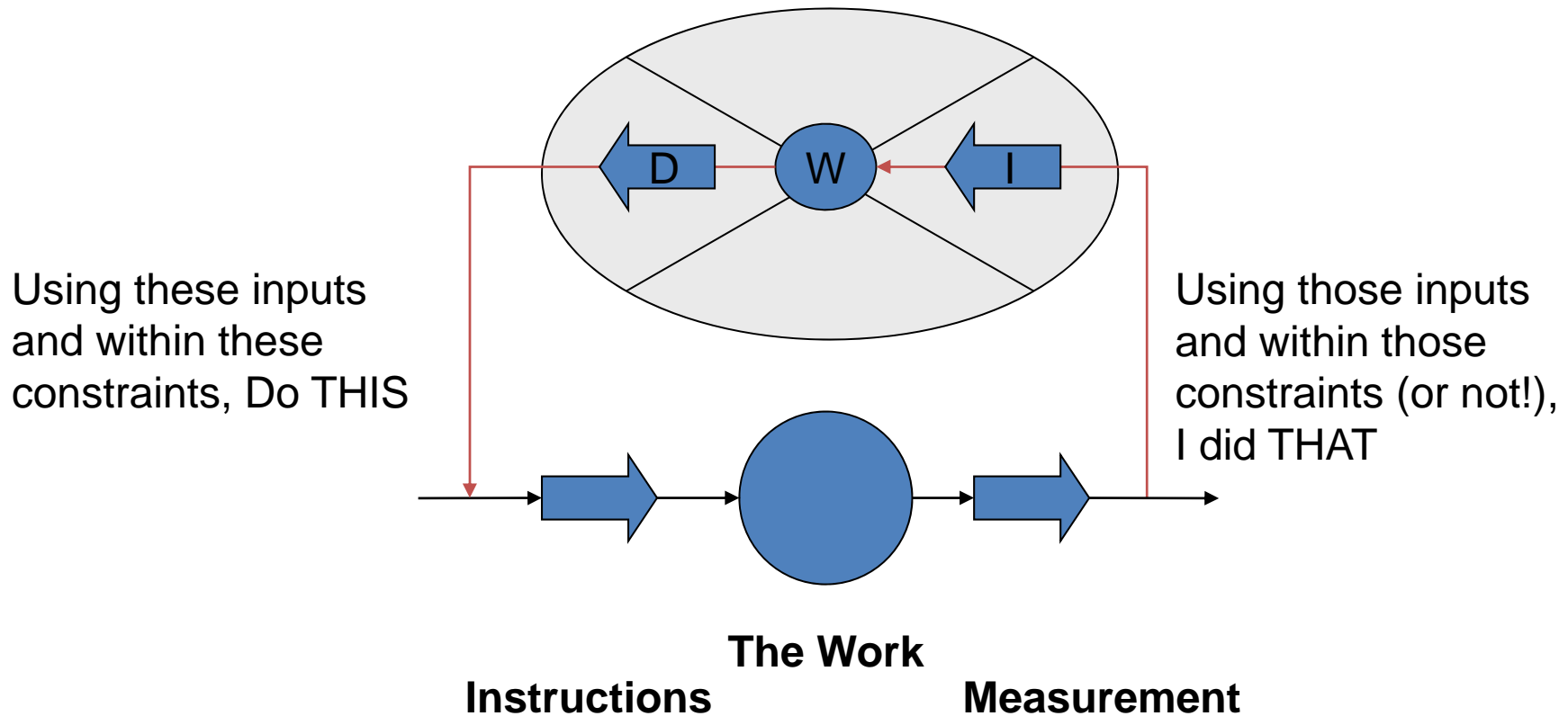
**Do it!**

## The Basic Project Model



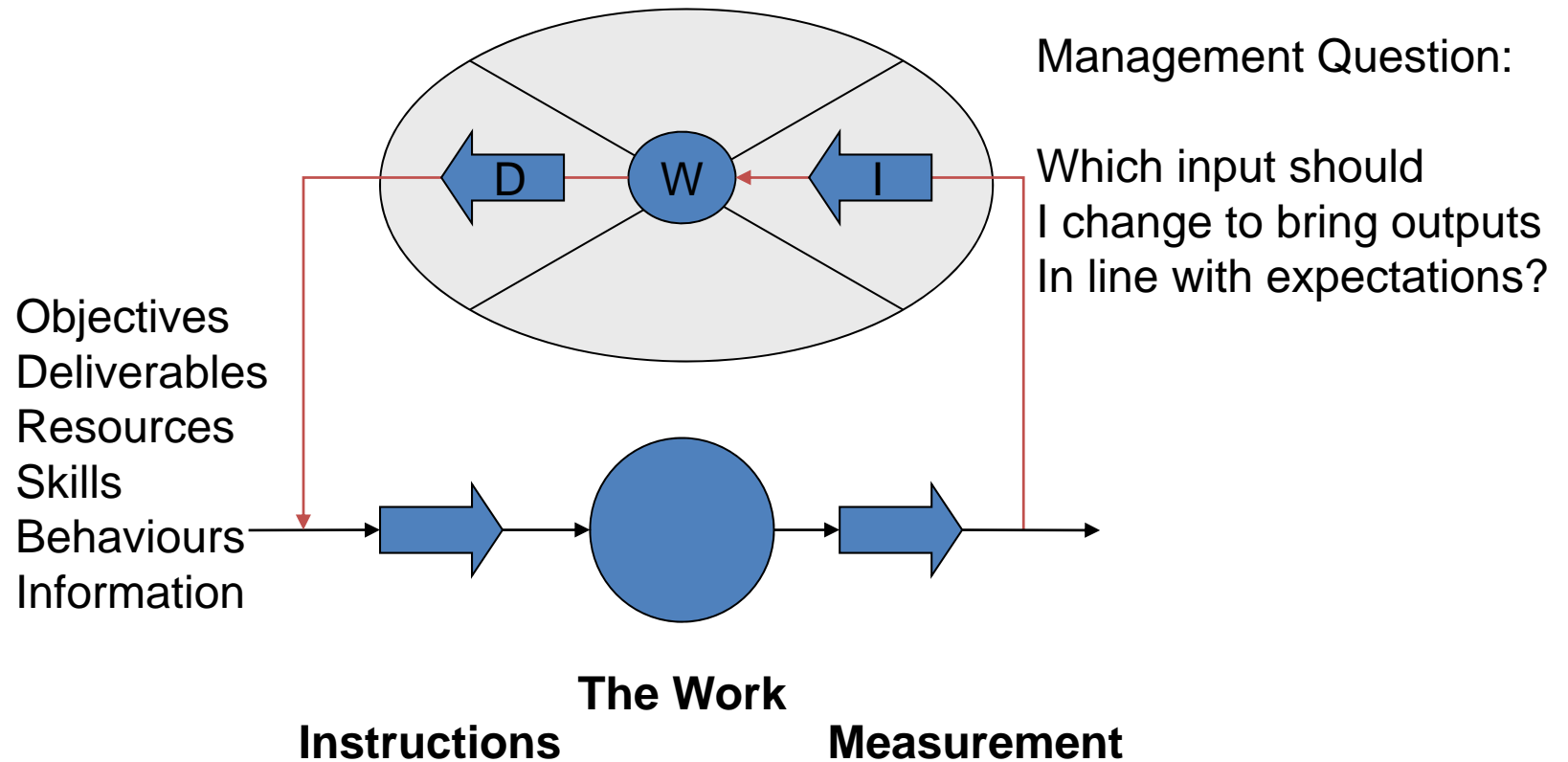
