

2 Key Project Management Tools to Use in Your Next Project



Projects fail for a lot of reasons. Some fail because of a lack of clarity on project objectives, others because of minimal sponsor or stakeholder engagement, and others because of overall poor communication. But if you've ever been responsible for a large-scale initiative or project, you know that failure can be detrimental to team morale, business objectives and your career.

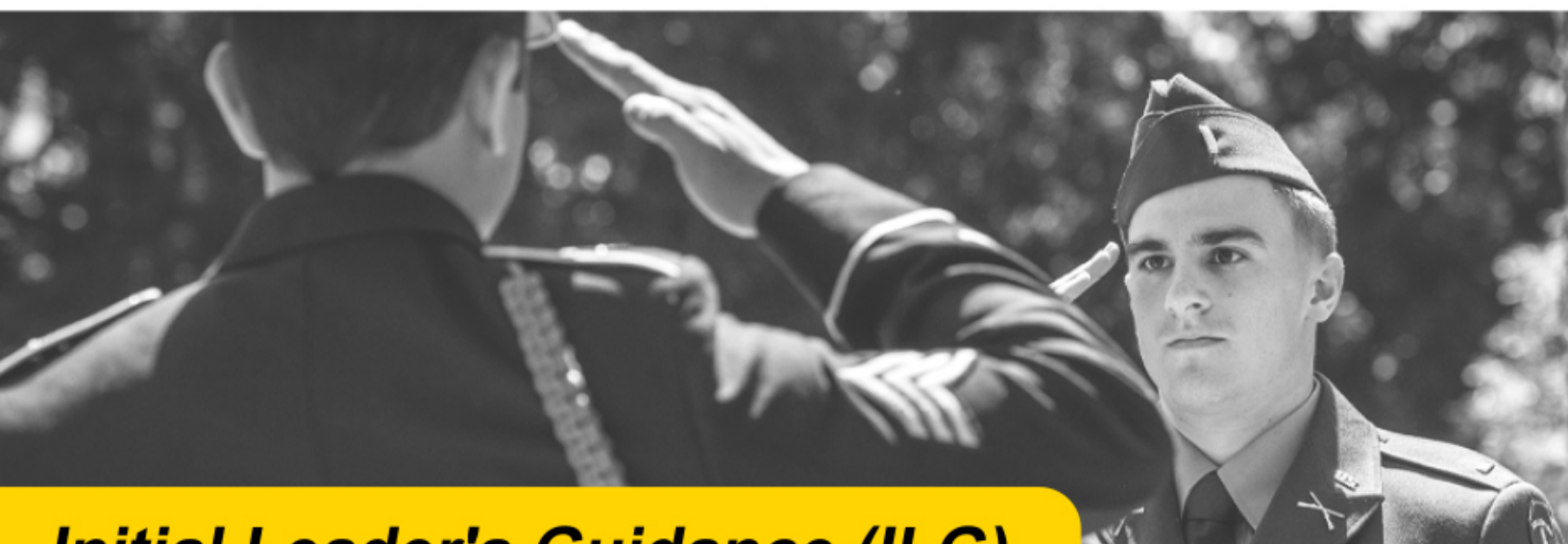
The good news is, these negative outcomes can be mitigated by ensuring that a common understanding exists at the start of the project. The best way to create alignment across all stakeholder groups is through an initial leader's guidance (ILG), and understanding the client's definition of success (CDS).

If you're a veteran or have a military background, some of these terms might seem familiar. Greencastle uses these two distinct tools to ensure projects are a success from day one.



Client's Definition of Success (CDS)

One of the most critical components of Greencastle's service delivery techniques. CDS is equivalent to "intent" and describes the desired outcome of a project. It includes intangibles outside of the stated scope of a statement of work or project charter.



