

Yes, I went to AALL!

Portland, 2025



By Jo-Ann McQuillan, Peel Law Association Library



Fail Smarter: Learn, Adapt and Thrive with Strategic Project Management

Takeaways:

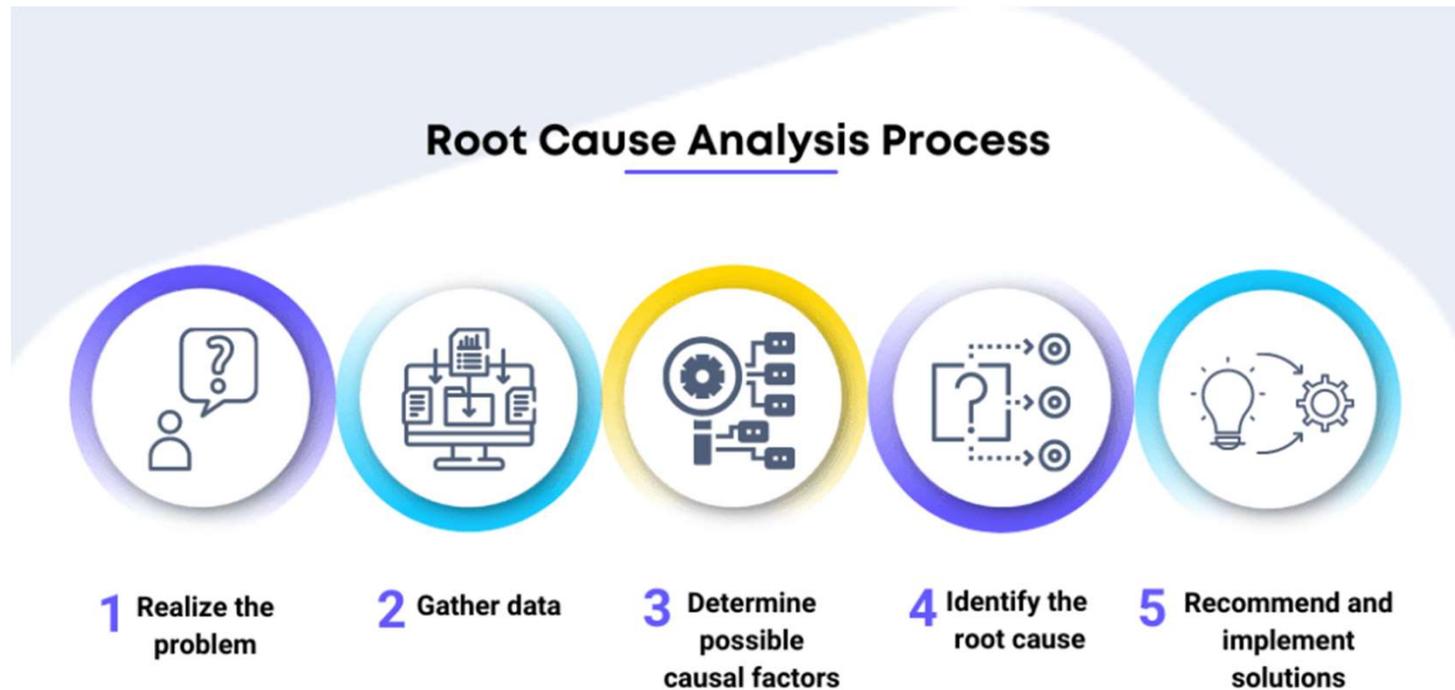
- Evaluation frameworks
- Recovery from failure
- Communicating failure
- Project management tools
- Book recommendations

Post Mortems (the debrief)

