**BT 353-C Project Management**

**Midterm**

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**Professor Dool - Fall 2018**

**How should change management be planned for and managed including “scope creep” in the project management process?**

To answer this question, we must identify the different sources of changes and “scope creep” within projects. The sources include the sponsors of the project, the managers and higher-ups within the company, and within the project team itself. Depending on the source of the changes, the amount of scope creep should be managed accordingly in order to balance team morale, sponsor satisfaction, and recognition from within the company. However, some amount of scope creep is inevitable, and should be planned for in all cases with extra padded time within the timeline and ensuring that a proper project charter has been signed in order to keep all three parties focused on the original goals of the project.

Scope creep among these three sources are quite similar, in the idea that if they are not managed correctly, a slippery-slope type of situation may occur, and the project will be impacted, whether it be in the punctuality, the quality, or the completion of the project itself. For all kinds of scope creep, the all three parties should be contacted, whether it be the team about the changes’ effect on morale and workload, the higher-ups about the changes’ effect on the project timeline and quality, or the sponsors about whether the changes are desirable or not. However, the possible benefits and drawbacks of implementing areas of scope creep change depending on the source, and this is the last thing add to the precarious balance that is implementing last-minute changes.

Meeting the dynamic changes from sponsors can result in increased sponsor satisfaction. The ability to implement extra features at a moment’s notice will likely bring the company a better reputation for future projects. However, these changes will also likely bring down the project team’s morale toward the project, having to make such quick changes to something not agreed upon. In turn, this can impact the timeline and quality of the project, something that higher-ups in the company will disapprove of. However, this all depends on the extent and depth of the change.

Implementing areas of scope creep introduced by higher-ups in the company can lead to increased job performance and reputation, possibly even recognition as the manager for a successful project. However, similar, but slightly different aspects apply to managing this kind of scope creep. While these changes must still be considered in their impact on the morale of the team and the timeline of the project, the sponsor must not also get involved in the discussion, assessing whether the introduced changes are within the sponsors’ desires. With all three parties now involved in the discussion of the balance of the success of the project, this may be the most difficult type of scope creep to consider.

Finally, implementing scope creep originating from the project team itself is likely the simplest task. If the changes come from within the project itself, it is already likely going to benefit the morale of the team. Therefore, all that is needed is to present the changes to the sponsors and higher-ups, and assess whether the sponsors support the changes and whether the higher-ups will allow the impacts on the project timeline.

**Why should a project manager NOT begin a project without an approved project charter?**

**What are the key components in an effective Charter and why are they important?**

A project charter has many uses that help with the project management challenge, allowing each party involved in the project, such as stakeholders, other managers, and the project team, to gain a mutual understanding of the core elements of the project. Each key component of the charter provides a reason that a project should not start without it, signed and agreed to by all stakeholders of the project.

One of the first parts of the charter is the mission and objectives portion, where the high-level goals of the project are laid out, both in what the project is and why the project is beneficial and worth executing. This allows all those involved in the project to have the same basic understanding about the overarching goal of the project is and what purpose it provides, whether it be building a mall to boost the commercial sector of a certain city or building extra classrooms in a school to accommodate the growing student body. This kind of high-level summarization sets the tone for the rest of the project.

The next closely-related set of elements within the project charter are the roles and responsibilities, the high-level work breakdown structure, and the deliverables. These three things provide a general understanding of how the project will progress and how progress will be measured. The roles and responsibilities make sure that not only is each member of the project accountable for a certain portion of the project, but that all responsibilities within the project are accounted for, facilitating further understanding between the project team and the project sponsors. The high-level work breakdown structure also mirrors these same points, making sure that both the team and the sponsors understand what must be done and what may be missing. The planned deliverables then create a way for this progress to be measured, which is always an important factor within the project management process to make sure that the project will be finished on time.