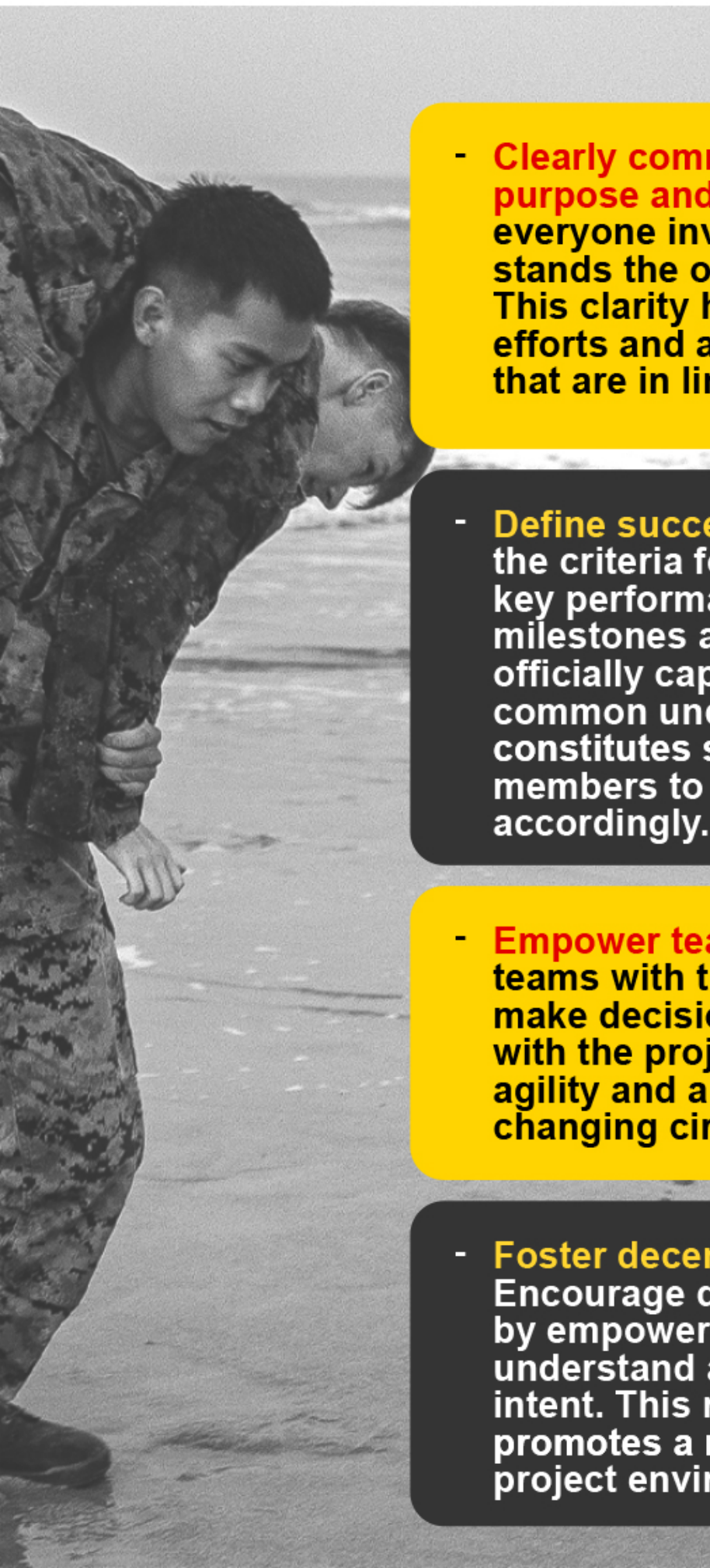
Initial Leader's Guidance (ILG)

Also known as a Leader's Project Analysis. The ILG assists the project sponsor in formalizing his/her concept for why the business is undertaking the project and in gaining further situational understanding. This enables the sponsor to influence initial project activities by providing clear and concise guidance to the project team, thus bridging the business idea and the project team's actions.

