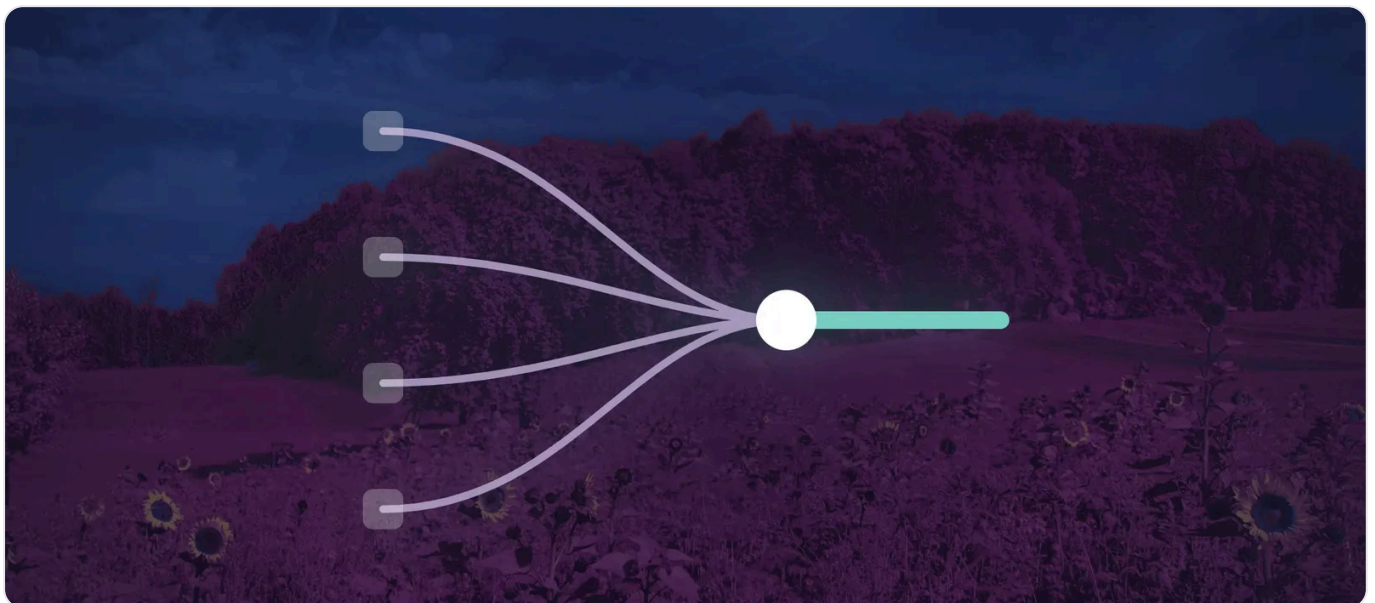


BLOG

5 Top Problems with Project Management, Part 4: One Source of Truth

On the plus side, today's internet-connected world of laptops and smartphones means we have tons of choice about how and where to work. On the down side, that means every team has ten ways to communicate, five different ways to track status, and a long digital trail stretching behind them littered with abandoned SharePoint sites, intranets, and cloud file storage solutions.

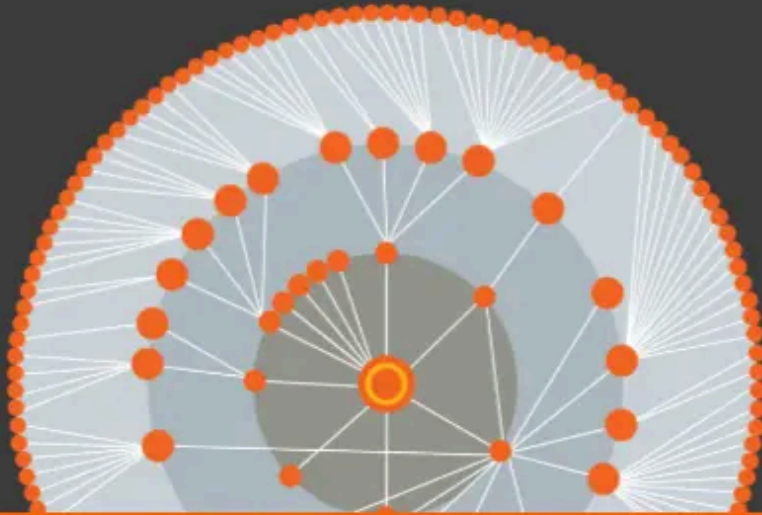
Jay Goldman May 26, 2018



On the plus side, today's internet-connected world of laptops and smartphones means we have tons of choice about how and where to work. On the down side, that means every team has ten ways to communicate, five different ways to track status, and a long digital trail stretching behind them littered with abandoned SharePoint sites, intranets, and cloud file storage solutions.

