

Managing Information Technology Projects

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Peter Brueckner

Workshop Description

Information technology projects frequently run into difficulties or fail altogether. It is the author's belief that most often this is the result of failure to carry out the fundamental management activities required for success. Examples are a failure to clarify objectives, allowing uncontrolled changes in project scope, or maintaining inadequate communications to track progress.

Thus the objective of this workshop is the review the basics of project management. Ultimately, however, the most important ingredient for success is the will to carry out or enforce these basic requirements.

The workshop was supplemented by a short practical exercise to illustrate the subject and promote a forum for discussion.

Introduction

- A project is an identifiable item of work that is expected to achieve a result and has a beginning, a middle and an end.
- The objective of project management is to complete the work in a controlled and timely way so the desired result is obtained with an efficient use of resources.

We Will Focus on the Basics

- Think About Common Reasons for Failure
- Plan from the Top Down
- The Basics are Simple but not Always Easy
- Impact of Errors Increases with Stage

Project Goal

- Vision
- The Real Goal - Business Purpose
- Specific Objectives
- Determine What will Contribute to Success and How It will be Measured
- Estimate Risks and Probability of Success
- Ensure Support for the Project

Project Scope

- Base Scope on the Defined Objectives
- Be Specific
- Identify Significant Excluded Items
- Determine Involvement of Others
- Establish a Change Protocol
- List Assumptions

Project Team and Management

- Determine Who is the Project Manager
- Appoint a Project Team
- Ensure Requisite Expertise is Available
- Define Responsibilities and Authority
- Ensure Availability and Commitment

Project Plan

- Phases and Milestones
- Schedule
- Work Estimates
- Resources
- Tracking System
- Systems Development Lifecycle

Process

- Needs Analysis
- Specifications and Requirements
- Task Definition and Organization
- Modeling/Prototyping
- Develop Accurate Estimates of Work and Duration

Process Control

- Unambiguous Assignments to Staff
- Reporting Protocol
- Assess Progress
- QA Testing
- Control Scope

Communications and Contacts

- Internal Documentation
- Meetings and Minutes
- Status Reports
- Define External Contacts
- Reporting Must be Forthright and Complete

Budget

- Does not have to be in Dollars
- Be Realistic
- Consider Full Cost Accounting
- Establish Sensitivity
- Track and Determine Variation

Changes and Amendments

- Recognize Changes as Such
- Includes Additions, Deletions Alterations
- Establish a Change Protocol
- Determine Impact of a Change
- Have the Authority to Disallow Changes
- Just Because It's a Good Idea Doesn't Mean It Should be Done

Summary - Key Success Factors

- Clearly Define Objectives and Scope
- Follow an Orderly Process
- Obtain Information and Expertise
- Open Communications
- Track Progress