If you're still not sure how these concepts can help, read on as we explore how to apply both the initial leader's guidance and the client's definition of success to create buy-in and begin with the end in mind.

Client Definition of Success (CDS)

CDS is a concept derived from military strategy of “commander’s intent” that emphasizes clear communication of the overall goal and objectives of a mission. It provides a framework for decision-making and empowers individuals to take appropriate actions even in the absence of explicit orders. Here's how Greencastle leverages CDS:

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- A black and white photograph of two soldiers in camouflage uniforms. They are both looking down at the ground, possibly at a map or a specific point of interest. The soldier in the foreground is slightly to the left, and the one behind him is to the right. They are both wearing helmets and have serious expressions.
- **Clearly communicate the project's purpose and objectives:** Ensure that everyone involved in the project understands the overall purpose and objectives. This clarity helps align team members' efforts and allows them to make decisions that are in line with the project's intent.
 - **Define success criteria:** Clearly articulate the criteria for project success, including key performance indicators (KPIs), milestones and other success factors not officially captured. This provides a common understanding of what constitutes success and allows team members to focus their efforts accordingly.
 - **Empower teams with autonomy:** Provide teams with the authority and autonomy to make decisions and take actions that align with the project's intent. This promotes agility and allows for quick adaptation to changing circumstances.
 - **Foster decentralized decision-making:** Encourage decentralized decision-making by empowering individuals at all levels to understand and act upon the project's intent. This reduces bottlenecks and promotes a more agile and responsive project environment.

Initial Leader's Guidance (ILG)

ILG activities involve a systematic approach to analyzing and understanding complex situations. It helps leaders gain insights, identify risks, and make informed decisions. Greencastle use the ILG to:

- **Gather relevant data:** Collect and analyze relevant data related to the project, such business drivers for the project, limitations, constraints and key success factors. This data provides insights into potential risks and opportunities, enabling leaders to make informed decisions.
- **Conduct scenario planning:** Develop scenarios that explore various potential outcomes and their implications for the project. By considering multiple scenarios, leaders can anticipate challenges, devise contingency plans, and make better-informed decisions.
- **Perform risk assessments:** Identify and assess risks associated with the project, both internal and external. Evaluate the likelihood and impact of each risk and develop strategies to mitigate or respond to them effectively.
- **Foster a culture of learning:** Encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the organization. Promote open communication, feedback, and reflection on project outcomes to identify lessons learned and apply them to future projects.
- **Engage in critical thinking:** Encourage leaders and team members to engage in critical thinking and challenge assumptions. Foster an environment where diverse perspectives are valued, enabling robust analysis and innovative problem-solving.



The Value

The value of initial leader's guidance and the client's definition of success can't be underestimated in any project or endeavor. Leaders play a crucial role in guiding decision-making and setting the engagement approach for the team. By providing clear directives and outlining the preferred methods of collaboration, leaders ensure that the team members are aligned and working towards a common goal. This guidance helps streamline the decision-making process, avoiding confusion and conflict and ultimately leads to more efficient and effective outcomes.

Leaders are instrumental in defining the purpose and scope of the project. Their guidance helps team members understand the objectives, the desired outcomes, and the boundaries within which they can operate. This clarity is essential for project success, as it enables team members to align their efforts, prioritize tasks, and make informed decisions. By setting clear expectations and communicating the project's purpose and scope, leaders empower their teams to stay focused and motivated throughout the project's lifecycle.



Both client's definition of success and Initial leader's guidance plays a vital role in removing barriers to effective communication. Leaders create an environment where open and honest discussions are encouraged, enabling team members to share their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fear of judgment or reprisal. By fostering a culture of open communication, leaders promote collaboration, creativity, and innovation within the team. They provide a safe space for team members to express their perspectives, ask questions, and seek clarification, ultimately enhancing the quality of the project's outcomes.