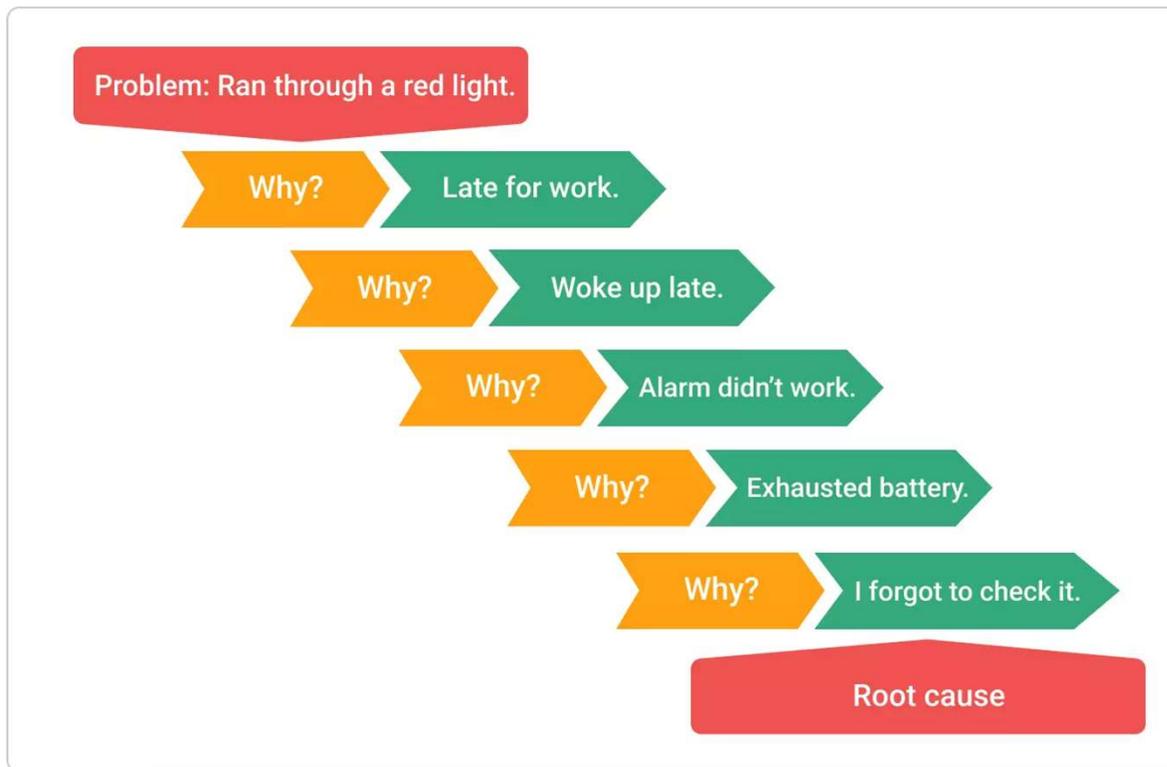
PROJECT POST MORTEM



Root Cause Analysis



The Five Whys



How to recover from failure

- Refer back to your objectives
- Recalibrate route to goal
- Reframe issue
- Reconnect
- Review input
- Reflect & document
- Be flexible

“I never lose. I either win or learn”



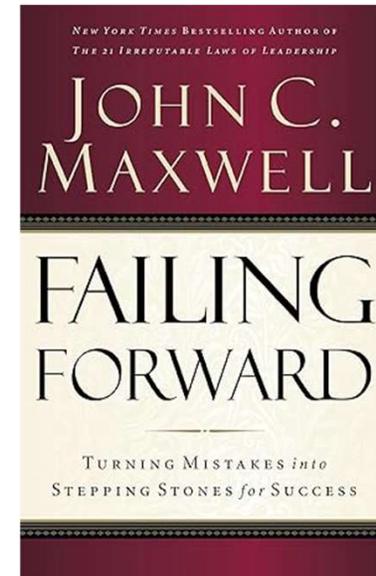
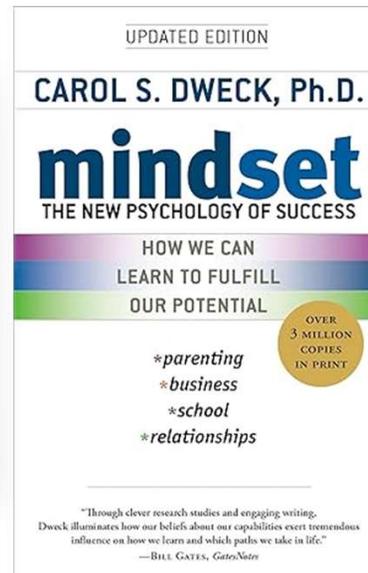
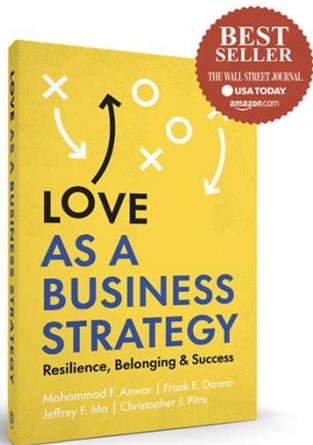
How to communicate failure

- Be transparent and accountable
- Provide context
- Highlight lessons learned
- Overcommunicate
- *If blame must be assigned, the project manager should always take the blame on behalf of the team
- “Don’t take loss, take learns!”

