Fundamentals of Project management: The Role of the Project Manager

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Introduction

- The role of project managers seems to be very misunderstood throughout the world.

  - Because many **project managers arrive at their position as a natural progression** from their jobs as engineers, programmers, scientists, etc.. **This simply isn't true.**

- The primary responsibility of the project manager is to ensure that **all work is completed on time, within budget and scope, and at the correct performance level**.

- The primary role is **to manage the project, not do the work** !

Introduction

- Project managers must
  - understand the mission and vision of the organization
  - see how the project they are managing meshes with the organization's mission,
  - pilot the project to ensure that the interests of the organization are met.

Project Manager Role: It's about people !

- The job is **not** a technical job.

- It is about getting people to **perform** work that must be done to **meet** the objectives of the project.

- Most managers know more about getting performance from computers, machines, and money **than** they do about getting people to perform.

  - The first skills that a project manager needs are people skills.

- Many project managers who have strong technical backgrounds find it difficult to deal with people effectively. **They are "things oriented" not "people oriented" !**

The Working Project Manager

- Sometimes, the project manager is indeed responsible for performing technical work, in addition to managing the job.

- The problem with this is that when there is a conflict between managing and doing work—and there always is such a conflict—the work will take priority and the managing will be neglected.

- **This is a double bind that should not exist !**

Authority

- The universal complaint from project managers is that they have a lot of responsibility but no authority. **It is true, and it is not likely to change**.

- However, you can't delegate responsibility without giving a person the authority matching with the responsibility you want him to take.

  - So, while the project manager's authority might be limited, it cannot be zero.

- The manager is an **enabler** of employees. They are actually servants of employees, not their masters.

- Since you have very little authority anyway, consider that your job is to ensure that everyone in the project team has what he needs to do his job well.

  - **If you do, then most of your team will perform at appropriate levels.**

Do You Want to Be a Project Manager?

- Project management is **not** for everyone.

- If **you can deal with people**, you can either learn to do everything else or delegate it to someone who can do it.

- But being able to do everything else **without** being good at dealing with people just won't cut it.

- Now the question is, do you really want to be a project manager? Do you like having responsibility with very limited authority? Do you enjoy working to impossible deadlines, with limited resources and unforgiving stakeholders?

Leadership and Management

- Leadership is the art of getting others to want to do something that you believe should be done."
  - **The operative word in the definition is "want."**

- Clearly, a project manager needs to exercise leadership, since he **lacks** authority.

- The **leader** can get people to **perform** without having to closely supervise them.
  - However, a project manager must also exercise management skills.

- The two sets of skills must be integrated into the job of project management because management deals with the administrated aspects of the job—budgets, schedules, logistics, and so on—while **leadership gets people to perform at optimum levels**.

Main Characteristics

- The five main characteristics of an effective project manager :
  - Credibility
  - Creativity as a problem solver
  - Tolerance for ambiguity
  - Flexibility in management style
  - Effectiveness in communicating