In addition, leaders provide clarity on complex issues. Projects often involve intricate challenges and require the navigation of complex concepts. Leaders with expertise and experience in the domain can break down these complexities into understandable components, making it easier for team members to grasp and contribute effectively. Their guidance ensures that everyone has a comprehensive understanding of the project's intricacies, enabling them to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions.



***“ Leadership and learning are
indispensable to each other. ”***

- John F. Kennedy

The Process

The process of initial leader's guidance in project management involves several key steps that contribute to the success of the project:



- **Understand the Leader's Intent:** The leader establishes the purpose, key tasks, and desired end-state, and provides important project and organizational details. This sets the foundation and direction for the project, ensuring clarity and alignment among team members.

- **Get Initial Guidance:** The leader provides initial guidance to the team, outlining the project's scope, objectives, and expectations. This includes setting priorities, defining timelines, and assigning responsibilities. It serves as a roadmap for the team to follow throughout the project.

- **Outline the Client's Definition of Success:** We actively engage with the client to understand their definition of success. By listening to the client's needs, goals, and expectations, we incorporate their input into the project planning process. This helps ensure that the project outcomes align with the client's vision and objectives.



- **Enhance Client Engagement:** We make the client feel heard by actively listening to their concerns, ideas, and feedback. By valuing the client's input and involving them in decision-making processes, we foster a sense of collaboration and partnership. This enhances client satisfaction and strengthens the relationship between the client and the project team.