# The Basic Project Model

## Project Management

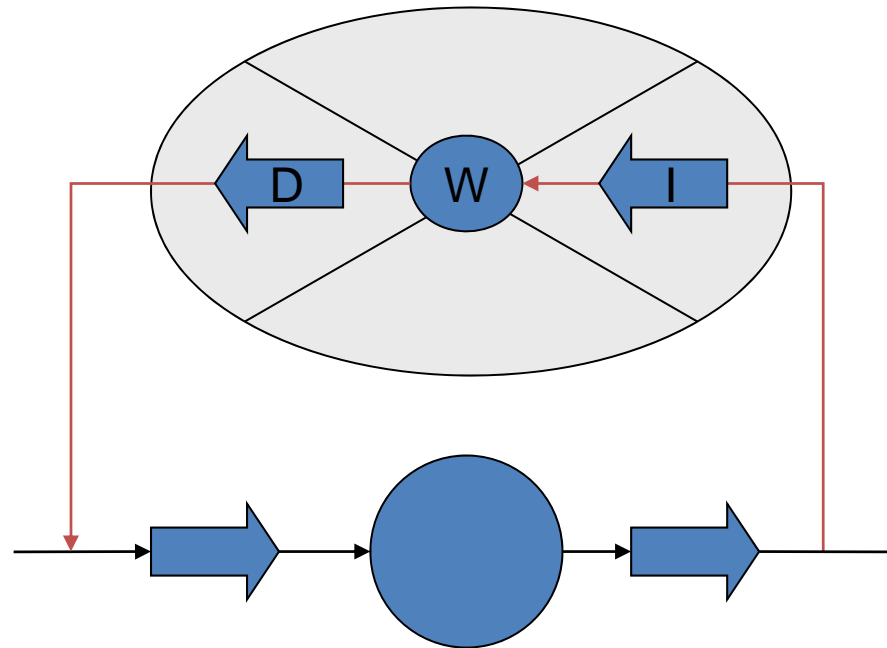


# The Basic Project Model

