

PM Tools #1 - Mini POAP

Boosting Project Management Efficiency with Mini Plan On A Page



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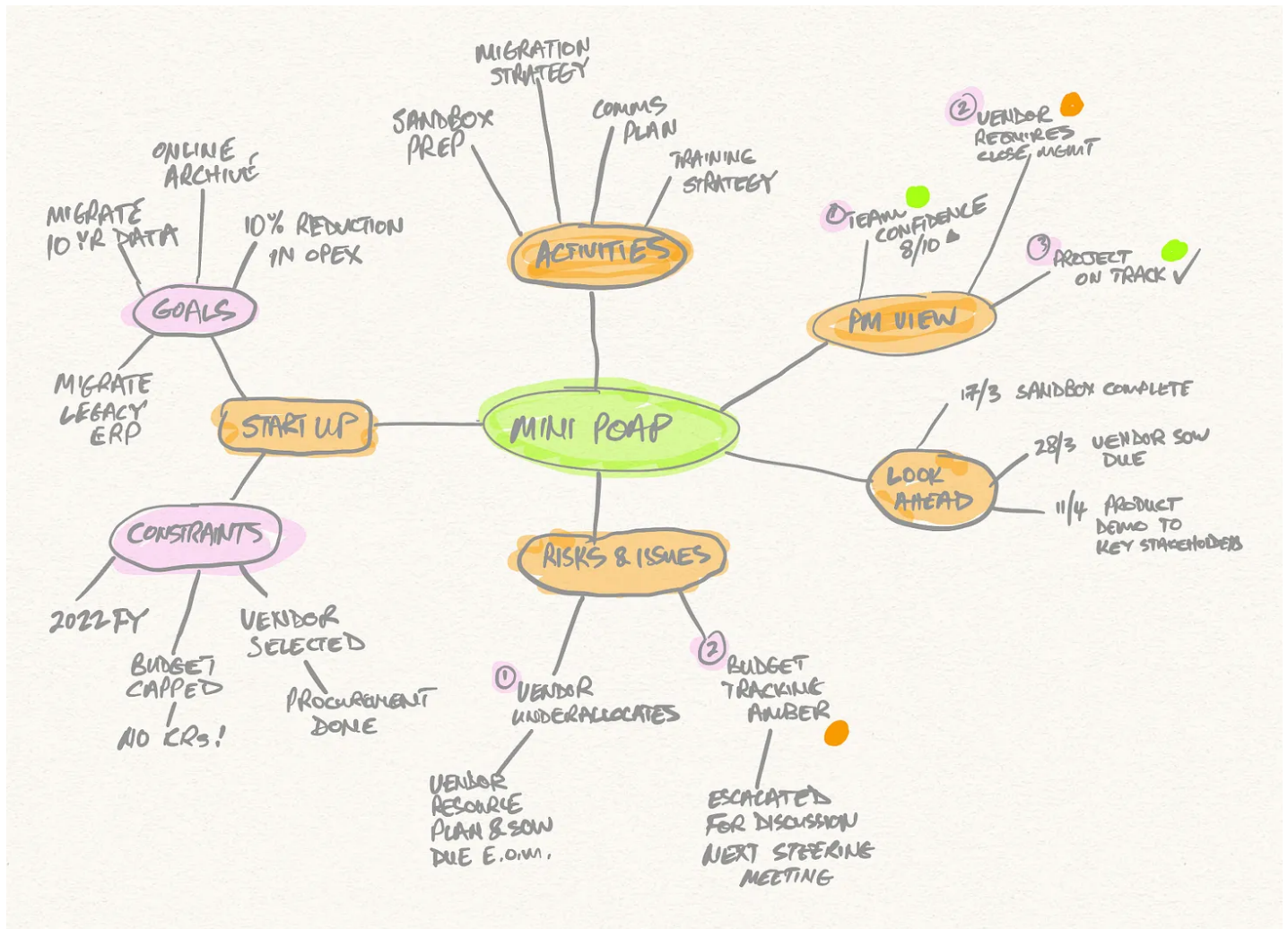
Every project manager can relate to being called into a meeting at a moment's notice, whether with a sponsor, business owner or other stakeholder. As the saying goes, "Always be ready to give an answer." Given the challenges of managing multiple projects, I have found tremendous value in maintaining a mini plan-on-a-page (Mini-POAP) for each project in my notebook or tablet. The primary goal is to keep it simple and concise, fitting within a single page. It serves as a quick reference guide or cheat sheet before discussing the project. Allow me to share some ideas on what you could

include:

1. Key objectives
2. Significant constraints
3. Top two or three risks or issues and their mitigation strategies (keep it brief)
4. Next two or three milestones, including the expected Live/Delivery dates (you can present them as a list or a mini-gantt chart)
5. Two or three key activities currently in progress
6. Two or three important upcoming dates, such as the next steering meeting, sprint review, demo, or vendor meeting
7. Simple budget overview, including the allocated amount and actual spend to date
8. Your view as a PM – is it going well? What concerns or blockers do you have?
9. FAQ section covering a few common project-related questions:
 - a. Is the budget on track? (consider using traffic light symbols)
 - b. Is the schedule on track?
 - c. Do we have sufficient resources?
 - d. How is the team's confidence level?
 - e. Are we effectively aligned with the business objectives?
 - f. What feedback are stakeholders providing regarding the project, especially regarding communication?

There are plenty of other ideas. I would keep it to things that matter most to you or your stakeholders to start with. These suggestions can be adapted and presented in various formats, such as a list, mind map, or simplified status report.

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Example Mini-POAP using a mind map format

Choose an approach that aligns with your style and adequately addresses the anticipated inquiries of your stakeholders. With a quick skim read, you should be able to recall most of the information from your short-term memory.

Review your Mini POAP once a day or periodically to check for any changes and update it when preparing a status report. One of the significant benefits I've discovered is that it helps create a simplified mental model of the project, enabling easier articulation of essential points during conversations.

Conclusion

As project managers, our projects demand our attention and efforts. However, expecting

ourselves to accurately remember every detail all the time is unrealistic. That's where a Mini POAP can come to the rescue when stakeholders inquire about project progress. It empowers us to confidently address their questions and provides a tangible reference to enhance project management efficiency.

In the comments section, I invite you to share your thoughts and experiences with Mini POAPs. Together, we can refine our project management practices and drive success.

As project managers, we employ various techniques and tools to streamline our work. While we are familiar with well-known resources like PRINCE2, PMBOK, SCRUM, SAFe, etc., our day-to-day activities often call for personalized planning, organization, documentation, review, problem-solving and communication. In this post series, I will share valuable tips and tools that have consistently proven effective throughout my career. I invite you to leave a comment, sharing your own experiences or suggestions, and contribute to the conversation.

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