Case Study: Problems with Multitasking

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The situation presented is that of a financial institution in the eastern part of the United States that has been working on a project for some time and is encountering numerous issues. Those issues include falling behind of the set timelines and possibly going over budget. These issues are so bad that a consulting firm was hired to basically fix these issues and get everything back on track.

As part of fixing the issues, the consulting firm got to the root cause of the issues. This root cause was that resource requirements were not adequately identified nor scheduled. This caused the team members to work on multiple projects at the same time, also known as multitasking (Pinto, J. K. 2018).

**Multitasking an issue**

So, why was multitasking an issue? To answer that, multitasking needs to be defined. Basically, multitasking is nothing more than two or more things at the same time (Deeb, n.d.). The reason that this became an issue is because all the team members had other projects they were working on in addition to the project in the scenario. This means that they had to split their time among all their projects, some being seen as more important than this one. Being able to multitask is seen as desirable, the problem is that it decreases employee productivity by 40%.

Switching from one task to another before completion can contribute to confusion because it takes time to fully get the mind engaged in the new project (Deeb, n.d.). It is during this time frame where mistakes can be made and any issues that arise may not be properly addressed.

**Project Contamination**

Going back to the scenario, as stated earlier, all the members were engaged in multiple projects at the same time, this resulted in them being overworked. This caused the employees to experience unnecessary stress and anxiety. The result of the stress and anxiety was that the employees productivity decreased which resulted in their morale decreasing (Deeb, n.d.).

**Decoupling**

The people leading this project set an ambitious schedule without taking the team members availability into account. This effectively caused the team members to decouple their time among their multiple projects. This made it impossible to accurately frame a realistic timeline

**Eliminating Multitasking**

Is it possible to eliminate multitasking? The answer to this is not really. The reason for that is being able to multitask gives the appearance of being able to accomplish more however, as shown above, that is not the case. There are things that can be implemented that can mitigate the negative effects of multitasking. One of those things is to eliminate distractions. This means that while an employee is working on project x, that is the only thing they are dealing with. Any communication regarding their other projects is basically ignored until they get to that project (Deeb, n.d.). Something else that can mitigate the negative effects of multitasking is ensuring there is an open line of communication. Encouraging the team members to speak up when they start to feel overwhelmed is a good way to lessen the stress and anxiety and will have a positive effect on productivity and morale.

# References

Deeb, C. (n.d.). *Multitasking Effects on a Worker's Performance*. Retrieved from Chron: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/multitasking-effects-workers-performance-32339.html>

Pinto, J. K. (2018). Project Management: Achieving Competitive Advantage (5th Edition). Pearson Education (US). <https://ecpi.vitalsource.com/books/9780134730509>