

- 0:00 [MUSIC] Hello and welcome to part one of our project management panelist discussion. My name is Stephane Muller and I'm the director of business programs, UC Irvine Extension. I'm happy to be kicking off this three part series discussing topics essential to project managers. Today we will be discussing initiating and planning projects. Let's jump in and introduce you to our three expert panelist. Please meet Marty Wartenberg. He has spent over 40 years managing companies and project in the areas of aerospace, software, commercial product development, oil field instrumentation, and farmer research and development. Next, we have Neil Sahota. He's an IBM master inventor, an ecosystem engagement manager in the IBM Watson group. Finally we have Karen Nguyen. She currently manages Kia Motors America's enterprise BtoB portal consisting of 70 dealers facing system. Thank you for being here, everyone. Let's begin with a question for the entire group.
- 1:17 What do you think is the most important part of the project planning process?
- 1:23 >> I believe that the most important part is the front end. The project initiation activity of establishing a scope, assumptions, exit criteria, that if you don't do that right, it almost doesn't matter what you do in your next steps of detailed planning or execution, so for me it's always the front end.
- 1:43 >> Thank you. >> And I completely agree, it's really understanding the scope so anything and everything to do with the scope because that determines the success, the risk, everything that comes with the project.
- 1:58 These are both good answers. I'll just add on that it's also very important to understand what's your method or approach to actually doing the planning? At least what I've experienced a lot of times, especially working on bigger projects, is that there's so many moving pieces to it that people start getting silo and heads down on their own piece. And they lose sight of the big picture. So it's basically that you're hopping in a car without anywhere to go. So we're really defining inside that framework and said this is how we're doing approach planning has made a huge difference, positive difference, in the success of a project.
- 2:29 >> Next question.
- 2:31 What advice would you give to a brand new Project Manager, Marty? First thing I would try to ascertain is whether they really wanna be a project manager. [LAUGH] I try to make sure they understood the trials and tribulations they're gonna be going through and then it's something that you just don't jump into. That you have to make a commitment that you're going to take full accountability for the actions of others and that you had responsibility for a lot of work, and not everybody is up to being a project manager. So I would first have them decide do I really want to do this. >> Thank you. Karen. >> And because of those trials and tribulations, and especially when you're new it is very critical to get buy in
- 3:16 as many people as possible so that it can help you with the success of your project and all the requirements that comes with it and the scope creed and then, more importantly, try if you can, get a sponsor. That's very important because that has credibility that comes with it and also All the things that you need to help shape a successful project. >> Thank you. Neal? >> I guess there's a lot of advice I could give. But I think, two things jump out. And one is to have thick skin, and the second is to take risks. So thick skin, as Mario was talking about. At the end of the day, if a project goes well, the team gets the credit. And they should. They do the work. But if anything goes wrong a project manager's the unfortunate one that's gonna take the hit responsibility for it. And you're gonna wind up working with difficult people at times. You're gonna have difficult projects. And you can't let things get to you. A project manager, one of things is you've got to be the project cheerleader and you gonna have to keep that positive attitude.
- 4:15 Take risks. And this is what I tell a lot of people, especially when I hire them, is that you're never gonna know everything. You're gonna have to make assumptions. And a lot of times when you go into a project, we were talking about sculpting earlier, often even customers or client to understand what they even want and you gotta be prepared for that. And risk is not a bad thing. I know that's the connotation. You have positive risks. You have negative risks. So you gotta be ready to quote-unquote roll the dice sometimes as a project manager. Thank you, Neal, very interesting. >> Follow up a little bit on what Neal brought up is not everybody is cut out to be a project manager. One of the questions I ask when I hire is I ask the candidate, do you have a to do list? And of course everyone says they do and I said when you come into work in the morning if suddenly you cannot work on your to-do-list because all kinds of new things came up would that upset you? And if they say yes I said okay maybe there's something else you

should do but not being a project manager because as Neil said you never know what you're gonna be working on and you're having to look at the big picture and balance things.

5:22 >> Thank you very much.

5:23 My next question is have you dealt with difficult stakeholders and what did you do about it? >> I thought of that one quite a bit because almost every project you work on, if you have multiple stakeholders there will always be some difficult one.

5:41 And often they're not, they may not be the primary ones, they may be secondary or tertiary, but you still have to deal with them. My approach is inclusiveness.

5:51 I follow the Machiavelli principle of keep your friends close and your enemies closer and so I will actually include the most negative of my stakeholders and get them more actively involved in the project and in the planning aspects. So they gradually become part of the problem instead of being the outside and so again, that's been my approach and it works most of the time.