The next group of elements are the stakeholders, the communications, the documentation, and the decision-making process. All these elements build on top of each other – as the stakeholders are identified, whether they be project sponsors, other functional managers, or the team members themselves, they need to have communication lines identified within the project charter should they need to reach each other. These two things allow for the lines of communication to lay out a decision-making process, which, if effective, should involve multi-way communication between all stakeholders. Finally, a general hub for documentation allows for stakeholders to catch up and keep themselves informed on the project itself and its parts and removes the necessity for frivolous communication for things that could easily be documented.

Finally, assumptions, risks, and boundaries outline the overarching scope of the project. Assumptions and boundaries go together, defining the things that are within the scope of the project but not closely considered and things outside of the scope respectively. Defining factors not considered is important to either identify factors within this list that actually must be considered or identifying factors that have not yet been enumerated both within the project and this list. Failure to do the latter can lead to unforeseen problems within the project, that could even lead to failure of the project itself. Identifying risks also goes with these factors, as risks can be considered among the factors that are important to the project but are not able to be clearly defined within the assumptions of the project. This middle ground is important for project managers to keep an eye on during execution.

**At the beginning of project execution, you notice different opinions between team members relating to project work and deliverables and to the level of overall complexity. What should you do to address this?**

The differing opinions on the project work and deliverables can be solved by revisiting the project charter that should have originally been agreed to by all stakeholders, including the project team. On that document, the project work is addressed by the responsibilities and high-level work breakdown structure sections of the charter, and deliverables has its own dedicated section on the charter. These should be reiterated to the whole project team to ensure that even those who did not air any concerns are on the same page. If there are still disagreements regarding these two elements of the project, the project charter may have to be reevaluated in order to gain a greater understanding of the project and ensure that there is a level of coherence within the project team. This new project charter, just like the old one, should be agreed to by all stakeholders, including the project sponsors and upper management.

As for disagreements about level of overall complexity, this may not be addressed in the project charter, as the project charter is a high-level document that may not cover the nuances within the level of technical complexity that the project requires. Thus, communication channels defined in the project charter should be exercised with the sponsors and customers to agree upon the level of technical complexity. First, I should enumerate the concerns about complexity in a list to reference when communicating with project sponsors and customers. Then, in a meeting with these parties, the concerns should be brought forth and resolved, and documented accordingly with the project charter. Then, I would schedule a meeting with the whole project team to reiterate what was communicated by the project sponsors and customer in order to quell any further differing opinions in the team. If disagreement still remains, I believe it is important to not continue with the project until this disagreement is solved, with further communication between the project team and the sponsors through the project manager.

**You have just taken over as manager of a project that will create many benefits for the performing organization, but you sense a high level of resistance in stakeholders right from the start. What is the most appropriate action to resolve the problem and drive more engagement and buy-in?**

Because the term “stakeholder” is a very vague term, I will resolve a few scenarios regarding some of the most common stakeholders within a project. This includes the sponsors, the customers, the project team, and upper management. While the consistent theme across all resolutions will involve increased and more effective communication, there may be specific nuances between each group.

If there is a high level of resistance from the project sponsors, it is important to understand the goals of a project sponsor: to drive the project to completion and gain a benefit out of sponsoring the project, such as financial return or publicity. Thus, it is possible that the project itself has some factors that impact the perception of the sponsor to achieve these two goals. Increased communication must happen between the project manager and the sponsors to iron out these insecurities; why does the sponsor feel that the project may not be completed on time or does not achieve the goals that they set out to accomplish? Perhaps the project does not give the sponsor the desired angle of publicity they wanted? Maybe the financial outlook of the project is not as promising as they had hoped? These are some of the points that a project manager might want to focus on when talking to sponsors.

When there is resistance from the customer or multiple customers, the concerns would seem to lie in the product itself. The uncertainty lies within factors such as usefulness, reliability, and/or cost, or any other problems that may arise when the product is used. Therefore, communication with the customer should focus on the outcome of the project. What features are in the product and how can they be used? Are there any signs of reliability issues, and how can the project team show what they have done in terms of reliability? How much will the product cost? Any disagreement regarding questions like these must be resolved in order to lessen push back from the customer in this project scenario.

