

Project Manager's Diary

January

- 3rd Gained approval from my boss to approach users about a major new application that I have been thinking about.
- 6th Gave presentation to users. Reaction was very positive; guess my enthusiasm turned them on. They agreed that my information system ideas can improve customer service, but want the new approach implemented at all field offices not just headquarters as I had envisaged. I assured them that this could be done and told them in a few words everything I knew about browser based client-server computing. They want to move quickly to benefit from this application; they say it must be in place before the new product line is ready a little over eight months from now. I told them eight months was more than enough time.
- 12th Application is shaping up as a significant extension of our present online database system, serving remote users via the web and distributed networking techniques for the first time.
- 19th Sketched out possible use cases and screen layouts and showed them to the user operating personnel; their reaction was "These look great". Visited two field offices to observe their manual procedures...which are hopelessly archaic. One supervisor told me "we do things the same as we always have, but we get the job done right..."
- 30th I like the relationship that is developing with the user stakeholders. They have little knowledge of IT and seem to have faith in any of my ideas; I should have complete freedom to design and implement the system.

February

- 4th Presented my ideas at an executive conference with the senior staff of the main user department. They were extremely cordial and appeared favourably impressed. Few questions were asked.
- 24th The user manager has approved the project and set a completion date of 1st August, five months from now (to give customer service representatives time to learn the new procedures before the new product line is introduced). I have been promoted to Project Manager reporting to the Manager of Software Development. My new boss told me that the user manager would have preferred a more experienced project manager, but none could be released from their current commitments.

March

- 1st Spent some time with new my manager. Told her I was impatient to start and that I want to run my own show. Asked for experienced people to be assigned to the project and was directed to talk to the Manager of IT Resources.
- 3rd Manager of Systems and Programming can give me two analysts with practically no web design or client server systems experience and four junior programmers. Decide to pressure for more experienced people.
- 17th Have repeatedly expressed my urgent need for an experienced team to my manager; emphasised that I can't waste time training people. She again pointed out that she has no direct control over the supply of analysts and programmers, but refused to pass my demands to higher management.
- 23rd Getting nowhere in my efforts to get top people for the project. My manager says she simply cannot take resources away from other projects at this time; I will have to make do with anyone I can get.
- 31st Have to admit that the available people could have been trained by now; feel pretty frustrated and angry. Went over my manager's head and wrote a blistering memo to the Chief Information Officer.

April

- 1st Told Manager of IT Resources that I was resigned to taking anyone who was available. Six people showed up within an hour!! Hastily put on a performance of my executive presentation, gave them copies of my proposed use cases and screen formats and sent them away to think about the project.
- 11th My manager asked to see the project schedule; she demanded that the schedule be ready for review by the end of the week. She seemed almost hostile towards me.

- 13th Burned the midnight oil to produce a list of major activities and target dates that must be achieved in order to finish by 1st August.
- 14th Manager acted as though this plan was a commitment to deliver the system to the user's deadline; told me to carry on.
- 15th Project team reacted very badly to my schedule; they felt that the job is more complex than I imagine and that the schedule is unrealistic. Determine to talk to them individually and get them straightened out.

May

- 1st An experienced analyst from another project unexpectedly became available and has been assigned to the team.
- 8th New man has set to work independently on a new general system design, including reworking the use cases and screen layouts. He appears to be a loner and has not been accepted by the other members of the team. They spend most of their time talking and reading; I am glad to have at least one productive team member.
- 16th Target date for completion of general design. Forced to report that we are behind schedule; SRS (System Requirements Specification) is taking longer than expected.
- 25th Head of the user department called to complain that my new analyst is trying to tell them how to run their business. Said he is abrasive, over-bearing and arrogant; they never want to see him again.
- 26th The analyst says he thought he had authority to set systems specifications; he has clashed with a user methods man who claims that responsibility.