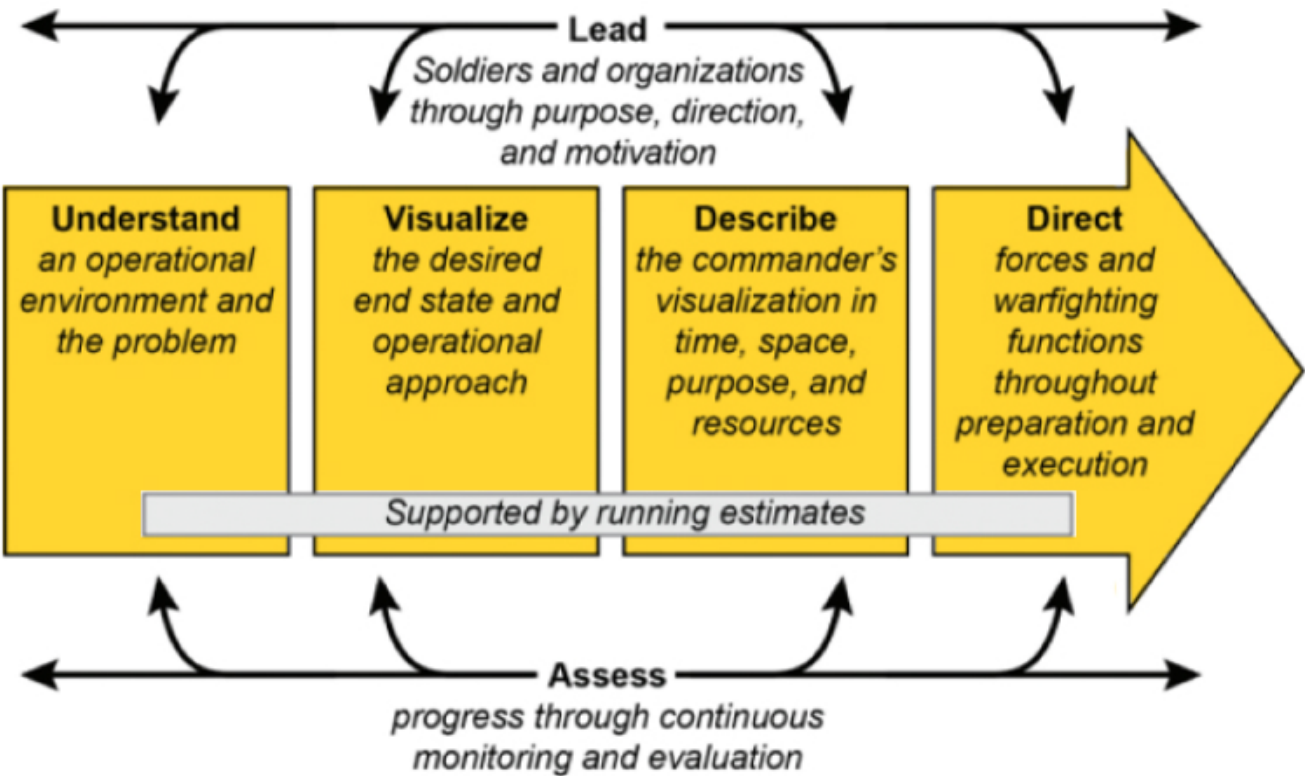
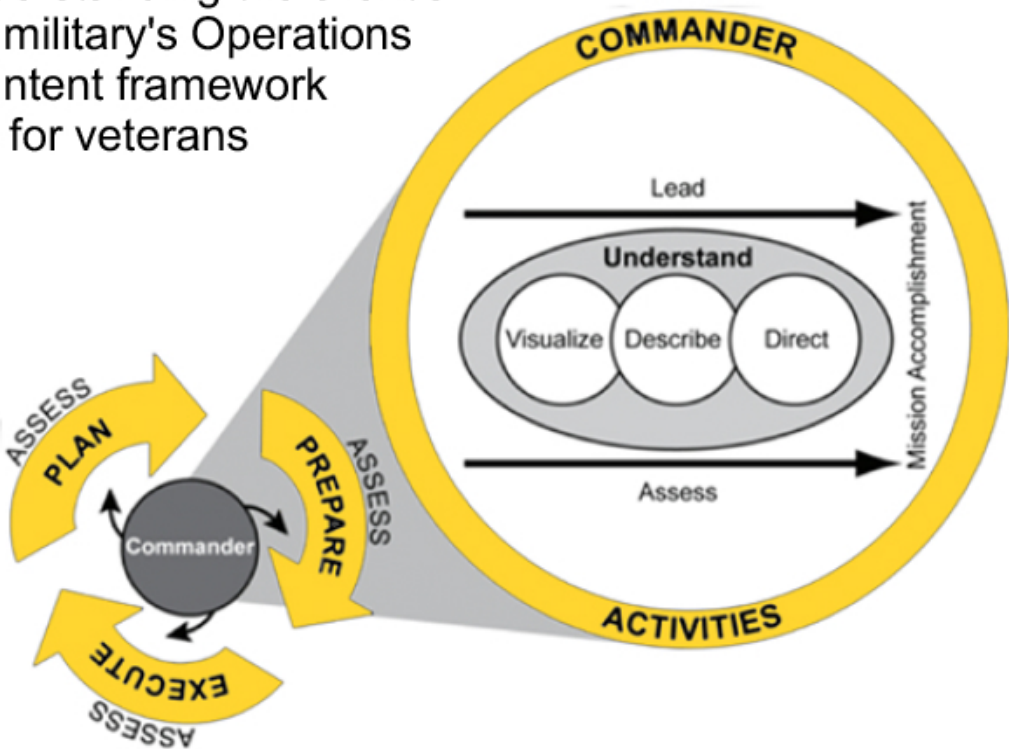
- **Create Situational Awareness:** Through effective communication and sharing of information, project managers promote better situational awareness among the team members. By providing comprehensive details about the project and the organization, we equip the team with the necessary knowledge to understand the project's context and potential challenges. This enables team members to make informed decisions and adapt to changing circumstances.

Why Military Experience Matters

Veterans bring valuable skills and experiences to the table when it comes to conducting initial leader's guidance and understanding the client's definition of success. The military's Operations Order and Commander's Intent framework provide a solid foundation for veterans to excel in these areas.

