

Keeping All of the Plates in the Air – Notes from Presentation – 09/30/2011

Since this presentation was interactive – I captured notes from the session to share with participants and anyone interested in tips and tricks for Project Management.

First we explored fears and challenges of project management ... this exercise resulted in the following list – can you relate to any of these? For each fear and/or challenge, refer to the listed sections for resources, tips and tools.

- Keeping everyone going – getting everyone to help (*collaboration, team building, communication*)
- Not Finishing – Delegating (*planning, communication, evaluation*)
- Not being able to keep up with the details (*planning, collaboration – tracking tools*)
- Time to do it well and within timeframe /deadlines (*planning*)
- Creating something from nothing (*planning, collaboration*)
- No one liking my path and refusing to help with what I need (*communication, planning, team building*)
- Directing people without coming off as too demanding/or rude (*communication*)
- Missing an important aspect (*communication, planning*)
- Getting the perfect result (*planning*)
- Not having the resources (*planning*)
- Explaining the procedures of the project (*communication*)
- No one will come (*planning*)
- Coordinating all aspects so everyone is informed (*communication, planning, collaboration, evaluation*)
- Failure of project (*planning*)
- Staying organized – (*collaboration*)

The group then explored the following five aspects of planning, along with appropriate tools.

Communication

Key to a successful project manager. You need to identify how you are going to communicate with your team, clarify and check for understanding when you communicate, and follow-up to ensure that the products meet the project goals.

Tips:

- Make it a point to communicate with each team member on a regular basis in a positive, constructive manner.
- Identify your communication tools and make sure that everyone on the team uses those tools.
- Provide positive and constructive feedback on a constant basis to your project team.
- Communicate in a respectful, proactive manner.
- **Listen** to your team's ideas and together evaluate the value of each idea. Never discredit any idea.
- Treat your project team as your customers and provide them the best possible service.
- Avoid micromanaging (be sure to have a conversation with your team to make sure you know what everyone's definition of micromanagement is)
- Always clarify with team members to see if they are on the same page as you – or at least in the same chapter!
- Make sure that communication is a reciprocal process.
- Work on your communication skills – take a class if you feel it is a weak area.
- Be proactive as a project manager when you communicate – take care of issues either before they arise or immediately after. Resolve problems immediately.
- Ask your team “What can I do for you to help you complete your tasks?”
- Take copious notes!

Tools

- E-mail
 - Wikis
 - Face-to-Face
 - Proactive problem-solving
 - Nothing beats face to face interaction
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PLANNING

Tips

- Take time to plan – identify target audience, create SMART goals, outcomes and outputs. Taking time to plan in the beginning, saves time later in the project.
- Before starting make sure you identify
 - Vision (can be impact also): what experience do you want patrons to have?
 - Objective(s): how can you deliver that experience? (See SMART Goals)
 - Tasks: what needs to be done.
 - Help: who should be involved
 - How will you measure results.
- Create a timeline with milestone celebrations and end of project evaluation (both the process and the product)
- Do a SWOT exercise – brainstorm strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Use these lists to help mitigate future project issues. (refer to <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/worksheets/SWOTAnalysisDownload.htm>)
- Outcome Based Planning – Use a planning matrix such as provided by Shaping Outcomes to clarify all the various components of your project. (If you need more information refer to <http://www.shapingoutcomes.org>)
- Planning should include all team members.
- Identify team members who should be involved by looking at the human resources needed to successfully complete the project.
- Determine what type of project management tool you will need to help you track all the aspects of the project (Excel Spreadsheet, Wikki, Action Method)

Tools

- SMART Goals <http://topachievement.com/smart.html>
 - Shaping Outcomes <http://www.shapingoutcomes.org>
 - SWOT <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/worksheets/SWOTAnalysisDownload.htm>
 - Project Management Tools
 - Action Method <http://www.actionmethod.com>
 - ICfL Project Guide (Excel Spreadsheet Template) <http://libraries.idaho.gov/files/projectplanguide.xls>
 - Wikkis (Wiggio [<http://wiggio.com>] , PBWorks [<http://pbworks.com>], Wikispaces [<http://wikispaces.com>])
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TEAM BUILDING

Tips

- Communicate with your team to identify the tools and resources they need to do their job.
- Before you start planning bring the team members together and have them engage in some team building activities – especially if they have never worked together before.
 - Work on communication
 - Clarify terminology
 - Identify expectations of all team members
 - Identify what means of communication will be used during the project
 - Encourage flexibility
 - Empower team members to solve problems and make decisions.
 - Emphasis the importance of each team member to the success of the project.
- Continue team building throughout the project by
 - Providing constructive feedback
 - Recognizing task well done
 - Celebrating milestones
 - Going the extra mile to make sure everyone has what they need
 - Assisting with problem-solving and decision making as needed.
- Make sure ownership of the project is shared by all team members

Tools

- **Teampedia** – an online resource wiki for team building activities
http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page
- **Team Building Resources** – <http://libraries.idaho.gov/files/TeamBldgTrngResources.pdf>
- **Team Building** by the World Health Organization – great resource for the concept of team building – under 20 pages, short – to the point:
<http://www.who.int/cancer/modules/Team%20building.pdf>

COLLABORATION

Tips

- Use online tools to facilitate sharing and working together (wikki's, Google docs)
- Encourage team members to discuss project activities, work together to solve problems and keep you apprised of their progress.
- The collective knowledge of the team is greater than one.
- Reward excellent examples of collaboration through whatever means you might have!

- If there are individuals who you find difficult to work with – recognize it and then find ways to successfully work with them.
- Identify expectations and make sure that all team members understand.

Tools

- Action Method <http://www.actionmethod.com>
 - ICfL Project Guide (Excel Spreadsheet Template)
<http://libraries.idaho.gov/files/projectplanguide.xls>
 - Wikkis
 - Wiggio [<http://wiggio.com>]
 - PBWorks [<http://pbworks.com>]
 - Wikispaces [<http://wikispaces.com>])
 - Web Conferencing Tool: AdobeConnect – <http://adobeconnect.com>
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EVALUATION

Tips

- Identify what success looks like
- Determine what evaluation tools you are going to use
- Determine when and what you will evaluate [milestones, project completion, the process, the product]
- Identify who is responsible for this part of the project.
- Allow time after the project to celebrate the end.
- Conduct a PLUS/DELTA (Plus – what worked well – Delta – what could we do better)
- Completing an evaluation/survey at the end of a project, bring closure to the activity, allows the team members to celebrate, and provides an opportunity to learn from mistakes.

Tools

- SurveyMonkey – <http://surveymonkey.com>
- Google Docs – <http://docs.google.com>

Other Resources for information on Project Management

WebJunction: <http://webjunction.org/project-management>