

Mini-Case Study: Project Management at Global Green Books Publishing

Global Green Books Publishing was started two years ago by two friends, Jim King and Brad Mount, who met in college while studying in Philadelphia, USA. In the new business Jim focused on editing, sales and marketing while Brad Mount did the electronic assembly and publishing of books for Global Green Books. Their business was successful and profitable in the first two years, largely due to contracts from two big businesses.

In their third year they got very busy thanks to their third major customer, a local college that needed customized eBooks. They hired several part time employees to help them with their publishing business.

But by the end of third year of operation, Global Green Books started experiencing critical problems. They were:

- unable to leverage all the new employees effectively
- unable to deliver eBooks to their customers on schedule
- unable to provide quality texts—time and money was being spent fixing defects in their products
- unable to control costs—their business was not profitable in the third year.

Global Green Books saw a significant rise in issues, a lot of unpleasant “surprises” were cropping up; business was down as new resources were hired, also some of the projects were poorly estimated. The local university was unhappy as their eBook products reached campus late for use by professors and student. In some cases, the books were a week or two late. Since the courses must start on schedule and students need their books at the beginning of their courses, the new lucrative college customer was unhappy.

One of the new part-time employees hired by Jim and Brad, Samantha, had taken a project management course at college. Samantha was excited about the discipline of project management and had intentionally selected a job with Global Green Books Publishing as she saw an opportunity to polish her project management skills.

One fine day, Jim invited Samantha, for a lunch meeting. He was aware that Samantha was familiar with project management, and wanted to hear what she had to say about the problems he and Brad were facing. Over lunch he questioned why their small business which had operated and implemented projects so successfully over the first two years was being challenged significantly now. He specifically listed the problems they were facing and asked for input to solve them.

Samantha asked for more time to research all the issues but noted that Global Green Books, while being innovative, completed projects without a roadmap or a project plan and lacked a disciplined approach to project management. She noted that Jim and Brad did not use any project software for scheduling and they did not use tools or techniques to estimate, budget or to communicate with stakeholders. Finally, they had no processes in place to manage project risks and quality.

Impressed with this and other conversations, Jim King asked Samantha if she would consider joining them as a project associate or project manager on a full-time basis to help them introduce project management practices and help them tide over their current crisis.

Samantha accepted the offer! She has several key skills—she is an excellent communicator with very good interpersonal skills and detail-oriented. Within the first three months in her new role as PM, she introduced formal project management processes, created a PM manual and trained the employees to get the work done well.

Within nine months Samantha had fully turned things around. Due to proactive risk analysis and risk response planning, surprises and issues reduced. Communication with stakeholders was enhanced.

Brad and Jim noted that the company was delivering projects on schedule, the quality processes worked—and customers were happy with the products!

Comment on the following aspects of the case study:

- a) Why did Global Green Books Publishing struggle?
- b) What were the specific PM solutions that were introduced by Samantha that worked?
- c) What kind of suggestions would you give to Brad and Jim if you were the PM?
- d) Are you aware of other similar start-up businesses that struggle in a similar manner? How did they overcome the challenges?
- e) Global Green Books Publishing is a technology intensive business, but Samantha is not technically knowledgeable, will she continue to be a successful project manager?