Project Management software recommendations



Book recommendations



Reinventing the Law Library Tour

Examples shared:

Louisiana Supreme Court Library Tour for kids - Be a Book!

Puerto Rico Supreme Court - focus on art and history (closed stacks library)

Chicago Kent University - Berkson Reading Room - tour options: research, new students, or legal tech, each ending with a training session

DC Court of Appeals - created Libby mascot to give tours of library open to public @dccalibby AND created a filmed library tour



Library Tour Essentials

1. Multidimensional understanding of your library

You need to anticipate any questions you will get

2. Needs of tour attendees

Judges, New calls, law students, courthouse staff, public, etc

Have 3 highlights ready that will intrigue each cohort

3. Enthusiasm!

Use your storytelling skills and make an emotional connection

Examples of Tour Menu Options

Legal Research

Designed for law students or researchers. Includes a walkthrough of databases, print collections, and research services.

Historical & Architectural

Highlights the library's founding, its historical artifacts, and architectural design. Great for civic groups or tourists.

Community Impact

Showcases how the library supports access to justice, community outreach, and DEI initiatives. Ideal for nonprofit or community organizations.

Behind-the-Scenes

Offers a glimpse into technical services, preservation efforts, and digitization projects. Ideal for other library professionals or archivists.

Kid-Friendly

Includes interactive stations, simplified language, and storytelling. Perfect for school visits or family outreach days.

The Power and Peril of Unfinished Work

Zeigarnik effect: incomplete, interrupted tasks are easier to recall

Strategies for dealing with open loops (unfinished tasks/projects)

- Make plans for unfinished work (stop the mental noise)
- Offloading info is important (get it out of your brain)
- Leave work at work
- Leverage the effect for creativity: intentional interruptions will allow your unconscious further develop ideas

“My bed is a magical place where I suddenly remember everything I was supposed to do.”



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

12 Techniques to Master Your Minutes

By Amy Gibson

1 Timeboxing
(n/t Marc Zao-Sanders)

8am - 11am	Deep Work
11am - 11:30am	Quick Tasks
11:30am - 12:30pm	Break
12:30pm - 2pm	High-Priority Tasks
2pm - 4pm	Collaboration Time

1. Divide the day into blocks of time.
2. Assign each block a specific task.
3. Do nothing else during that block.

3 2-Minute Rule
(n/t David Allen)

If a task takes less than 2 minutes, do it immediately.




5 1-3-5 Rule

When planning your day, pick:

- 1 Big Task
- 3 Medium Tasks
- 5 Small Tasks



7 Flowtime Technique
(n/t Zoë Read-Bivens)

Work until you lose focus (no set timer)

Take a short break (5-10 mins).



Note time spent (your natural flowtime).

Adjust future sessions to your flowtime.

9 Getting Things Done (GTD)
(n/t David Allen)



Capture → Clarify → Organize → Reflect → Engage

11 Eisenhower Matrix

Urgent, Important DO	✓	🕒	Not Urgent Important SCHEDULE
Urgent Not Important DELEGATE	👤	🗑️	Not Urgent Not Important DELETE

2 Pomodoro Technique
(n/t Francesco Cirillo)



1. Decide on a task.
2. Set timer (25 mins).
3. Stop when the timer goes off.
4. Take a 5-min break.

4 Kanban Board
(n/t Taiichi Ohno)

Categorize tasks visually to see progress.

To-Do	Working On	Completed

6 Eat the Frog
(n/t Brian Tracy)

Do your most challenging task first thing in the day.




8 80/20 Rule
(n/t Vilfredo Pareto)



Focus on the vital 20% = your focus. Eliminate or reduce the trivial 80%.

