

Transcript of clip from Dan Gardner's Mind Tools Expert Interview

"There are three basic promises that every big project makes, which is it's going to cost a certain amount of money, it's going to take a certain amount of time, and it's going to deliver certain benefits. Things like passengers moved or conferences attendees attending, that sort of thing.

"And so Bent has been collecting these data for project outcomes around the world into this database, and this database is now absolutely huge. It has the data come from more than 160 countries around the world. They come in, I believe it's 24 project categories.

"These are big project categories, all sorts of things, everything ranging from information technology to the Olympic Games to highways to hydroelectric dams and so on. In all, there are more than 16,000 individual project outcome entries in this database and the topline conclusions that we can draw from that database are pretty sobering.

"I don't think anybody is going to be surprised if we say that many projects come in over budget and over time, but I don't think people realize quite how bad the record is. In fact, if you compile all those data and you boil them all down to three numbers, you'd ask what percentage of projects come in on budget and the answer is just a little under half.

"What percentage of projects comes in on budget and one time, that's about 8.5 percent, which is not good. What percentage of projects comes in on budget, on time, and they deliver the benefits that they promised, which is the whole reason you did the project in the first place? The answer there is 0.5 percent, basically a rounding error.

"Even if we're generous, we round up to 1 percent, that means 99 percent of projects do not deliver on all three of their core promises. That's a really bad track record and basically, we make the argument that we can easily do substantially better, and in doing substantially better we can save an enormous amount of money which will allow us to do much more."

[Listen to the full 30-minute interview in the Mind Tools Club.](#)