There's no reason for all of that to live in different places. It's time for tools that can truly act as a single source of truth for project plans, status, and data. Without that, we end up with situations like this:

Ripple Effects



ANNUAL TOTAL
300,000
HOURS A YEAR

And that's just meetings.

As astonishing as this chart may seem—300,000 person hours supporting one weekly excom meeting—it's important to remember that it doesn't include the work time spent preparing for meetings. Research shows that 15% of an organization's collective time is spent in meetings—a percentage that has increased every year since 2008. No amount of money can buy back that time. It must be treated more preciousely.

From <https://hbr.org/2014/04/how-a-weekly-meeting-took-up-300000-hours-a-year>

HBR author [Michael Mankins](#) and his colleagues analyzed data about time use at one large company and found that people there spent *300,000 hours a year* just supporting the weekly executive committee meeting. It's the ripple effect of the exec team members spending 7,000 hours a year in the meeting and preparing for it, which requires those 11 unit heads to spend 20,000 hours a year with their teams, which chews up 63,000 hours in prep meetings, which create 130 meetings at the next level down — adding another 210,000 hours. A shared platform communicating real-time status and a single source of truth would avoid the vast majority of those wasted hours.

If you've been reading along in our series, you might recognize this as an extreme example of Muda (from back in [Part 3: Breaking the Cycle](#)), or 'waste' that gets produced alongside your customer delivery process.

That probably feels familiar from your own career, although hopefully to a much lesser degree. You may even have found your mind wandering in the fourth or fifth hour of an interminable status meeting or while digging through your inbox or other stores of info to track down the latest KPI update. Most of the tools we use in the workplace today are either not designed around the concept or offer a very low value exchange for the end users. Consider, for example, most CRM systems. It's notoriously difficult to get salespeople to update CRM records because they don't actually drive much value for them—unless you have a very large book of business, you can probably track your status and next actions just as effectively through easier to use or more readily available tools. The real recipient of value is the company who owns the CRM and who keeps full control over their contact lists and activity records even as salespeople come and go.



Here's a different idea.

Imagine, instead, a system that sits at the center of your project and keeps a record of everything that's happening. It's not updated after the fact but, rather, becomes the place that work actually happens. It launches new initiatives with the project plan — like you might do today—but then it becomes that single source of truth. Your team logs in from anywhere in the world and works inside the platform,

updating tasks, adding status, and tracking key data. Any questions about how the initiative is doing, whether you're achieving targets, or even what a specific task's status is can be answered simply by logging in. You would never again need to track down information for a status report or painstakingly update Microsoft Excel spreadsheets or PowerPoint decks.

Even better, all of that data is kept in perpetuity even after that initiative ends, so any key decisions can be revisited in the future. The basis for the initiative—what we call a Playbook in [Conductor](#)—captures all of the organizational knowledge and best practices about how to do that type of thing so that they can be carried into the next instance of that initiative type quickly and easily.

And, of course, a single source of truth ends a lot of debates about progress and goals very quickly. When everyone agrees that it is the gospel, and with everyone's updated numbers in it, then you only have one place to go to settle disagreements. Time savings aside, imagine how much political infighting that could resolve even for small teams.

Frequently asked questions

How much time does a large company spend supporting one weekly executive meeting?

Harvard Business Review's analysis of one large company, cited in the article, found roughly 300,000 hours a year went into supporting a single weekly executive committee meeting: 7,000 hours in the meeting itself, 20,000 hours of unit heads preparing with their teams, 63,000 hours of prep meetings, and 210,000 hours in the 130 meetings spawned one level further down.

Why do status meetings consume so much time?

Fragmented information. When status lives in ten communication channels, five tracking tools, and a trail of abandoned SharePoint sites, every update requires someone to hunt for and reconcile it. The meeting is where reconciled information finally gets shared, so the meeting and its prep absorb all the effort the tools failed to save.

What makes a single source of truth actually work?

A system where the work itself happens, not a place updated afterward. The article's model: launch the initiative with its plan, then have the team log in and work inside the platform, updating tasks, adding status, tracking data, so any question about progress or targets is answered by looking rather than by asking. Tools that only capture reporting create low value for the people asked to update them, which is why adoption fails, as with CRM systems that benefit the company more than the salesperson.

READ ONLINE

Read this article on our website

getconductor.com/resources/5-top-problems-with-project-management-part-4-one-source-of-truth



GET STARTED

Talk to sales

Walk through an example with our team and see Conductor on your own programs.

[Talk to Sales →](#)



Scan to book