

IT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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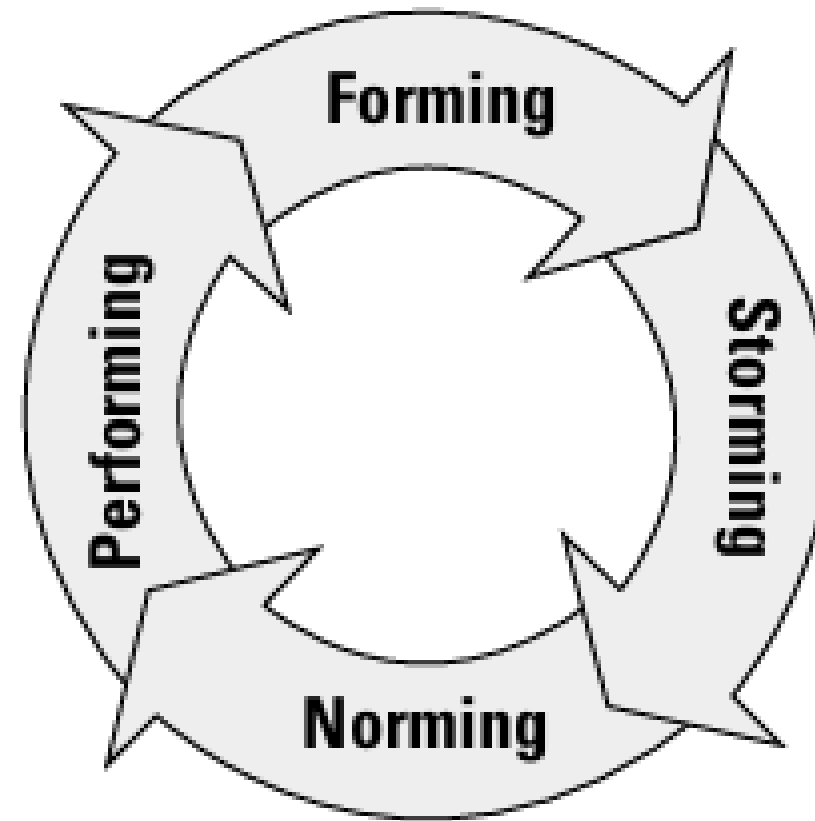
Working with Project People

Understanding the life cycle of a typical project team

- Forming. At the beginning, team members gather and introduce themselves. It's the "Hi, how are you?" phase of project team development. Everyone is polite, cordial.
- Storming. Heated discussions, disagreements, and struggle for team leadership occur in this phase. Storming is the phase of the project when someone on the project team is going to take charge.
- Norming. In this stage, things settle down. Team members have gotten to know each other and start to deal more with issues on the project than with issues with other team members. You may still notice tension in the air, but for the most part, folks have accepted their roles on the project team

Understanding the life cycle of a typical project team

- Performing. Forget the power struggles and politics — we've got to get this project done! In this stage, performing is the primary goal. The project team members have accepted their roles and are working hard to meet goals and deadlines.



Making a team out of a group of people

The transition from individual to team member rarely occurs at the same time for any two people. It is, however, often accompanied by several things:

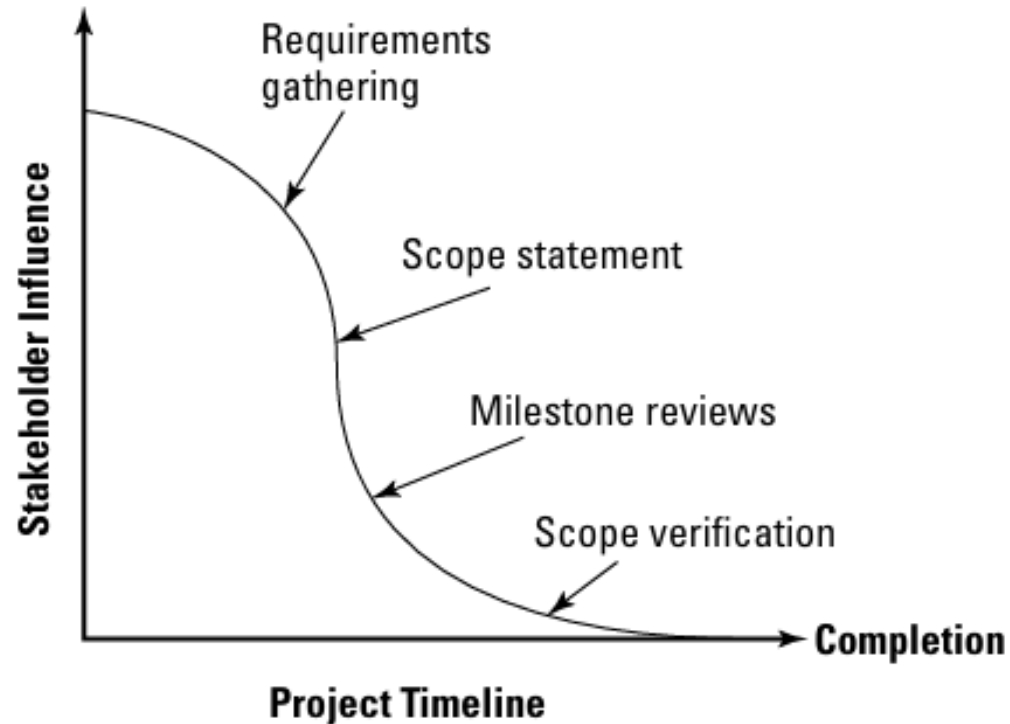
- A belief that everyone is working toward a common goal.
- A feeling that the goal everyone is working toward is worthwhile.
- The creation of trust among members of the team. The members feel as if it is okay to speak out and be noticed.
- An acceptance of responsibility. Members realize that if the goal (to complete the project) is to be accomplished, everyone must contribute