10 Warren Buffett's 25/5 Rule

1. List your top 25 goals or initiatives.
2. Prioritize them by importance.
3. Focus only on the top 5.
4. Ignore all the others entirely.

12 Task Batching
(n/t Cal Newport)

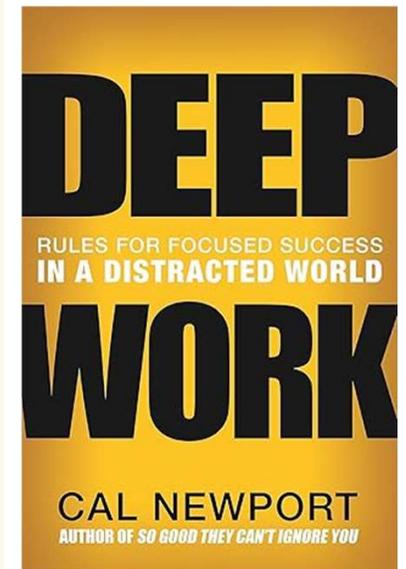
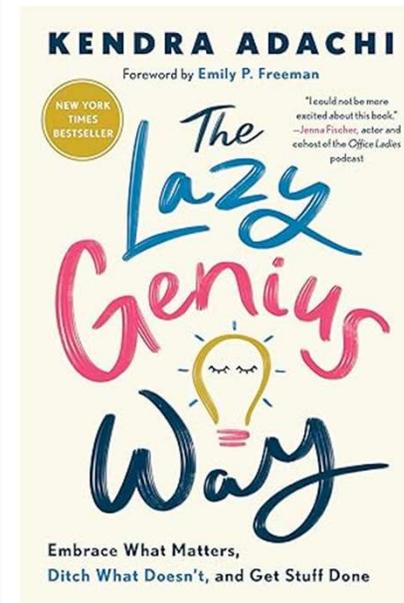
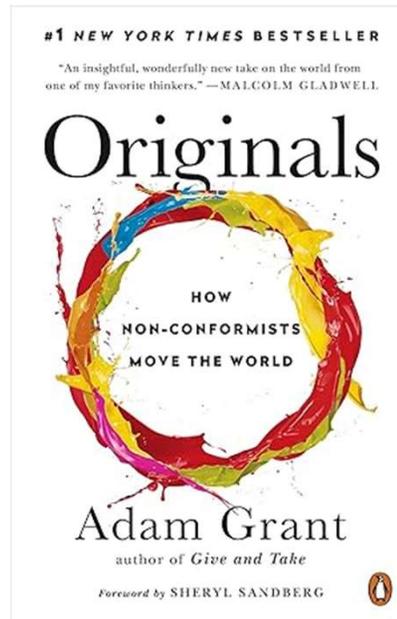
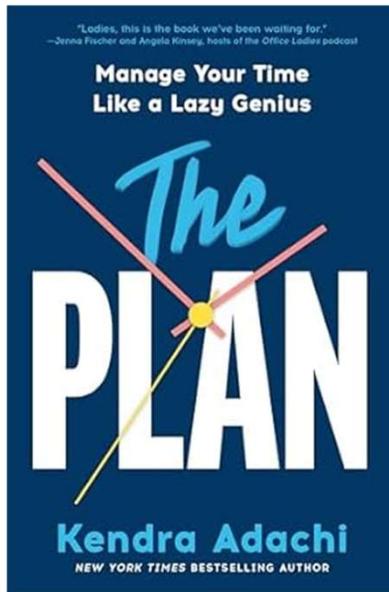


1. Group similar tasks.
2. Schedule them together.
3. Work on them in one session.

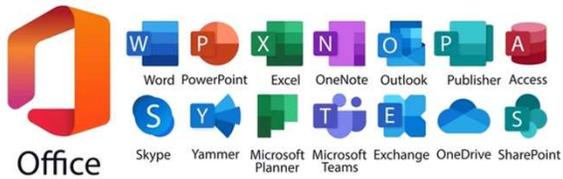
Book recommendations

Getting Things Done
the art of stress-free
productivity
from the New York Times bestselling author
David Allen

