Chapter   5

Teams

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5.1   Learning Objectives for this Chapter

Having completed this chapter you will be able to:

- Define a team and understand the role of teams

- Identify some responsibilities of the Project Manager as leader of the team

- Understand the steps and issues in resource planning

- Understand the steps and issues involved in acquiring and developing your team

- Appreciate the common phases in team development

5.2   Introduction

In this chapter we look at how individuals are organised as teams and the implications of this for the project manager.

5.3   Teams in Organisations

In the previous chapter we learned that there are various ways that a project can be implemented within organisations. These range from a simple arrangement of people within an existing functional structure to a complete rearrangement of the organisation in order to accommodate projects.

However at the heart of any project is the group of people who are to execute the project – *the project team*. Let us start our discussion, as usual, with a definition. Davidson has one which seems to fit the bill:

*A **Team** is a gathering of individuals who assemble to accomplish a purpose.*

Although Davidson's definition applies to any type of team you can see that it initially appears to fit quite well with our definition of a project. It fits particularly well if we are talking about project members in a strong matrix structure or in a projectised organisation.

However, it could be agued that the typical "project teams" which you would see within a weak matrix type organization structure or within a completely functional structure do not appear to be fit this definition as closely. For example, in many such cases, these people never actually "assemble" physically. It is true to say that they jointly accomplish a common purpose but their awareness and motivation towards that purpose is likely to be low (or non existent). They are merely a group of individuals who happen to be working on common piece of work.

In order to explore what happens on a *real team*, a more precise definition would be useful. Here is one given by Katzenbach and Smith in their book *The Wisdom of Teams*:

*A **Real Team** is a small number of people with complementary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose, goal, and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*

It is the project managers' responsibility to build and lead such a team. The rest of chapter concerns this responsibility.

Note:

*During this chapter we talk about teams being composed of "resources". In the context of our discussion about teams, you should take this to mean **"living, breathing, skilled human beings"**. The use of the generic word **resource** is perhaps a little dehumanising but it is unfortunately a common term in project management and you will find it used as an alternative to "person" or "team member"*

5.4 The Project Manager as Team Leader

What does a Project Manager need to do in order to fulfil their role as team leader?

The Project manager must….

- **Understand…**

    o The purpose of teams and factors that influence team success

    o Leadership – the requirements for effective leadership

    o How to use appropriate leadership styles

- **Plan** for Building and Managing the team

- **Acquire** the necessary resources

- **Build** the Team

- **Lead** the Team

- **Manage** the Team

We will explore the process of planning, acquiring and building teams in this chapter.

5.5　Planning your Resources

As with all project management activities, time invested in advance planning is never wasted and will reap rewards later in the project. Planning your resources is primarily concerned with the following activities:

- Determining the project roles that will be required

- Associating responsibilities to those roles

- Determining reporting structures within the project

- Drawing up a plan of how the project staff will be managed during the project - acquiring, training, safety, release etc (The Project Staff Management Plan)

The outputs from the first 3 activities are brought together in documents such as Organisation Charts and Responsibility Matrixes.

The Staff management plan should include sections on:

- How staff will be acquired

- A Resource Histogram – a timetable showing the resources required and when they will be engaged on the project

- Procedures for managing staff coming onto the project and staff to be released from the project

- Training and Education needs

- How performance will be recognised and rewarded

- Standards of Compliance & Safety

5.6   Acquiring your team

Having developed a resource plan the PM must now find the required people. Likely sources could include:

- In-situ or pre-assigned resources

- Negotiated resources

- External resources to be contracted

In situ/preassigned:

Sometimes the Project Manager may "inherit" or "retain" resources. Perhaps she has a core team which is maintained from project to project. Alternatively, resources may be pre-assigned by the sponsor or by a department head because of their particular expertise or perceived value to the project.

Having resources readily available in this manner can make project mobilisation easier. However the project manager may have to satisfy herself that such resources will actually add value to the project. Having a resourcing plan which includes a list of clearly defined roles & responsibilities will help.

