

Secrets to Successful Project Management

What is a “project” and how does it differ from “business as usual”?

Project management is the discipline of planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives. A project is a temporary endeavor, having a defined beginning and end (usually constrained by date, but can be by funding or deliverables), undertaken to meet particular goals and objectives, usually to bring about beneficial change or added value. The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast to business as usual (or operations), which are repetitive, permanent or semi-permanent functional work to produce products or services.

In practice, the management of projects vs. operations is found to be quite different, and therefore both require the development of distinct technical skills and the adoption of separate management.

Challenge of Successful Project Management

The primary challenge of project management is to achieve all of the project goals and objectives within the project constraints. Typical constraints are scope, time, and budget. The secondary—and more ambitious—challenge is to optimize the allocation and integration of inputs (people, time, budget) necessary to meet the stated objectives.

Evaluating Project Management Skills?

Skill at managing projects is like conducting a symphony while a typhoon rages around you. It is complex and like any complex skill set, you need to break it down. In our Project Management Effectiveness assessment, we break the skills down into **8 core competencies**. To be effective, a great Project Manager needs skills and abilities in these 8 areas:

1. Setting goals and standards
2. Results orientation
3. Communicating clearly
4. Planning and scheduling work
5. Change handling
6. Making decisions and weighing risk
7. Managing under pressure
8. Organization and delegation

But it doesn't end there....

Each competency is composed of **twelve behaviors**. Let's take the first competency above as an example -- **Setting Goals and Standards**. Here are **12 behaviors that underlie that particular competency**:

1. Sets personal project goals and standards at the outset

2. Demonstrates that project outcomes need a clear path to achieve them
3. Converts loose intentions into hard and tangible goals
4. Looks for innovative ways to generate enthusiasm in others about project targets
5. Sets standards and targets that are specific, action-oriented and realistic
6. Does not accept generalized project goals for which results are not specific
7. Sets a closer or easier project target if the team seems to be “drifting”
8. Clearly defines how to get from A to B for each major project task
9. Keeps checking to make sure that everyone is on the right track
10. Matches broad directional goals with steps that can be taken immediately
11. Stays focused and does not let people get side-tracked or thrown off course
12. Can quickly get people to decide on a single direction out of competing alternatives

So, one of the secrets to great Project Management skills is to understand and assess the skill level of an individual in each of the 8 competency areas to determine where to target continuing development as a Project Manager and get that project off to a great start!!!

To learn more about Project Management tools and resources, and to check out our online Project Management Effectiveness Profile assessment, visit our Project Management forum at <http://store.readytomanage.com/ProjectManagementForum.aspx>