Module 1: Critical Thinking

Project Inception Steps

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Siegel defines a project as “a temporary activity intended to create a product or service”. In Siegel’s example of the oil refinery, creating the oil refinery is the project. Once the oil refinery has been built, the project is over. The actions of operating the refinery and maintaining the equipment are examples of continuous business operations, which are on-going and repetitive for an open-ended time frame.

According to PMBOK, the Close Phase of a Project is the process of finalizing any project document updates, create a final report, and have the final product (Project Management Institute). This is where the planned work of a project is completed, and the final product of the project has been created. At the end of this phase, the resources are released to work on new projects. Although the project is ending, the project continues to live on through the Fielding & Use phase of the Project Life Cycle and Disposal. This is where the Project reaches the Production Stage of the Project Life Cycle, where the product of the project is deployed, and is ready for Fielding and Usage. This is also where the Project ends. Following the conclusion of the project is the Fielding & Use, and Disposal steps of the Project Life Cycle, which are regarded as continuous business operations.

It is important to make the distinction between a project, and continuous business operations because the activities and challenges that are faced by the project, and the business operations that are performed after the project is completed are different (Siegel). When building the project, the goal is to create something new, within a specific time frame. For the ongoing business operations, the procedures performed is using the product that resulted from a project. Maintaining equipment, refining, and exporting the oil are repetitive in nature, and require different staff to operate. The ones who built the Oil Refinery are released to go build a new Oil Refinery, and the staff that perform the continuous operations continue to use the product from the project until the product has been disposed of. The procedures needed to build the oil refinery are entirely different than the standard operating procedures that are required to perform to use the Oil Refinery and export the oil.

Eventually, the Fielding and Use stage of a project’s life cycle comes to an end and reaches the final stage of the project life cycle, which is Disposal (Siegel). This is where the final product of a project is no longer being used. A project could reach this stage due to technological or scientific advancements. On July 11th, 2008, Apple released the second version of the iPhone, the iPhone 3g, which included new features such as GPS Navigation and a scientific calculator (Turner). With the advancements that they have made in their iPhones, they put the first iPhone into the disposal stage, discontinuing the first iPhone on July 15th, 2008 (Apple iPhone (1st Gen) Dimensions & Drawings).

All good things come to an end, but it is still necessary to go through the effort to create these systems. When working on a project, you capture lessons learned, which is “written guidance about how to do each of the different types of activities in an engineering project” (Siegel). This is a great way to learn from experience, as lessons learned lets you know what works, and what didn’t work for a particular project. This helps you and your team to come up ideas on how to improve the product that was the result of the project that was completed. For example, when the first iPhone was created in 2007 (REF), Apple did not call it a day, and stop creating iPhones. Instead, they started a new project to create a better iPhone than the one they released, to stay competitive in the market. The ones working on the next version of the iPhone used the Lessons Learned from when they created the first iPhone, to help them create an improved version. You are no longer able to purchase the original iPhone from Apple, as it was discontinued July 15th, 2008, but the latest version of the iPhone would not exist without the efforts made to create the first one.

In conclusion, all projects come to an end, but the results of the project live on through the Project Life cycle in the fielding and usage stage, until it reaches the Disposal stage. After the product of the Project has been completed, there are continuous business operations that use the resulting product from the project. Although all projects come to an end, it is important to create them, as they allow us to capture lessons learned, which can be used to create new and improved products. Without taking the steps to work on new projects, we would not have the incredible products that we have today, as the knowledge we gain from working on them allows the lessons learned from the project continue, to help us create better products in the future.

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