Negotiated resources:

In most matrix organisations, this task may not be a easy one. Internal staff will have to be requested from their functional managers or departmental heads. Ideally the project manager will have assessed the available pool of resources and identified the people who are best suited to the role as outlined in the resource plan. However it is likely that the requested person will be equally valuable to the functional manager. As a result this task is likely to test the negotiating and influencing skills of the project manager. She is likely to have to negotiate on one or more of the following points:

- Securing the release of the **right** resources

- Securing the release of **any** resources!

- Securing the **time commitment** required from the released resource

External resources:

External resources are engaged for a number of reasons. In many cases the required skills and tools may not be available within the organisation. In some cases the skills may be available; however using all of your skilled resources on the project may compromise ongoing business, particularly for major change projects. It may be more economical and just as efficient to use external resources. As a result, other parties may be contracted to take care of specific activities. Securing these resources will be subject to your normal procedures for recruitment or procurement and will usually be agreed by means of a formal contract.

 Here's a typical resourcing scenario:

Your company installs and maintains emergency power supplies in commercial premises. This work normally involves installing battery packs and changeover switches in small office blocks and factories. You have just secured a contract to install a complete backup system in a large office block, including installation of an emergency generator in the basement area. Your site survey has indicated that this will involve drilling substantial holes through the existing concrete walls(which are up to a half a meter thick) You don't currently have the expertise and equipment to do this and choose to subcontract this work to a specialist concrete boring company. You then insist that they nominate a project manager who will sit on your project team as required.

Securing commitment of resources:

Whatever the source of your resources it is important that you secure a formal agreement. Following agreement of the assignment from the donating manager, a letter of assignment should be sent to each assigned persons clarifying their role, commitment dates etc. (and thanking them for their willingness to assist in this important project!)

5.7   Developing your team

Now that you have your team assembled it would be foolhardy to believe that this grouping of people will immediately begin acting like the "Real Team" which we defined above. The project manager must actively work to ensure that this happens.

To help understand what needs to be done to develop your team into a real team let's look at the recipe for a real team - as suggested by the definition:

a) *Small number of people*

b) *..with complementary skills*

c) *..equally committed to a common purpose, goal,*

d) *..equally committed to a working approach*

e) *..hold themselves mutually accountable.*

Let's look at what can be done for each item:

a. *Small number of people*

How small is small? In resources planning you should already have addressed this issue. While deciding your team structure and sketching your organisation chart you will have had to determine how big the project team needs to be. This depends on the complexity of the project, the amount of activities, geographical spread, functional areas involved etc. However team size can impact proper team performance and development as follows:

- Large teams can be cumbersome and restrict, rather than encourage, cross-functional communication.

- Over time, large teams tend to fragment into cliques (frequently based on function or specialisation)

- On the plus side, the larger the team the higher the likelihood of getting a mix of skills and personalities

- Small teams restrict innovation

It is generally considered that a team size of between 5 -10 people is the optimum.

Having secured the people the project manager should review the team mix and size and decide whether it still meets the needs of the project.

b. With complementary skills

The project manager will try to identify the best mix of skills and the required levels of skill competency which will ensure successful delivery of the project.

Once the team is assembled it is expected that the resources secured will match those outlined in the resourcing plan. If not, then any training and development plan should be revised accordingly to take account any shortfall in skills.

The PM should then make sure that the training plan is implemented using a mix of formal training and informal methods such as coaching sessions, informal feedback etc.

c. Equally committed to a common purpose, goal,

d. Equally committed to a working approach

e. Hold themselves mutually accountable.

For the three above items - it is unlikely that all members of the team will have equal levels of commitment and equal appreciation of their accountability. There is no one tool or approach which will develop the team in this way. Consider any or all of the following:

- Encouraging a sense of ownership by involving the team in planning activities, as appropriate

- Using your general management skills, particularly the softer interpersonal skills, to anticipate and reduce problems.

- Team building activities – Formal or informal events to increase communications between members.

- Co-location – making sure that most or all of the team are based at the one location

- Communicating and enforcing ground rules – this ensures that everyone understands what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is particularly important when people are coming from different organizations and cultures (economic and social)

- Rewarding desirable behaviour – this reinforces the objectives and encourages better performance.

5.8   Stages of Team Development

Teams rarely become fully functioning immediately; they develop over a period of time.