## Project Management



## Project Management

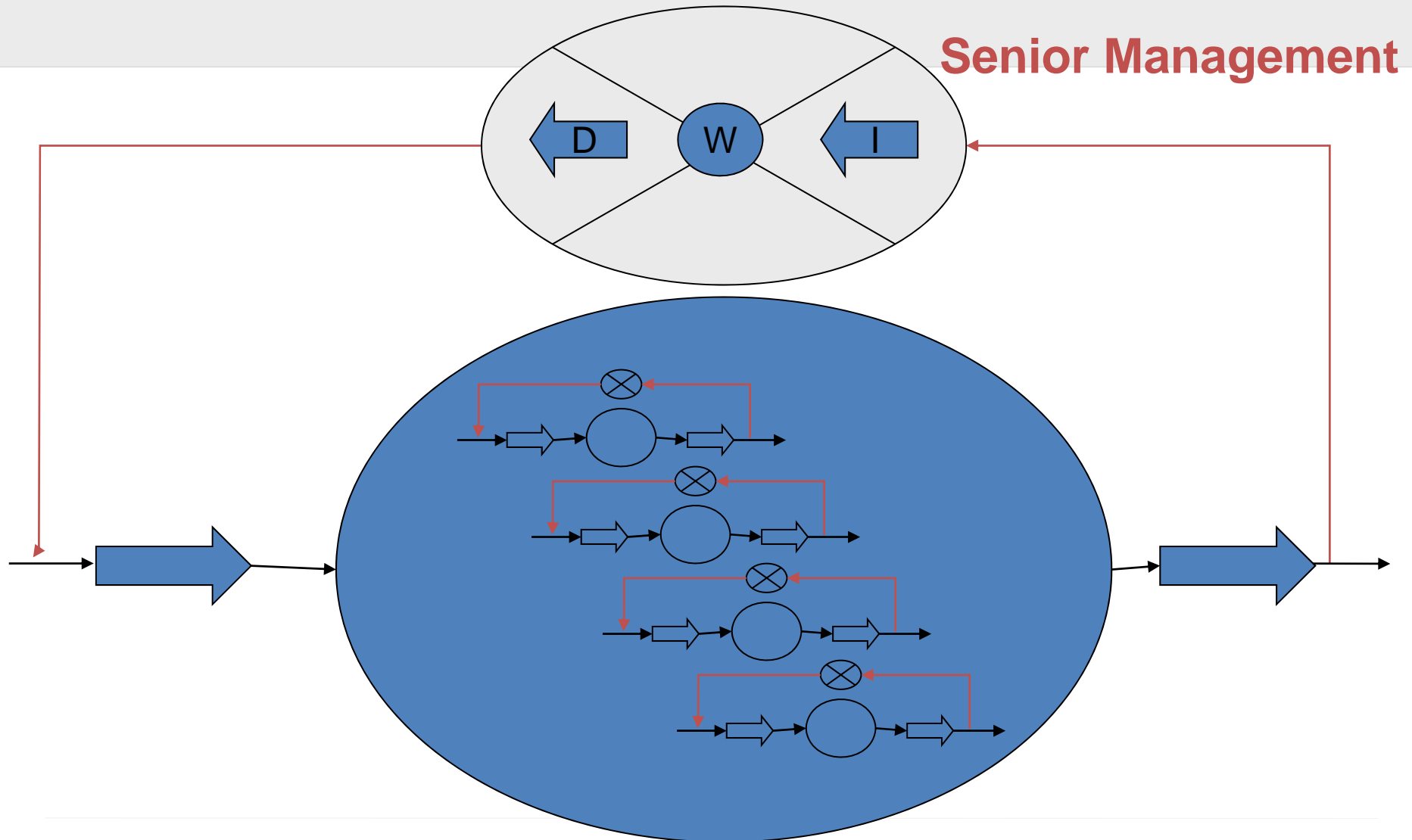


Are we doing things right?

