

The Execution Lens™

Walk Your Project Before You Run It

The 10 Execution Lens™ Questions for Better Planning and More Predictable Delivery

*A guided exercise of 10 questions to help you see your project the way experienced project leaders do - **before** execution begins.*

Introduction

A project plan can look complete and still be missing the work that determines whether delivery succeeds.

Most project managers have experienced this.

The schedule is built.

The tasks are assigned.

Stakeholders are aligned.

Status is green.

And then execution begins.

Suddenly there are missing dependencies, unspoken assumptions, handoffs that don't quite work, decisions that no one realized needed to be made, and work that somehow never made it into the plan.

It's tempting to think these are surprises.

Most aren't.

They were simply invisible.

The best project managers I've worked with don't just read a project plan. They mentally **walk** the project before execution starts.

They imagine the work unfolding one step at a time.

They ask themselves:

"What has to be true for this step to happen successfully?"

Then they keep walking.

As they do, missing work begins to appear.

Dependencies become clearer.

Questions surface naturally.

Missing work and time become accounted for in the plan.

The plan becomes more realistic.

Over the years, I realized this wasn't just experience. It was a way of thinking.

This guide is an invitation to practice that way of thinking.

Don't think of the next pages as a checklist. Think of them as a guided walk through your project.

Choose one active project. (Important! This is what makes the next part work.)

Then mentally walk it from beginning to end.

Pause at each question before moving to the next.

You aren't looking for perfect answers. You're looking for places where your understanding becomes less certain.

Those moments are often where the most valuable conversations begin.

Let's begin.

The 10 Questions

1. If I mentally walk this project from beginning to end, can I clearly describe what happens first, second, third, and so on?

Where does my understanding become fuzzy?

2. What has to exist before each major piece of work can actually begin?

Am I assuming something will already be available?

3. Where does work move from one person or team to another?

What information has to travel with it for the next person to succeed?

4. What assumptions am I making that haven't been explicitly validated?

Which of those assumptions could change the outcome if they're wrong?

5. What work exists that isn't represented anywhere in the plan?

Think about coordination, communication, approvals, decision-making, testing, clarification, or stakeholder preparation.

6. Where are the points where someone needs to make a decision or give approval?

Are those moments planned—or simply assumed?

7. If I asked each owner to describe what “done” means for their work, would everyone describe the same outcome?

Where might expectations differ?

8. If one task slips by a week, what else changes?

What dependencies aren't obvious until something moves?

9. If I were joining this project today with no prior context, what questions would I immediately ask?

Those questions often point toward missing clarity.

10. Looking at everything together, where do I feel least confident? Not because something is wrong, but because I don't yet understand how the work will actually unfold?

That feeling is worth exploring.

It often leads to your most important discoveries.

Closing Reflections

If you found yourself slowing down at certain questions, that's normal.

Experienced project leaders aren't better because they know every answer.

They're better because they recognize where they **don't yet understand the system.**

That's where they become curious.

They ask better questions.

They seek more context.

They walk the project again.

Over time, this becomes less of a checklist and more of a habit. A way of seeing execution before it happens.

As you worked through these questions, you probably noticed something...

The questions weren't really about finding problems or faults.

They were about helping you build a more accurate understanding of how work will actually unfold.

That's the heart of **The Execution Lens™**.

It's a practice of developing execution judgment by inspecting the transition between a plan and the reality of delivering it.

The clearer you can see execution before it begins, the fewer surprises you'll encounter once it does.

Because better execution doesn't just lead to better projects.

It builds trust.

It builds credibility.

And over time, it builds the judgment that sets exceptional project leaders apart.