Doing Some Fun Team-Building Exercises

- When many think of team building, they think of making a fool of themselves in some torturous exercise that doesn't seem to really have anything to do with the task at hand.
- Here's a list of just a few popular team-building exercises:
 - Golfing or putt-putt
 - Bowling
 - Geocaching (going on a geographically oriented treasure hunt)
 - Outdoor rope courses (Check out *The Power of Team Building: Using Rope Techniques* by Harrison Snow, published by Wiley)
 - Paintball
 - Hide-and-go-seek

Managing Project Conflicts

Dealing with stakeholders



- If the stakeholder is correct, don't be afraid to say so.
- If the stakeholder is wrong, say so. Delicacy is paramount — there are many ways of letting people know that they are wrong, but few are as successful as education (and avoiding use of the phrase “you’re wrong”).
- Few issues are truly black and white, which means that using phrases like “you’re wrong” or “I’m right” just serve to create unnecessary contention

Dealing with project team members

- Although firing difficult members of your team is an approach that has been employed by many a manager, it is the wrong tactic to take.
- Some experts in project management advocate moving team members to various teams over time. As the members become more comfortable with each other, they tend to disagree less often, so mixing up the dynamics by adding new members can be beneficial.

Here are some conflict resolution dos and don'ts to consider when you have this meeting.

- Do make sure to address each concern that was expressed to you.
- Don't let things get emotional. Let the parties cool down, and don't let them rehash the issue in this meeting.
- Do clearly state the reason why you elected to go with the solution that you did.
- Don't let the parties walk out of your office before you tell them that you understand that they may not be pleased with the decision. Reiterate that it's the best decision and that they need to accept it for now.
- Do make sure that the parties understand that they need to let things get back to work.
- Do make certain that the team members leave knowing that when another conflict comes up, you will listen to it openly and objectively and make the right decision again.

Using Your Super Magic Project Manager Powers

Forcing a decision

- As much as we all love democracy, there are times when someone just must decide. You are that someone.

The following discourse shows you what we mean:

Team member 1: *Before we go any further, we need to test this part of the software on every Linux platform currently shipping and make sure that there are no issues.*

Team member 2: *We have tested it on three Linux platforms already! Those are the ones that most corporations are using. We've found no issues, and as long as they are using the same kernel, the software should run the same on every implementation.*

Team member 1: *We can't afford to wait until the project is finished to find that it doesn't work on every version. We need to find and identify the problems now.*

Team member 2: *If we do that with every single module as it is developed, that will slow us down and we'll never make the dates.*

Project manager: *I can understand what you're saying. We can't afford for the final build to not run everywhere, but we are a long way from that. Let's check each module, as it is finished, on three versions and alternate those versions — always using two of the most popular ones. That way we stand a good chance of catching issues early on and adapting to them. Now, about the interface. . . .*

Relying on expert power

- One rule of life is that expert opinions have more weight than others. You may not realize it, but you have expert power because you have valuable experience and knowledge to make sound decisions.

Team member 1: *I think we're crazy if we don't stop and check every module on every platform. Unless we are doing that, there is no guarantee that the final product will run without error for every customer.*

Team member 2: *We don't have the time or manpower to check every module in that way. A better solution is to just wait and check the final product on every machine.*

Team member 1: *I'm not about to go along with that! If it doesn't work, we wasted all of this time creating nothing.*

Project manager: *When I taught at MIT, we recommended checking each module on a few platforms. I used that method when I developed the DST and it worked well. Let's go with that — it's worked for me over and over in my experience.*

Using coercive power

- Usually, coercion is defined as compelling a person to act by employing a threat.

One of the most feared threats for employees today involves the performance improvement plan (PIP). Contrary to the name, it's not really viewed as a map for improving employee performance as much as it is viewed as a means of documenting any weaknesses in the worker's performance and sending a message that termination is a distinct possibility. Consider the following exchange:

Project manager: *Evan, I understand that you haven't been finishing your assignments on time.*

Team member 1: *That's not my fault. I didn't get the software I needed from Kristin until Thursday. When I got it, it didn't work right and I had to basically redo everything she did.*

Project manager: *You got it on Thursday, but when did you request it from her?*

Team member 1: *Thursday.*

Project manager: *Don't you think you should have requested it sooner? Isn't this pretty much the same thing that happened with the last project, and the one before it, as well?*

Team member 1: *I had to spend all my time redoing what should have been done in the first place.*

Project manager: *That is not your assignment, is it? If anything that reaches you is not ready, you need to bring that to my attention. I don't see any record of you ever documenting any changes you've made to the stub files. Can you show me what you did?*

Team member 1: *I didn't write down the changes.*

Project manager: *Did you save them?*

Team member 1: *No. I just did what I needed to do; then I started in on my part of it.*

Project manager: *Again, this isn't the first time this has happened, is it?*

Team member 1: *No.*

Project manager: *Do you know what your deadline is for turning over the next phase?*

Team member 1: *This Friday.*

Project manager: *Are you going to make that?*

Team member 1: *I am going to try.*

Project manager: *I need you to do more than try. I need you to make that date or else the whole project might slip. I've started working on a performance improvement plan. I don't want to go that way, but if you don't make it by Friday, you're going to be in here looking that over. Do you understand what that means?*

Team member 1: *Yes, but . . .*

Project manager: *Let's talk about the "but" on Friday. I want you to get out there and start working on that module.*

Theories of human resources

- Herzberg's Theory of Motivation.
- McGregor's Theory X and Y.
- Ouchi's Theory Z.
- Halo Effect.
- Expectancy Theory.