

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to gain an understanding of project management and to give a brief overview of the methodology that underpins most formally run projects. Many organisations do not employ full time Project Managers and it is common to pull together a project team to address a specific need. While most people are not formally skilled in project methodology, taking a role in a project team can be an excellent learning opportunity and can enhance a person's career profile.

A project is a temporary and one-time exercise which varies in duration. It is undertaken to address a specific need in an organisation, which may be to create a product or service or to change a business process. This is in direct contrast to how an organisation generally works on a permanent basis to produce their goods or services. For example the work of an organisation may be to manufacture trucks on a continual basis, therefore the work is considered functional as the organisation creates the same products or services over-and-over again and people hold their roles on a semi permanent basis

A project is generally initiated by a perceived need in an organisation. Being a one off undertaking, it will have a start and an end, constraints of budgets, time and resources and involves a purpose built team. Project teams are made up of many different team members, for example, end users/customers (of a product or service), representatives from Information Technology (IT), a project leader, business analysts, trainers, the project sponsor and other stakeholders.

Project management is the discipline of managing all the different resources and aspects of the project in such a way that the resources will deliver all the output that is required to complete the project within the defined scope, time, and cost constraints. These are agreed upon in the project initiation stage and by the time the project begins all stakeholders and team members will have a clear understanding and acceptance of the process, methodology and expected outcomes. A good project manager utilises a formal process that can be audited and used as a blue print for the project, and this is achieved by employing a project management methodology.

Goals and Objectives Project Management

The objectives and goals of the organization can be achieved in an efficient manner through proper project management. Project manager plays a key role in managing the project. They forecast all the risks that might arise during the production process and ensure that all the risks are addressed with a proper plan. By following a good project management structure the employees will have a good understanding about their roles and responsibilities, they will also be aware of the schedule of the deliverables and will have the opportunity to plan their schedule accordingly. A good project management structure ensures that the project is completed within specified time period and within budget.

Project Management Institute has identified nine key areas within project management, and they are as follows:

1. Integration Management
2. Scope Management
3. Time Management
4. Cost Management
5. Quality Management
6. Human Resource Management
7. Communication Management
8. Risk Management
9. Procurement Management

Project Phases, Life Cycles, and Incorporating User-Centered Design Principles

Project Phases

To have a better control on the project, the project is divided into different phases. Each phase defines the tasks and activities that have to be completed within specific time period. It also outlines how many team members will be allocated in each phase so that all resources are used to their full potential.

Project Life-Cycle and UCD

A project life-cycle refers to all phases of a project, from initiation to completion of the project. When defining the project life-cycle, the first phase in the cycle is referred as zero. According to PMI, there can be four to five phases in a project life-cycle. Some may even contain more phases, it basically depends upon the complexity and size of the project. Most of the companies across the globe make use of Agile or Waterfall life-cycle approach. You can also incorporate user-centered design (UCD) best practices and methods. A user-centered design process includes planning, collecting and analyzing data, writing content, designing and developing and testing

Project Plan

Project plan plays a crucial role for effective project management. When the project manager designs a project plan, they have to ensure that they include all user-centered design best practices and methodologies

A project plan consists aspects such as objectives, scope, budget, and team roles and responsibilities, schedule, assumptions, dependencies, risk assessment and management plan, and change control plan.

Basically, a project plan outlines a complete set of activities that needs to be undertaken by team members. It is also possible that the sponsor may request some new changes in the final product, in that case, the project plan must be updated accordingly. Then project manager may also include charter agreement in their project plan. This decision has to be taken by the project manager

depending upon the project requirements. A project charter is a document which is signed by the project sponsor.

Scheduling

Scheduling is one of the key aspects of project management. If the project is not properly scheduled then it might lead to a project failure. Scheduling basically defines what are the activities that have to be carried, and also clarifying who is responsible for carrying out these activities.

Conclusion

Projects and project management processes vary because of their size and complexities involved in each project. It is advisable that the project managers gain a thorough understanding of the project requirements and implement all the phases of project management to smoothly execute the project.