Team structure problems

Problem	Possible causes	Potential impact	Recommended action
• Your team lacks necessary skills.	• You overlooked certain skill requirements during planning. • You discovered a need for new skills in the midst of the project.	• The project doesn't move forward as fast as it should, or it stalls.	• Arrange for a team member to be trained in the skills needed. • Hire outside consultants or contractors who have the skills.
Problem	Possible causes	Potential impact	Recommended action
• A team member leaves.	• This could happen for many reasons, ranging from sudden illness to departure from the organization.	• Severity depends on the skills and knowledge lost: • If you can easily redistribute the work or hire someone with the same expertise, the impact may be slight. • If not, the loss could create a crisis.	• Have backup team members at the ready. • Cross-train people so they can fill in for one another. • Make one person's departure an opportunity to bring an even more skilled team member on board.

Interpersonal problems

Problem	Possible causes	Potential impact	Recommended action
• Team members are *too* friendly.	• They spend excessive amounts of time chatting or discussing personal problems.	• Overall productivity decreases. • Time is wasted, and the project slows down. • Hard-working team members resent those who work less efficiently.	• Emphasize that social gatherings need to be planned for after work. • Reorganize team subgroups to disrupt cliques.

Problem	Possible causes	Potential impact	Recommended action
• Conflicts exist within the team.	• People have a hard time reconciling different personalities, working styles, or areas of expertise.	• The schedule, quality of work, overall productivity, and team cohesiveness could all suffer.	• Focus team members on the project's goals, not on personal feelings. • Separate the underlying causes from the surface disturbances, so you can solve problems at the root. • Propose solutions, not blame.

(continued)

Productivity problems (continued)

Problem	Possible causes	Potential impact	Recommended action
• Time is spent on the wrong tasks.	• People manage their time poorly. • A team member prefers some tasks over others, regardless of relative importance. • You've sent the wrong message about priorities.	• Work on critical tasks is delayed. • The overall project is delayed.	• Clarify which tasks are most important. • Assign tasks to pairs of team members to work on together so they can keep each other in check. • Provide resources to help members improve time management skills.
• The quality of the work is poor.	• A team member misunderstands the requirements of the job. • Different people measure the work by different standards. • Someone doesn't have adequate skills to complete a task.	• Work must be redone, costing money and time. • The project fails.	• Be clear from the start about quality expectations and standards of measure. • Develop an action plan for improving the quality of the team member's work. • Provide training and support to develop skills.