An all-new
updated
edition



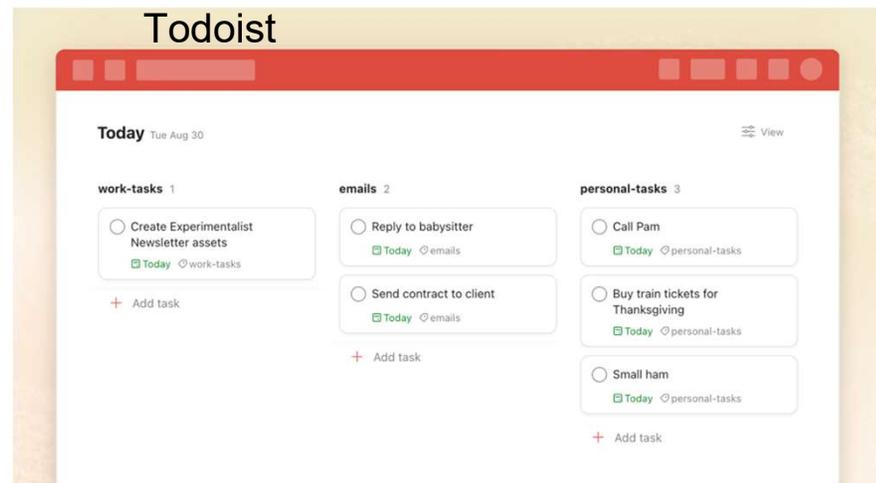
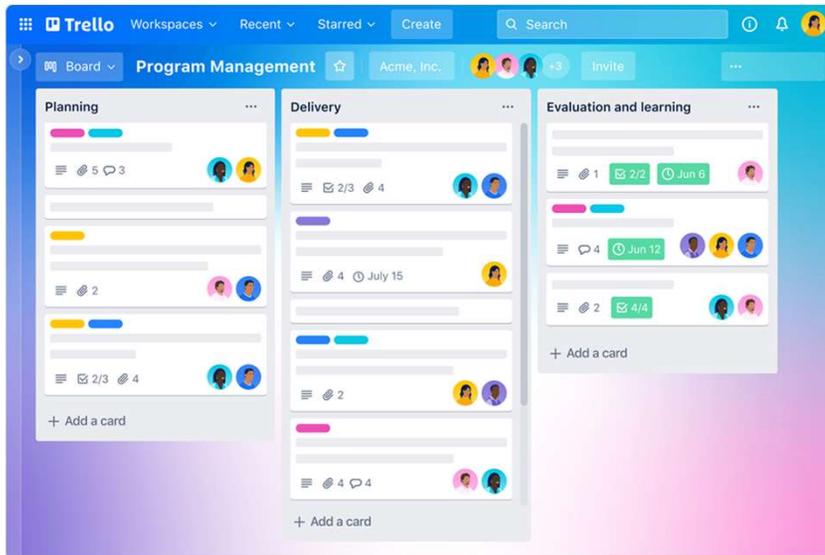
Tools & Apps: Project Management



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Use technology you already have!!



Tools & Apps: Focus



Are you *sure* you want to continue?

<https://www.reddit.com/>
is blocked by one of your rules

← Never mind! ↻ Not yet → Yes



Tools & Apps: Habit Tracking



Offscreen



Way of Life

Workplace Health Check-In

1. Desk Height
2. Screen Distance
3. Ergonomic chair
4. Lighting / brightness
5. Senses (white noise, music)
6. Plants
7. Water
8. Regular Breaks (stretch)
9. 20/20/20 eye rule
10. Unclutter screen



Disappointment #1

Hot Topics in Library Operations

Few takeaways:

1. If your team is too busy, develop FAQs and Libguides to relieve labour burden
2. Don't take cutbacks too well - show pain and impact
3. Find dead zones - repurpose and reactivate
4. When advocating for salary increases, use current job postings

Disappointment #2

Practical Application of AI in Library Functions

There were no demos, visuals, or notes—only rapid-fire tech recommendations that were impossible to transcribe!

Takeaway: visual learners need a “show me, don’t just tell me” approach!

Disappointment #2

Stepping Beyond Our Walls: Expanding Our Impact Through Public Library Partnerships

Session was cancelled and was one of only two sessions with Canadian speakers.

Upside: I have reached out to the speakers and got a copy of their presentation. There is an opportunity to have them do the session for their Ontario counterparts.

Please email me!

I can share more notes and presentations with you.

eo@plalawyers.ca

You can find the master list of presentations here:

(page 14 onward)