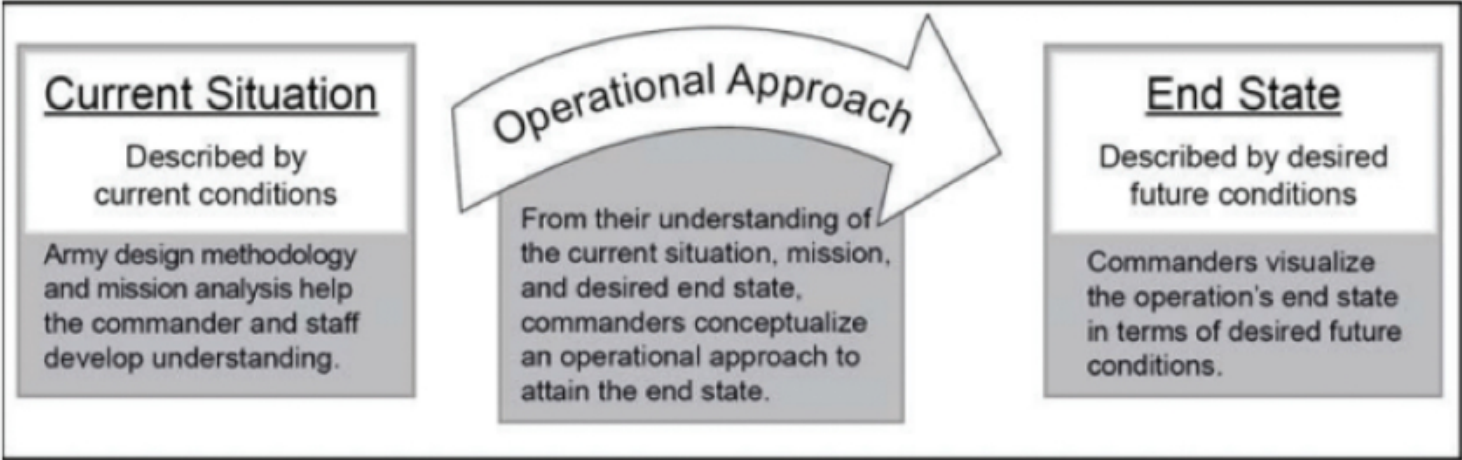
Veterans are well-versed in developing and executing plans, setting clear objectives, and providing concise guidance to their teams. This framework instills in veterans the ability to articulate the purpose, key tasks, and desired end-state, aligning the team towards a common goal. Their experience in formulating operational plans and strategies translates seamlessly into project management, enabling them to effectively guide teams through the initial stages of a project.

Not only that, but veterans are skilled in providing guidance on the conduct of operations. In the military, leaders are responsible for providing clear directives and guidelines to their subordinates, ensuring effective execution of tasks. This experience translates into the ability to provide initial guidance in project management, offering clear instructions, setting expectations, and establishing protocols for the team to follow. Veterans understand the importance of precise and effective communication, enabling them to articulate project objectives and ensure everyone is on the same page.





Additionally, veterans often bring a unique perspective and approach to the corporate world, leveraging their military experience for the benefit of organizations. They have been shaped by their experiences in the military, which often involve working in high-pressure environments, adapting to changing circumstances, and leading diverse teams.



These experiences foster traits like discipline, resilience, adaptability, and strong problem-solving skills. Veterans' ability to think strategically and make decisions under challenging conditions translates well into project management, allowing them to navigate complexities and overcome obstacles.



Greencastle Associates Consulting is a 100% veteran-owned and operated implementation consulting firm that tackles critical projects with a unique, military-precision approach. Founded by veterans in 1997, Greencastle provides metric-driven results to businesses looking to maximize growth. We are experts in change management, process improvement and project management. Using Implementation Management as the foundational approach to every project—we help our clients meet and exceed their definition of success. Our team is mission-focused, adaptable, and ready to get stuff done—all while saving you time and driving operational efficiencies.