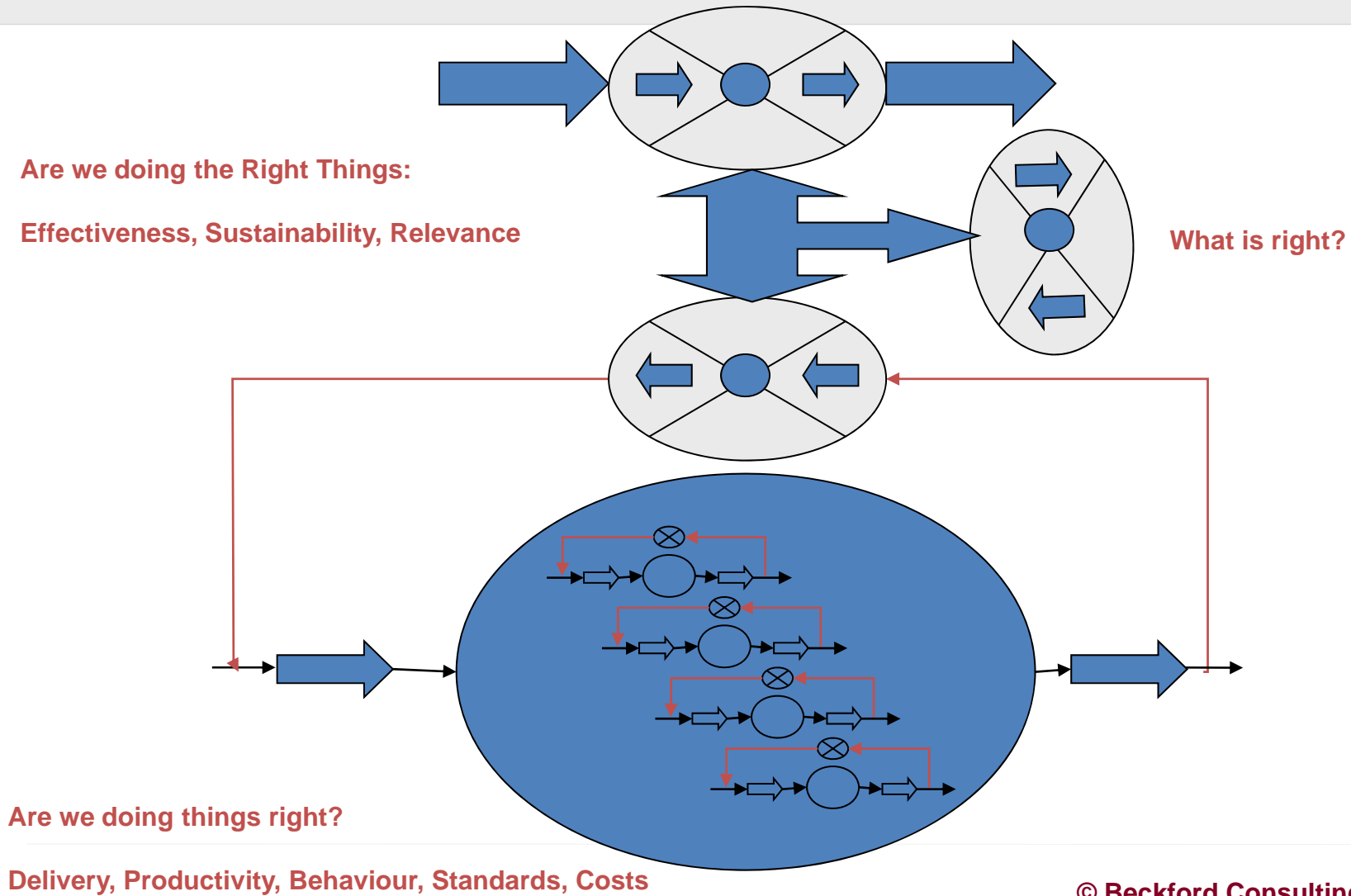
Delivery, Productivity, Behaviour, Standards, Costs



# Project Program Model



# Complete Program Model



- Deliverables achieved
  - Ahead of time
  - Below budget
  - With
    - Technical Problems (largely) resolved
    - Accessibility eased (reduced number of clicks!)
    - Content relevance increased
    - System Suppliers held to account
  - LMS relaunched to users
    - Reputation (largely) restored
  - Reputations of Project Team restored
  - Planned Business Benefits Realised
    - Initial benefits shortfall of £4m reduced to <£500k in 5 months
- Upgrade and extension project agreed
  - Same core project team

- A significant proportion of projects fail to realise the planned outcomes
- Failure commonly relates to:
  - Unrealisable Objectives
  - Lack of Clear Focus
  - Poor Planning with Inadequate Control
  - Inadequate resources
  - Over complex delivery
  - Lack of Stakeholder Engagement

- A template for a rescue plan?
  - Honest, objective assessment of status
    - Project, People, Process for Delivery
  - Define the gap between where you are and where you want to be
  - Engage the team to devise a plan to close the gap
  - Obtain support from the prime sponsor
  - Manage according to the plan
  - Change the plan if it isn't delivering!
  - Under promise, over deliver
  - Share the credit!

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Simple isn't it?