One of the largest stakeholders in a project is the project team. Dedicating time into this project, a “second job,” requires dedication in order to get the greatest chance of success. Therefore, pushback from the project team must be resolved quickly. Resistance from the project team likely comes from disagreements about the project plan, whether it be how short the timeline is, how much work the project will be, or even concerns about the success of the project. This will require reevaluation of the project plan and charter, which constitutes more communication and an evaluation of questions like, “what are the responsibilities of each project member?” or “what are the deliverables and their due dates?” Reiteration or reworking the project charter is an important step in getting the project team involved and will lessen resistance.

Even with the benefits that this project will have on the company, it is also possible that upper management will exhibit resistance as well. Their resistance would come from the company resources that are devoted to the project, such as personnel on different teams working on different projects that might be necessary for this project. Therefore, the project manager must facilitate communication with these people, whether it be other functional managers regarding a team member or the upper management regarding the timeline and resources devoted to the project.

**During the execution of a project to build a complex defense system, your team**

**has run into a deep crisis. The project’s goal and objectives have been challenging right**

**from the start, but now you have discovered that your team members have become**

**increasingly unaware of them. Being busy solving detail problems, they often fail to**

**understand the overall requirements. Then they develop solutions which resolve issues in**

**their area of limited responsibility, while causing new problems at the interfaces with other**

**system components.**

**Meanwhile, the team members show signs of growing frustration, and time is**

**running away. How can you help your team in this situation?**

There are a few problems to be identified in this scenario, with the first one embedded in the failure to understand the overall requirements of the project. This requires a reiteration of the project charter throughout the entire project team or groups within the project team to spread general understanding of the overall requirements. However, due to the situation of the project, as the project is during execution, any major problems found with the project charter at this point must be compensated for, as a redraft of the project charter at this point may result in project failure. However, minor problems can still be patched and missing portions can be appended, as it seems the team did not have a clear understanding of the project objectives in the first place. From that point on, with greater understanding of the overall requirements and overarching goal of the project, the team should have a greater confidence in the project and these actions may have solved some of the frustrations.

However, the next problem, the fact that the team is developing solutions that do not work with each other, shows issues within the project team and the channels of communication within the team. One of the first things for the project team to understand is how they fit into the larger picture, which is revisited during the initial reiteration of the project plan. Extra focus on the responsibilities portion and the high-level work breakdown structure could help with this problem as well. Also, an aid to getting pieces of the product to interface correctly is an emphasis on the use of documentation within the project. I would ensure that the documentation and the standards for documentation are understandable and useful in order to enable each element of the project to better integrate each other’s solutions. From my own personal experience in computer science, clear and effective documentation makes another person’s code much easier to use and understand to use for my own purposes. However, aside from these surface level issues, the fact that the team has lost sight on their role within the bigger picture of the project and solely focusing on individual goals shows a disconnection from the concept of the project “team.”

Therefore, while it is good that members of the team are not stepping into others’ areas of responsibility, the team has serious morale and communication issues that must be addressed. The morale issue, coming from the frustration experienced by the project team before resolutions were put into place, are likely slightly alleviated due to the measures put in place to fix the surface level issues, which if done correctly, should bring some confidence to the team and boost morale. However, these morale issues should still be directly remedied, possibly by talking to stakeholders such as the sponsors to extend the deadlines and relieve a bit of stress off the team. However, as time is growing short according to the situation, this would probably have to be balanced with the amount of extra overtime the team may need to put in in order to meet original or extended deadlines. Furthermore, it is important for the project manager to monitor the team a little closer regarding the communication issues, as even though the already taken actions may have solved some of the most urgent issues, the lack of communication may be an even deeper-rooted issue with the project team that needs monitoring to diagnose and fix for the project to run smoothly for the rest of its duration.

**Rewarding a team member for a job well done or promoting an outstanding employee is**

**easy. Counseling a poor performing employee, addressing a sensitive issue with a peer**

**or trying to find a solution amongst two conflicting project team members is not. The**

**reality is no matter how uncomfortable these conversations can be, we all can relate to**

**being found in them as leaders. The outcome of the difficult conversation all depends on**

**how you handle the discussion. How would you approach this type of conversation?**

**What are some the steps you will follow to ensure a constructive outcome?**

As the prompt may suggest, the three conflicts here require different approaches to solve them constructively and without any damage done to the project or relationships between people in the project.