6:17 >> Very good. Karen? >> My approach is Dale Carnegie way, which is how do I make friends and influence people. These difficult stakeholders, is inevitable in every project. And the more you try to, because ultimately it comes down to service, and meeting their expectations. And so, I think that the key to meeting project managers, it's really I handle those difficult situations, I think that's like my forte is like from a strategic and political level. So if my personality does not fit like a Neil or a Marty because it is a little bit more stronger, then I will send my project managers, or whoever the sponsor is, or the stakeholders, to deal with that person. And to make sure, it's sort of a SWAT team, to make sure that you please that person. Basically, get them to the level where they finally have trust in you. And then from there, the rest of your project is more smooth sailing is so important. And as you know, I'll be talking a lot about that, through out this presentation.

7:28 >> Those are both really great points that Marty and Karen have both made. My work is a little bit different, in that it is more contractual. There's a agreement with a client or a partner so there's an errant amount of conflict built in because of that. And because I tend to deal with a lot of C-level executives of large companies. There is more ego sometimes involved so one of the things actually also do is I'll do kind of a stakeholder map understand, okay. Where these people come in, what are their goals and agendas, how can I help them? But at the same time also recognize that I'm gonna have some people that will be very positive stakeholders, for example, and I want them to be my advocates, my cheerleaders. Try and convince them, people that are more neutral, that are on the fence, to become positive, and then you're gonna have people that are negative, that are just dead set against it for one reason or another. And you can try sometimes as hard as you might, but you are never going to convince some of these folks. And I have learned just to accept that and you have to understand how you can best minimize their impact to the project. Because they might try and sabotage it and that is really going to lead to trying to leverage some of the other folks.

8:35 >> Very good thank you. My next question is for Karen. Can you describe a time when you used your influence as a project manager with your stakeholders to get the job done?

8:48 >> I actually use it all the time, at project kick-off and then as well as throughout the inception of the project, like Neil said. Ego, right? You can't have more ego and male-dominated in the auto industry. So a lot times, as part of roles and responsibility, I set forth basically what I call a core team. And then the rules of the people, sort of like scrum, right, they handle all of the major decision making. And then from there, we also have focus group teams. And then I'm basically the leader of all of that overseeing. So whenever there's issue, escalation, they know specifically who handles the project and who to contact when it goes sideways. So it's really important to understand for the stakeholders and user community to know the direction and who's in charge of the project cuz the worse you want to have is that mix up in roles and responsibilities.

9:49 >> Thanks a lot. My next question is for Monty. Can you share a few leadership skills that are imperative for a project manager to have?

9:58 >> We could probably spend about a day just on that question, but

- 10:05 project leadership is more like wartime leadership than peacetime.
- 10:11 In a functional group you have time to build relationships and to establish yourself as the leader. And you can make mistakes and then have time to recover. In projects, mistakes tend to destroy your project. Well, leadership and project management is basically getting out in front.
- 10:32 People may not be working for you in a matrix organization. They probably don't work for you. So you have to do a lot of work through influence. You have to convince them. And my approach is, and what I try to teach young project managers, is that you need to create a vision for your project that is compelling, and that is sufficiently interesting, and valuable for the team to get behind it, and support it. Not just you as the project manager, but the concept of a project. That the mission of the project is sufficiently compelling and important that we all need to do this for our own sakes not just for the sake of the project manager or the organization.
- 11:15 >> Thank you very much. And my last question is for you, Neil. Can you share one common source of conflict you have experienced in the project environment and how you dealt with it?
- 11:26 >> Well that's a good question. I hate to phrase it this way, but one common source is people. I mean people are obviously different, they have different work styles. One challenge I typically see on projects is the team and the extended team and how they work together. Thinking like how they said they have different work styles [COUGH] they also might have a different agenda's and different things they want out of the project. And that tends to come with a conflict sometimes. I actually remember one project where it was on HIPAA compliance. And there's one resource we got, that was considered a superstar and needed a lot of stuff. But he had his own way of wanting to do everything which was against everybody else. And he was driving everyone crazy and actually ultimately what I wound up doing was I had him replaced. And people thought, why are you replacing your superstar?
- 12:15 And I'm like well, I've got a team of 17 core people here. He's the only one that's really disruptive. I'd rather have someone that's less of a superstar but works better with the rest of the team to actually accomplish the work. And that person needs to have goals that are in line with what we're trying to do and partner more with the folks. And we did that, and it actually worked out a lot better. But that's the one thing I commonly see is the people aspect. And as a project manager, you really have to understand where people are coming from, what they hope they get out, because it's not always going to be in line with what you're trying to accomplish. >> And that's a perfect example of how to deal with difficult people. >> [LAUGH] >> Thank you to our panelists for joining us in our discussion today. This wraps up part one of our project management panelist discussion. We will see you next time when we will be discussing budgeting and scheduling projects. Thank you for joining us.