

Lessons Learnt

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The Project Management Class was quite a learning experience. It certainly helped me to think differently and helped me to view the way project management is done in a much broader way. I have created a compilation of project management activities that I will be approaching at

a different angle based on the learnings and knowledge gained in this class.

1) Project Planning, Estimation and Tracking :

Project planning and tracking was the most important learning experience out of all the project activities. For every new project, I will be creating a proper Work Breakdown Structure and assign each work package into the project schedule using MS Project. I have learnt two important estimation techniques throughout this course, I will be using Top Down Estimation to get ball parked pricing and for accurate cost estimation I would implement the Bottom Up Estimation. The assignments had rigorously brought into me always on the foot for Project Tracking. I had greatly learnt on how to stay on budget and also increase cost effectiveness. Perhaps there are employees with high hourly rates working on low-value tasks or the overall cost of the employees on the project outweighs the allotted budget. All these can only be tracked through effective tracking of the project and helps in bringing effective resource usage. I will keep a tighter tracking for the most nearest milestones, because cost savings or early project completion isn't done all of a sudden but is much about cumulative smaller savings in each step.

2) Project Risk Management:

The importance of Project Risk Management is unparalleled. If risks are undocumented then there is substantial probability of facing more issues in the project. Auditing the project through Risk Management was a big lesson that I had learnt. Although the PMI book had several knowledge on how to achieve better risk management and become a better Project Manager, the most important lesson I have learnt was the importance of brainstorming with project team members during risk identifications. Another important lesson that has gripped me a lot is the importance of a cross diversity team. During risk management planning, I will try to bring

the whole project team onboard or at least make sure every representative of certain groups is present. When brainstorming sessions are done with the project team, so many new fields are ventured upon. If the project team consists of a varied diversity, you will be surprised on how diverse teams are able to look at the problem from so many different angles. Having a risk management plan in place allows a Project manager to be proactive and take steps to mitigate possible harms before they arise. The project team can take the risks that have been identified and convert them to actionable steps that will reduce likelihood. And if a risk turned out to be an issue then the contingency plans can kick in. I will prioritise more on the risks that are nearest to the closest milestones.

3) Identifying Stakeholders and Project Communication Management:

This class taught about how to identify various levels of stakeholders and how to have an effective communication plan to each stakeholder. I have learnt how to divide stakeholders between criteria of levels of interest and influence each stakeholder has on the project. On the next project management tasks, I would be more proactive in early identification of stakeholders and especially differentiating the key stakeholders. It's highly likely that there will be key stakeholders that are supporters, neutral or even be non supportive. I can increase the success of my next projects by making sure the supporters don't turn their back away, try to gain support from neutral key stakeholders for better buy-in.

Finally the Art of Project Management can't be achieved without laying down a proper Project Communication Plan. One of the best lessons that I have learnt is that the Communication Plan changes with every different project major milestones. I will be relooking on the communication plan based on the project tracking, whenever I notice a very slow communication process since which seemed to work well in

that the start of the project is taking much longer midway, and needs re-changing the CMP.

4) Outlining the scope of the project and Change Management Plan:

I have understood how project creeps can severely affect the success of the project. I will firsthand get all the required objectives, expected deliverables and the scope documented properly in the statement of work and project charter. After a well agreed project charter, any requests to changes will be met up with a change management plan. CMP can be customised to be tighter or relaxed based on the how much uncertainty the project deals with and the amount of budget and resources available. One of the best lesson that I have learnt is how important it is to document change requests and going through a CMP, since accepting any undocumented client requests can though increase customer satisfaction but in the end serves up to added pressures and expectations out of the project team and all this is expected on the old end date.

5) Developing a hierarchy and chain of commands:

A RACI chart is a matrix of all the activities or decision making authorities undertaken in an organisation set against all the people or roles. At each intersection of activity and role it is possible to assign somebody responsible, accountable, consulted or informed for that activity or decision. The RACI concept helped to understand that every task of a work package should always be accountable for one certain individual. Internally this helps to avoid any blame game and at the same time by assigning clear defined tasks and making a certain person responsible just helps to make sure that the necessary work is done on the proper time. The RACI helps me to identify which project team members can help up when a certain individual is stuck on solving a certain problem.

6) Closeout and Evaluation:

During the project evaluation process, as a project manager if I notice that the project hasn't gained the expected margins and have exceeded the timelines planned. In such cases, the project is not a 100% success and I would set up a final wrap up meeting with the key stakeholders and team members for identifying the potential mistakes that could have been avoided. These lessons would help to improvise better margins for future projects. One such learning occurred in my project schedule where I saw so many important deliverables were scheduled around National Holidays. Since I also had a very tight project schedule, there weren't good ways to use buffer periods too. This only leads to reduced margin profit as most times the project team members had to be paid substantially more for working around those holidays. On my next project schedule creation, that's an important lesson I will forever remember.