Although the first two scenarios, the poor performing employee and a sensitive issue with a peer, are both issues involving the project manager and a team member, there are certain nuances to dealing with the situation that differ between the two. In the first scenario, it is important to identify the reason for why the employee is performing poorly. Diagnosing the problem like this is the first step, however, this could also be where the approach ends. If the poorly-performing employee has a reason that cannot be helped, such as a desire to move jobs or simply quit the company, as a project manager I would not stop the person. I might encourage the person to make sure to keep working and maintain their healthy relationships, but otherwise, there is not much incentive for this person to perform at full capacity. However, if the reasons for why the worker is performing poorly are within my control, I will take measures to resolve it. If it is an issue about communication and understanding of the project, I will go over the project charter with the person and maybe a few of the most closely associated members of the team regarding his part of the project, reiterating and reinforcing understanding of that person’s role in the project. In this way, the team member will hopefully regain an understanding and maybe present any further issues they see with the project, boosting engagement and contributing positively to the project. If the issue is technical skill, perhaps I can put this person with another member of the project team with greater technical skill in more of a developmental, supporting role. This would allow the person to develop their technical skills while still contributing as much as they can to the project, so that they will have greater skills in the future.

Addressing a sensitive issue is similar to the first scenario, with a few nuances. Here, the cause of conflict is already clear and does not have to be diagnosed like the last one. However, even though the cause is clear, the “sensitivity” of the issue portrays a lack of willingness to cooperate from the team member in question. Whether it be an insecurity about the person’s technical skills or something completely unrelated to the project impacting their personal life, the team member is unwilling to talk about it or change. However, as the project manager, I must make an effort to not let detrimental behavior drag down the project. Therefore, I would split my approaches toward this topic into two sections: project-related and non-project-related. Project-related issues are addressed similarly to the poorly-performing employee scenario but with extra emphasis on the project goals; for example, if the person was insecure about their technical skill regarding the project but refused to address it, I would talk to them about changing their role while emphasizing the final goal of project completion, steering the conversation away from their actual ability. In this way, the team member may be more willing to accommodate for the benefit of the project if I do not attack his technical ability. However, if the reason is non-project-related, such as something like a family tragedy, there is not particularly much I can do with that person directly. I can offload some of their work onto others in order to give them space for a quicker recovery, however, this team member will need time to recover from such a sensitive subject. Thus, through this kind of method, I can minimize the impact on the project and give the team member the space to make a quicker recovery and also improve the relationship between myself and the team member.

If the conflict is between two people, it is important to exercise collaborating conflict resolution methods in order to achieve the most productive outcome out of conflict. As a project manager, I should drive conversation between the two and be actively involved in suggesting new possibilities and outcomes for the conflict which would satisfy both parties, as well as drive away a hostile environment if the conflict ever reaches such a boiling point. However, this collaboration is only a best-case solution to a vague scenario: time left in the project timeline and content of the conflict also plays into the equation. Because the collaboration method takes multi-directional communication to come to a win-win outcome, it takes a lot of time to resolve every conflict in this way. It also assumes that both sides present a valid and beneficial position to the table. If the conflict is within a time-pressured scenario, perhaps compromising between the two positions would provide a quicker, temporary solution that would keep the project moving and minimize any impact on the deadlines within the project. If one position is clearly better than the other, I might completely reject the lesser position with sufficient reasoning as to why the other position was more beneficial to the project. Sometimes, if the conflict is small enough to not warrant project manager intervention, allowing the team members to solve it themselves would allow me more time to focus on other aspects of the project, and possibly build greater coherence within the team itself. Therefore, while collaboration is the most ideal, the situation does not always allow for that strategy, and sometimes a different strategy ends up being the most ideal to resolve that conflict. However, priority lies in meeting the project goals, both in punctuality and quality.