

[MUSIC PLAYING] So a few years ago, I worked on a project that deployed a massive number of technical devices across a large footprint. On paper, flawless. Planning was tight, execution was seamless. The communication was totally transparent. We hit the scope, met the schedule, and managed the cost right to the penny. But once the dust settled, we realized something devastating. Those devices didn't actually solve our users' problems or improve their daily workflows. You should steadily decline, and we were left with a successful project that yielded a failed outcome. If you've ever hit every single milestone on a corporate initiative, only to realize you didn't actually move the needle, you know exactly how frustrating that is. Today, we're looking past the spreadsheets to find out why our traditional measures of success are failing us and exactly how you can start measuring what actually matters to your people and your bottom line. [MUSIC PLAYING] Welcome to People Process Progress. The podcast dedicated to helping leaders, project professionals, and teams cut through the noise, build operational stability, and drive meaningful outcomes. I'm your host Kevin Pennell, whether you're catching this episode on your morning commute during a walk or grinding out your garage gym, I'm incredibly glad you're here. Look, we've all been conditioned to believe that if we just manage the execution variables tightly enough, everything else will take care of itself. We stay busy, we log the hours, but we struggle to make actual headway. We're letting the traditional triple constraints blind us to what's actually happening on the ground. Scope, schedule, costs tell us exactly how we're managing the work, but they don't tell us a darn thing about the people doing the work, or whether meaningful, lasting progress is actually occurring. We need a deeper way to look at project health, and that's what we're breaking down today. [MUSIC PLAYING] So we're not throwing the baby out with the bathwater here. For me, I first ran into concepts like Scope, Schedule, and Costs long before I ever had project manager, a PMO director in my job title. Because back to my roots is the Navy Corps, and the EMS captain, and working in public health and emergency preparedness, we're using core project management principles to coordinate massive multi-agency preparedness programs across entire regions, long before I transitioned over to health care IT, and enterprise PMO leadership. Back then, we just called it doing the job. And look, those traditional metrics matter, they are foundational. And think about Scope, it's just boundaries. Keep people from adding one more thing until the whole house of cards collapses. You've just sat through a safe PI planning session. You know exactly how vital it is to map out boundaries so teams don't over commit and burn out. Schedule is just sequence. You don't pour concrete until the plumbing lines are in the dirt. It's how we coordinate resources instead of expectations and cost. Jeez, that's just reality. The checkbook has a limit because resources are finite. So let me be completely clear, these traditional measures are bedrock. They have to stay, but they primarily measure process. And process alone doesn't guarantee a win. Let me take you back to around 2012 or 2013,

when I was converting these massive several hundred page emergency operations plans or EOPs into streamline, actionable standard operating procedures. Now those ODEOPs looked perfect on a shelf. Every single compliance box was checked. Every regulatory requirement was met. They were, by all traditional metrics, completely successful documents. But have you ever tried reading a 300 page academic binder while an actual crisis is unfolding in real time? When the radio is screaming, the tones are dropping and a crisis is live. Nobody is flipping a page 214 of a binder. And that was the moment I realized, completion does not equal alignment. Completion does not equal understanding. Just because a plan or a project waves a green flag on a status report doesn't mean the people on the ground actually know what to do with it or believe in it. That's what I talked about in the first episode, visibility versus alignment. So back to this, I was walking my dog the other morning, frankly, and I just was watching him sniff around the neighborhood and it hit me how heavily the ODE emergency management less than applies to the corporate and healthcare projects that we're running today. If we're only tracking the process, we are missing the pulse. Here's our stand up for this week. How do we fix it? We cut the corporate theater. We don't build another massive soul crushing administrative framework. Nobody wants more buzzwords or paperwork. Instead, I wanted to think about it this way. I learned to look at things in the back of an ambulance like a clinician looks at a patient. When a paramedic or a doctor walks in, they check a suite of vital signs, blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen saturation, temperature. Together, those numbers tell the story of systemic health. We need project vital signs that augment our scope, schedule, and costs. I've narrowed this down to four specific people and progress-focused measures that I believe will give you the true pulse of your initiative. The first vital sign is alignment. This is a simple, honest assessment of whether the human beings involved are actually moving in the same direction. Think about your current project. Do the executives agree on the ultimate destination? Do your core team members actually understand today's priorities or are they working at cross purposes? Do the end users understand why their daily routine is about to change? Don't over-complicate it, right? With a massive survey, just rate it simply low, medium, or high. If alignment is low, it doesn't matter if your schedule is green, you're driving the car straight off a cliff. Second, measure confidence. And I don't mean corporate optimism or that polished executive spin we see on slide decks. I mean, real psychological confidence. If you ask the team anonymously, or we actually going to deliver the intended value on time, what do they say? Rate it highly likely, likely, unlikely, you're very unlikely. Right, if your cost metric looks great, but your team's confidence is very unlikely, your project is sick and you need to intervene. The third sign, I call it direction to done. This shifts the focus away from superficial busyness and focuses entirely on outcomes. And if you take nothing else away from this episode, take this question to your next meeting. What is demonstrably true today that wasn't true 30 days ago? Right, don't tell me about the

meetings you attended or the emails you sent. Show me the ground we gained. Track this simply by increments of progress toward the ultimate capability. 25%, 50%, 75%, 100, done. And the fourth vital sign, and this one is deeply tied to my DNA stability. Unstable systems rarely, if ever, produce predictable outcomes. You have to look at the environment. How stable is the project team? Are people constantly being pulled away to fight other fires? How stable is the scope of work? Or organizational priorities shifting every Tuesday? If stability is rocking back and forth, your project health is compromised. If you map these back to the core philosophy here at the show, look at how beautifully the balance restores itself. People are measured by alignment and confidence. Process is measured by our traditional scope schedule and cost, and progress is measured by direction to done and stability. If I were setting this up in a PMO today, I wouldn't mandate a 50 column spreadsheet. I'd be able to clean, weekly heat map using simple drop downs for those metrics. Think of it like a dashboard monitor in an ICU. Right, it's not there to give you a history lesson. It's there to let you make an operational pivot before the system codes. Here's our closing call to action. As we wrap up this episode, we're gonna take this out of the abstract and bring it right to your front door. Think about the most critical initiative, the most important project or the biggest change management effort you are personally leading or involved with right now. Not next quarter, not next year, today, for this coming week. Look over the budget spreadsheet in the Gantt chart for just a second and ask yourself, how aligned are the actual people? How confident is the team on the ground? How stable is the environment around them? And is the work generally moving toward a clear definition of done? Marie just running on a treadmill. Right at the end of the day, projects are delivered through people, process organizes the work and progress is what we remember. Right, scope, schedule and costs still matter, but just not enough anymore. Get out there, take care of your people, refine your processes and make some real progress. (upbeat music) If you found value in today's conversation, do me a favor, hit subscribe, leave a review, share this episode with one person who needs to hear it. You can find all our episodes, articles and resources that peopleprocessprogress.com. Keep this conversation going during the week. Connect with me on X and Instagram at the V Kevin Penel. If you want to look behind the scenes and my garage gym workout, road running, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu training, head over to YouTube and subscribe to own Move anchor. Thank you for tuning in, thank you for your support, and thank you for putting in the work. Until next time, keep people first, get your processes aligned and measure and celebrate your progress together. Godspeed, you'll. (upbeat music) (upbeat music) (upbeat music)