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Lesson Proper for Week 2

Project Attributes

A project has distinctive attributes that distinguish it from ongoing work or business operations. Projects are temporary in nature. They are not an everyday business process and have definitive start dates and end dates. This characteristic is important because a large part of the project effort is dedicated to ensuring that the project is completed at the appointed time. To do this, schedules are created showing when tasks should begin and end. Projects can last minutes, hours, days, weeks, months or years.

Projects exist to bring about a product or service that hasn't existed before. In this sense, a project is unique. Unique means that this is new, this has never been done before. Maybe it's been done in a very similar fashion before but never exactly in this way.

Definition of Project

The Project Management Institute (PMI) defines a **project** as a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. The temporary nature of projects indicates a definite beginning and end. The end is reached when the project's objectives have been achieved or when the project is terminated because its objective will not or cannot be met, or when the need for the project no longer exists.

Project Characteristics

When considering whether or not you have a project on your hands, there are some things to keep in mind. First, is it a project or an ongoing operation? Second, if it is a project, who are the stakeholders? And third, what characteristics distinguish this endeavor as a project?



Projects have several characteristics:

- Projects are unique.
- Projects are temporary in nature and have a definite beginning and ending date.
- Projects are completed when the project goals are achieved or it's determined the project is no longer viable.

A successful project is one that meets or exceeds the expectations of the stakeholders.

The Process of Project Management

On any project, you will have a number of project constraints that are competing for your attention. They are cost, scope, quality, risk, resources and time.

- Cost is the budget approved for the project including all necessary expenses needed to deliver the project. Within organizations, project managers have to balance between not running out of money and not under spending because many projects received funds or grants that have contract clauses with a "use it or lose it" approach to project funds. Poorly executed budget plans can result in a last-minute rush to spend the allocated funds.
- Scope is what the project is trying to achieve. It entails all the work involved in delivering the project outcomes and the processes used to produce them. It is the reason and the purpose of the project.
- Quality is a combination of standards and criteria to which the project's products must be delivered for them to perform effectively. The product must perform to provide the functionality expected, solve the identified problem and deliver the benefit and value expected. Quality on a project is controlled through quality assurance (QA) which is the process of evaluating overall project performance on a regular basis to provide confidence that the project will satisfy the relevant quality standards.
- Risk is defined by potential external events that will have a negative impact on your project if they occur. Risk refers to the combination of the probability the event will occur and the impact on the project if the event occurs. If the combination of the probability of the occurrence and the impact on the project is too high, you should identify the potential event as a risk and put a proactive plan in place to manage the risk.
- Resources are required to carry out the project tasks. They can be people, equipment, facilities, funding or anything else capable of definition (usually other than labor) required for the completion of a project activity.
- Time is defined as the time to complete the project. Time is often the most frequent project oversight in developing projects. This is reflected in missed deadlines and incomplete deliverables. Proper control of the schedule requires the careful identification of tasks to be performed and accurate estimations of their durations, the sequence in which they are going to be done, and how people and other resources are to be allocated. Any schedule should take into account vacations and holidays.

Project Management Expertise



In order for you, as the project manager, to manage the competing project constraints and the project as a whole, there are some areas of expertise you should bring to the project team.

Areas of Expertise
Application knowledge, standards and regulations
Understanding the project environment
Management knowledge and skills
Interpersonal skills

Figure 1: Areas of expertise that a project manager should bring to the project team.

They are knowledge of the application area and the standards and regulations in your industry, understanding of the project environment, general management knowledge and skills and interpersonal skills. It should be noted that industry expertise is not in a certain field but the expertise to run the project.

Understanding the Project Environment

There are many factors that need to be understood within your project environment. At one level, you need to think in terms of the cultural and social environment (people, demographics, and education). The international and political environment is where you need to understand about different countries cultural influences. Then we move to the physical environment, here we think about time zones. Think about different countries and how differently your project will be executed whether it is just your country or if it involves an international project team that is distributed throughout the world in five different countries.

Project Environment	
Cultural	Social
International	Political
Physical	

Figure 2: The important factors to consider within the project environment



Of all the factors, the physical ones are the easiest to understand, and it is the cultural and international factors that are often misunderstood or ignored.

Management Knowledge and Skills

As the project manager, you have to rely on your project management knowledge and your general management skills. Here, we are thinking of items like your ability to plan the project, execute it properly, and of course control it and bring it to a successful conclusion, along with your ability to guide the project team to achieve project objectives and balance project constraints.

There is more to project management than just getting the work done. Inherent in the process of project management are the general project management skills that allow the project manager to complete the project with some level of efficiency and control. In some respects, managing a project is similar to running a business: there are risk and rewards, finance and accounting activities, human resources issues, time management, stress management, and a purpose for the project to exist. General management skills are needed in a project.

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