ITT Project management

Defining projects

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IT Technology

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1.   Introduction

This document describes the basic requirements and considerations needed, when defining projects on the IT technology education.

Most of this document is copied and translated from Danish material provided by Carsten Buhr Langelykke (cabl@tietgen.dk)

2.   Why do this?

Defining a project properly helps identify who, what, how and why. It provides a good framework for what to consider, and will help expose potential issues as well as potential helpful stakeholders.

Purposeless projects usually result in poor projects with no real benefit to anyone. Considering why a project is made (even small projects) and identifying key stakeholders and the value of the project to these stakeholders, will help form the project into something useful – usually with the added bonus of higher quality, greater motivation and increased learning.

3.   Points of consideration

These point may be used directly as sections in the project description document.

3.1. Background

A short and specific description of why this project is necessary. This is the project context and should include relevant information about related projects (past or present) also.

3.2. Purpose

Describe the projects overall purpose and goal. This is a description of the "contributions" and how the project will fulfill specific needs. This could be a description of the capabilities and knowledge that will be gained and by whom.

3.3. Goals

The overall goal of the project as described above, is decomposed into smaller manageable goals. Each distinct part of the project will contribute to achieving the overall goals.

For each part of the system, milestones are defined. Milestones are specific in which results that will be achieved. This will be a precise list of the projects contributions.

The results may be described as formal requirements to the resulting system. These will always be concrete and verifiable outcomes.

3.4. Schedule

The expected start and end dates of the project, and suggestions for deadlines for all milestones in the project.

For the project definition, the numerous and specific subtasks for each milestone is not important. If available, a tentative project plan with dates, tasks and such as produced by, e.g. MS Project, could be attached as appendix and referenced here.

3.5. Organization

Considerations about the organization of the project may includes

- Identification of the steering committee

- Identification of project manager(s)

- Composition of the project group(s)

- Identification of external resource persons or groups

For each of the identified groups and people, their tasks must be specified and their role in the project must be clear. This could be done in relation to the goals of the project.

3.6. Budget and resources

Based on the goals, schedule and organization, an estimate of the costs of the project is calculated.

This will include rough calculations on salaries, renting, buying and other expenses expected in the project.

3.7. Risk assessment

The risks involved in the project is evaluated, and the major issues will be listed. The plan will include the actions taken as part of the project design to handle the risk or the actions planned should a given risk materialize.

3.8. Stakeholders

An analysis of the stakeholder is conducted to establish who has an interest in the project. There will be multiple stakeholders with diverse interests in the project.

Possible stakeholders

- Internal vs. external

- Positive vs. negative

- Active vs. passive

A strategy could be planned on how to handle each stakeholder and how to handle stakeholders different (and/or conflicting) interests and priorities.

This could also include actions designed to transform a person or a group into a (positive) stakeholder, or increase the value of the project for a given stakeholder.

3.9. Perspectives

This include consideration on how the project will affect daily operation in the company or the maintenance aspect of the system built in the project.

Other perspectives could be organizational, increase knowledge and future possibilities enabled by the project.

3.10.   Evaluation and communication

Evaluation is about how to gauge is the project was successful. This includes both the process and the end result. Both of which may have consequences on future projects.

The will be some documentation needed at the end (or during) the project, e.g. external funding will require some sort of reporting after the project has finished. This must be described.

The stakeholders may have some requirements or requests as to what reports or other output is published or used. Some part of the project may be confidential.

3.11.   References

Include any relevant references to legal documents, literature, books, home pages or other material that is relevant for the reader.