Team development is a continuous task and should happen throughout the complete lifecycle of the project. It is useful for the project manager to be aware of the various stages of team development and of the issues that arise at each stage. Dr Bruce Tuckman's model of Team Development is frequently used to illustrate this. According to Tuckman, teams usually go through four distinct stages as the team integrates:

a) Forming

The team begins to become acquainted and get to know each other. Issues of trust and inclusion are foremost. There is high dependence on the project manager for direction and guidance.

b) Storming

This stage is characterised by a level of power play as people begin to find their niche on the project and personal objectives can come to the fore. There may be leadership challenges. Consensus is difficult. The PM needs to coach rather than guide.

c) Norming

Having settled into personal roles people start to form alliances and team groupings become apparent. Consensus is easier and objectives and roles are clearer. PM is largely facilitating at this stage.

d) Performing

This stage represents a fully performing team and no major conflict issues are usually evident. A shared vision is apparent and the PM should only need to delegate and oversee.
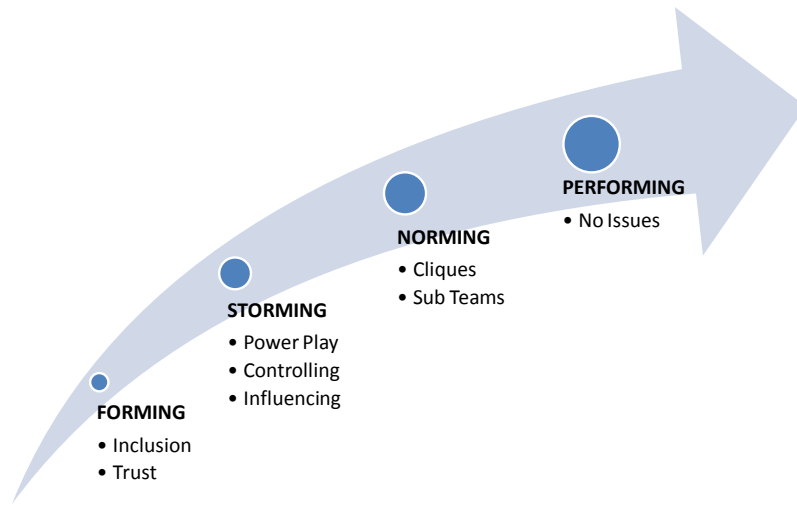
Figure 1- Stages of Team Development

Note that the general level of interpersonal conflict arising on the project is high at the early stages but declines as the performing stage is reached.

Note also that a major change to the structure of the team can result in the team reverting temporarily to a previous stage. This commonly occurs when additional resources are added to the team or when key people depart.

Note: An alternate version of this model adds an additional stage at the end known as the Adjourning (or Mourning) phase. As the project breaks up the team members may begin to experience issues of loss and separation.

5.9   The Responsibilities of Team Members

It is important for the project manager to be clear with all team members what is expected of them during the project. It can be useful to include some general responsibilities such as these in project role profiles, assignment letters and personal performance review material. The Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) defines five general responsibilities of team members:

a) To ensure that their part of the project work satisfies the need of the project and is completed as specified (on time./ within budget and to the required specification)

b) To communicate back to the team and the PM on issues

c) To complete and update all documentation in a timely manner

d) To highlight any possible issues or risks

e) To actively contribute to the team

✎   Exercise 1

"Project managers do not need to have much technical knowledge about the activities of the project. They could do their job better if they were allowed to focus on the important tasks of negotiating for resources, developing and managing the team and actually monitoring and controlling the project. The technical issues would only distract them. Anyway there are usually enough experts on the team already"

Q: Do you agree with the above statement? Give reasons for your answer.

Lock, Dennis (2007) Project Management, 9th. Edition, Gower – Chapter 9

Meredith, Jack R and Mantel, Samuel J Jun. (2006) Project Management: A Managerial Approach, 6th. Edition, Wiley

Project Management Institute (PMI)., Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), 3rd edition, PMI

Burke, Rory, (2001) Project Management, Planning & Control Techniques, 3rd edition, Wiley

Davidson, Jeff (2002) The Complete Idiots Guide to Change Management, Alpha.

Wikipedia has a good explanation of Tuckman's model:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forming-storming-norming-performing

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