



COMP 4356 – Software Project Management

Chapter 2: Identifying and Selecting Projects

Assignment #1

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Case Study # 1 A Midsize Pharmaceutical Company

Read case #1

Case Questions

1. How should Jennifer go about making her decision?

First, Jennifer needs to immediately identify and deal with her own biases in each project. She's impatient with Julie, which, while apparently valid, can cloud judgment. Her own history goes against Tyler's position, so she needs to examine the real reasons behind her stance on the production layout and employee teams. Joe's appeal may have struck a similar chord when he brought up her father—she needs to understand and control that reaction. She's also against Jeff's department with the same sort of characteristic abstraction, and that needs to stop. In particular, she seems to be writing the system off as 'all right'. This is a meaningless position, and needs to be corrected. She may be correct in some or all cases, but she doesn't know that yet. Simultaneously, she needs to refocus all of her managers on the bigger picture, the good of the company. They can legitimately disagree on how to help, but if Joe is any indication, they're way too cutthroat for their own good. In tandem with that soul searching and discussion, Jennifer he needs to start leading the project selection process. It sound as if they haven't agreed upon what they actually want for the business, e.g. prioritizing faster sales, higher volume, more products, or faster/better customer service. Step two would then be to have the manager list out all the assumptions for each project. Once they've agreed on all their assumptions, which I think is an agreement they can come to, they should brainstorm research options. Some of that \$2 million should be allocated towards researching the projects' potentials as necessary. The penultimate step is then to have an open, positive discussion about all the research results. Check your biases at the door. Jennifer should use all of this input to make her final decision. This final call is her decision, and she takes the responsibility for it—but she also needs to make it clear that their input does matter. If there are people willing to tell Tyler that she'd dismiss his project based on her personal history, then she really needs to straighten this part out. This process is the only way to make an informed decision that preserves, or more accurately, builds the relationship among the CEO and managers

2. What kind of additional data or information should she collect?

Jennifer should focus on collecting information on cost and benefits of the project. Costs should include one-time and on-going expenses. She will also need data on timeframes and specific tasks

3. What exactly should Jennifer require the others to submit in the way of proposals?

Jennifer should require others to submit for each proposal the tasks to be performed, a schedule, the



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resources used, and the cost and expected benefits of the project

4. What do you think Jennifer should do with the \$2,000,000? In explaining your answer, address the concerns and positions of Julie, Tyler, Jeff, and Joe.

If I had to make this choice without more information, I would mothball Julie's project and put the money in the bank. It's not worth the risk to do any of them without finding out more. Making up my own research data, I would mothball Julie's project and ret ask the scientists but put them on 20% time. They're apparently pretty smart if they've managed to keep the wheels on this thing so long, but there's something about the structure of the R&D that doesn't smell right. They're beating their heads against the wall. 20% time is a great headache cure.

I wouldn't give Tyler much money yet. But I'd give him enough to empower employees to identify issues, and to fix small ones in-house. I think he does have a good point, but it's too early to jump. They should formally observe a least a full year of plant operations before deciding what to change. Maybe they can improve it, but with capital investments the last thing you want to do is get the improvement wrong.

I'm on board with Jeff if the data comes back strong. It's a pretty straightforward request, and should be provable. I'm a little thrown by the need to hire someone from outside, though, so I'm not convinced that the research is going to come back in his favor. If it does though—they have the sales volume to warrant it, would retain more clients, would get fewer customer complaints—let's do it.

I'd wait on Joe. (Also, I might give him a pretty stern talking to about management ethics, but that's another story.) They don't seem like their treading water just yet if they pulled in \$2 million extra last year by surprise. (How did they do that anyway? They should look into that.) They're on a growth spurt it seems, and product growth will help there, hopefully between the 20% time and the service upgrades. Keep an eye on it though. If they can drive costs down or increase their product line enough to saturate their sales base, by all means, take the money. It'll be in the bank waiting, at least for now.

Case Study # 2 Transportation Improvements

Read case #2

Case Questions

1. What criteria should Zachary use to evaluate the projects?

Various options can be used as discussed in the chapter. The criteria should be defined in advance of evaluating the projects

2. What assumptions should he make?

Zachary has to make assumptions regarding the safety to the entrance outside of Big

John's superstore; it is off of a two-lane high-way at the base of the hill which makes it very difficult and dangerous for the cars who turn left into the store and those who are pulling out of the parking lot. Also, the need to widen and repair Elk Mountain Road, and the condition of the County Route and the bridge.



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3. **What data and information should he gather and how should he go about gathering the data**
Surveys and various types of research methods could be used to gather data related to the assumptions made

4. **After he has evaluated each project against the evaluation criteria, how should he decide the priority of the three projects?**

Safety is more important. Which does he believe will be more of a danger?