

# Are You Managing A Project Or Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro?

*Author: Clint Padgett, Forbes Author, "How Teams Triumph", CEO Project Success Inc.*

*Posted on May 11, 2021*



Some might argue the experience feels one and the same. Project planning is very much like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. The “easy” part is sitting on your couch routing your climb, outlining the things you’ll need, and identifying the support team you’ll need to complete the ascent. But what happens once you start climbing? Everything changes.

If you are three hours into your climb, and you find the path you’ve taken is washed out, you’re not going to give up on your goal, so you have to find a different route. You have to make a course correction. Maybe you go back to the trailhead and choose a new path to the top. This causes you to lose a few hours, but you’ll still achieve your goal of reaching the pinnacle. Or maybe you decide to stay near where the trail has washed out and veer to the right until you meet up with the trail again. Whichever option you choose, your decision is a course correction. You don’t change your goal of getting to the top; you change *the plan* to get there. The same thing happens with projects. You start down one path, realize it’s not working, make a course correction, get back on track, and keep going.

## Management of People and Processes is Not an Exact Science

I like to use this Kilimanjaro analogy because it aligns so closely with the project management experience. However, I've found teams often wish this was not the case. Teams want to operate with known and predictable variables – variables that can be planned on and around. There is a desire to identify all potential threats, concerns, and challenges to then eliminate them completely.

While I certainly recognize the appeal of this approach, and the fact that it will look impressive “on paper”, it's simply not realistic to plan this way. The simple truth is, you'll make course corrections and modifications to your plan throughout the life of the project. For example, a task that you didn't think about will come up; you'll learn something new about an activity that means its duration needs to change; you'll learn about a new regulation that will affect the project—the possibilities are endless. Like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, your project plan isn't static. It's in constant flux, and to deal with these changes, project teams have to make countless course corrections. And that's *OK* – that's why you integrate on-going “control sessions” that allow you to make adjustments and stay on course.

You can't predict or control every element of the project – it's neither an exact science nor do you have a crystal ball that sees into the future. This means your initial plan does not have to be perfect. You just have to be willing to course-correct in order to get back on track with your team on a continual basis. There will be times when you go down a path that ends up not working, forcing you to reevaluate your goals. Should we kill the project (give up on our goal of reaching the peak of Kilimanjaro) or choose a different path to reach the top? There are many things that can force you off your original, planned path. Acknowledging that it will happen and knowing how you will address it will dramatically increase your likelihood of success. Tune into my podcast, [The Conversation with Clinton M. Padgett](#) and learn more about how I can help your team triumph!

*First featured on [Forbes.com](#)*

**Resources on Clint Padgett and Project Success Inc.**

Visit: [Clint Padgett Website](#)

Follow: [Clint Padgett LinkedIn](#)

Join: [The Conversation Podcast with Clint Padgett](#)

Visit: [Project Success Inc](#)

Follow: [Project Success Inc LinkedIn](#)