June

- 3rd User Manager has formally requested that the offensive analyst be removed from the project. Also, requested my presence at a project accountability session in his office.
- 10th User Project team presented system design specifications that are extensively different from ours (seem to be based on original use cases and screen formats). Anxious to avoid making commitments, I remained silent during negotiations regarding the new requirements; just confirmed that we wanted to be responsive to their needs and that we would explore the feasibility of making the changes required.
- 13th User Project Manager issued a memo to all concerned, summing up his understanding of the meeting: "The IT department has agreed to meet all our requirements".
- 21st Advertising issued promotional flyers announcing the new product line and prominently mentioning "online and flexible customer service". Their description follows the user's specifications.
- 27th Approached Financial Controller for approval to order networking and security hardware. With Networking expenses already over budget, the accountants insist on studying the project's return on investment (ROI). I don't have time to prepare an economic justification and decide to proceed without approval.

July

- 2nd Marketing announced a "sneak preview" of the new product at a trade show; they request that we conduct a demonstration of the system.
- 5th We are now three months behind schedule; I am convinced that the project deadline is impossible to meet. Discussed crisis with the team; they unveiled a plan for rapidly implementing a subsystem of the ultimate system by modifying an existing client server application. I eagerly accept their scheme.
- 7th User Project Manager refuses to accept an interim system and will not reduce his requirements. Gave the team the go-ahead for the sub-system development anyway.
- 22nd The current release of *Websphere* (an application integration product) does not support certain features of the new client software we have installed for testing. With stipulations, the vendor can make available an early copy of their next product update before its general market release in two weeks - making us one of the first companies to use this version. This new middleware update can support our software but will only be available for testing at weekends.

August

- 1st Deadline day and the project is further behind than ever! Development is progressing more slowly than expected as modifications to the old client server system are being made by trial and error. The programmers complain that documentation for the system does not match the program logic and that the way the code was written makes it nearly impossible to amend.
- 5th Put the team on compulsory overtime by insisting they work at least half days on Saturdays and Sundays.
- 7th Manager is pressuring for completion of the subsystem and now requires weekly status reports.
- 15th The subsystem was not tested on Friday as scheduled. The developers feel that they are at least 90% done; I report the project as "on schedule" as I am optimistic the testing will be completed over the weekend.
- 18th Weekend testing revealed a basic design fault and extensive rework is necessary.
- 19th The compulsory overtime does not appear to have increased productivity and the programmers seem to resent it.
- 22nd The CIO, acting on my report that the subsystem is complete, requests me to schedule a demonstration for the user management.

September

- 5th The CIO has engaged a consultancy firm to develop the additional functions required by the user. My team is to concentrate on the initial subsystem. I feel no responsibility for the work of the "outsiders" and resolve to pay no attention to their part of the project.
- 12th The subsystem is operational and a demonstration was given to the user department heads. They were unimpressed; the system does not do what I had said it would and, anyway, they needed it a month ago.
- 16th Received the first consultant's invoice, which I routinely initialed and forwarded to accounts.
- 19th Accounts has refused to pay the consultants' charges. Company policy says I have to submit a form describing the nature of services provided by any outside vendor and that I should have independent controls to verify such vendor's charges.
- 26th Integration testing of the consultants' programs has been unsuccessful. The consultants blame undocumented changes in our subsystem and want us to revise our software to conform to the interface specifications they have written.
- 30th Gave in to the consultants' demands and the system now works. The user stakeholders are unhappy that the response time averages 17 seconds.

October

- 4th A team of internal auditors descended on the project. They intended to investigate unauthorised purchases and to conduct a comprehensive audit of my management procedures and controls as well as my provisions for data security, quality and operational auditability of the whole system.
- 12th The consultants have submitted a report to the CIO. It is harshly critical of our system design and recommends scrapping everything we have done and starting again.
- 15th The user division is asking to outsource its software development. The user manager presented the CIO with a proposal, which says "the existing IT Department cannot be relied upon to support us properly. Their inability to successfully implement the customer service system has severely impacted our position in the market place...".
- 16th The CIO has ordered all work on the project to stop. He has formed a task force of high level managers and senior technicians to evaluate the disaster.

Questions

1. What are the top 3 problems with this project?
2. If you were the project manager what would you have done differently to commence this project?
3. Who are the key stakeholders?