## 2. The Importance Of The WBS – Key Points

The triple constraint is the most important principle in project management, describing the interdependent relationship between scope, schedule, and budget – the Project Manager's triangular steering wheel.

The most famous sentence in project management is: "Just like changing the side of a triangle, a change in any one of these constraints will cause a change in one or both of the others".

The most important constraint is the bottom one, scope, because the number one driver of project success is to get a complete definition of the project scope before you do anything else, since only then can you plan enough schedule and budget to get that work done.

The solution is to remember the mnemonic "Put your scope in ORDer" – Objective, Requirements, Deliverables.

The work breakdown structure (WBS) of the deliverables covers the requirements and objective, and captures *all* of the work needed to make the project happen.

"If it's in the work breakdown structure, it's in the scope of the project. If it's not in the work breakdown structure, it's not in the scope of the project". If you are going to spend time or money on anything, you need to have a deliverable on the WBS that captures that work.

There is a very simple process to define the WBS, by bringing the core project team together for multiple meetings to iteratively define it.

For almost any project, give the WBS process at least three meetings, one hour max, and ideally a day apart, to get something fairly good.

A really large project might need a dozen WBS creation meetings or more.

Long experience has shown that a graphical image is much more effective than a list to document the WBS, so we usually draw it up using any hierarchy drawing tool, most often the hierarchy tool in Microsoft PowerPoint.

When working on paper with a colocated team, always bring two copies of the latest WBS to the second and subsequent meetings, one to leave unmarked to look at, one to mark up however required for the next version.

When working on paper, always use a red pen for markups, since red makes the edits much easier to see when entering the updates.

When we are working "in the realm of complexity", which is the case when planning most projects we have not done before, it is important to accept there is no way to just suddenly get the answer with one immediate action. You need "the right process plus time", having the patience to iterate a best practice process in multiple meetings. This simple combination – the right process plus time – will solve problems of any size and complexity.

"Once you know the deliverables, everything in PM gets easy!" The deliverables are what you flowchart in your precedence diagram, they are what you estimate, they are what you schedule, they make up the critical path, they are what you monitor and control as you go through execution. *Always* take the time to baseline a good work breakdown structure before you do anything else in project planning.