

Lost in Translation:

Communications Pitfalls and Solutions from the Big Dig

By Donna Gregorio

Abstract: The Big Dig, Boston's ambitious and costly infrastructure project, is often cited as a textbook case of project mismanagement and one of the most challenging endeavors in U.S. history. With massive delays, billions of dollars in cost overruns, and unmet objectives, the Big Dig presents a dramatic example of how communication failures can derail even the most complex initiatives. As a project manager navigating such a challenging environment, how could things have been different?

In this session, we'll dive into the communication breakdowns that played a pivotal role in the Big Dig's struggles and explore how modern project management strategies could have turned the tide. We will examine how better collaboration, clearer communication, and more effective leadership could have improved the outcome of this iconic project.

Attendees will leave with actionable takeaways and insights on how to implement these techniques in their own projects, including:

- Clear Objectives & Key Results (OKRs): Aligning teams with measurable, outcome-driven goals to track progress and ensure clarity.
 - Problem Framing: Leveraging moderators to guide brainstorming sessions and partner with technical experts to identify and solve critical issues.
 - Strategic Road Mapping: Building realistic, multi-year schedules that allow for adequate evaluation, adjustments, and feedback loops.
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By the end of this session, you will gain a deeper understanding of how to navigate troubled projects, avoid communication pitfalls, and implement strategies that foster success—ensuring your projects deliver on time, on budget, and with impact.
