ENGAGING EMPLOYEES SUCCESSFULLY IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Engaging employees in project management practices can be a daunting task in all the organizations. With the expansion of global teams, new technological advances in global meetings and larger groups of diverse employees, working towards a project's success, it is imperative to engage all members of the team in the planning and implementation of a project life cycle. How can project managers effectively engage teams of employees with varying degrees of skills, expertise, education and experiences? This paper includes a discussion of methods project managers can use with employees through interactions, training the trainer, engagement, and employee buy-in.

KEYWORDS: Daunting Task, Global Teams, Diverse Employees & Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Engaging Employees Successfully in Project Management Practices

Project management contributes to the success of an organization, but project failures gain the most attention (Allen, Alleyne, Farmer, McRae, & Turner, 2014). An efficient and capable manager is important for a successful project (Miterev, Engwall, & Jerbrant, 2015).Companies larger than 500 employees have the resources to maintain a project management department. Small businesses have limited resources and may not execute projects using the recognized standards of project management principles (Marcelino-Sadaba, Perez-Ezcurdia, Lazcano, & Villanueva, 2013). Small business owners often overlook the initial and final phases of a project because they are inexperienced, lack knowledge, or lack time (Marcelino-Sadaba et al., 2013). There is emphasis on the importance of using sound project management practices and principles in small- and medium-sized organizations to achieve process efficiencies and maximize revenue. Specifically, small- and medium-sized organization leadership is encouraged to adopt the fundamental concepts of project management and engage employees in those practices.

Vittal (2010) defined project management as, the functions performed by the project manager (PM) utilizing standard processes, techniques, and measures to accomplish cost and schedule objectives of a project while optimizing resource use. Further explanation of PM processes, techniques, and measures is in the body of this article, viewing project management as a collective work combining the tenants of art and science as noted by Austin, Browne, Haas, Kenyatta, and Zuluetta (2013). PMs are concerned about their customer approval, the project's final cost, and whether the project is completed on time, in addition to accomplishing the project's goals by actualizing the start, arranging, executing, controlling or observing, and finishing tasks (Nwagbogwu, 2011).

As a soft skill, project management requires PMs to combine their technical knowledge creatively with their leadership abilities in executing the projects (Dragos-Paul, 2014). There are differences between a leader and a manager (Austin et al., 2013). Managers organize workloads and systematically execute the company's vision. A leader will encourage and inspire employees, gain their trust, and guide them to reach the company's goals (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2016). A strong leader is essential in successful project management (Austin et al., 2013).

There is mounting pressure for businesses, to have effective project management and be able to execute projects with a clear strategy, while maintaining efficiency (Hubbard & Bolles, 2012). With global expansion influencing the manner in which companies conduct business, the need for efficiency and effective management of projects has increased. Between 2002 and 2012, the goods and services produced were25% of all goods and services produced in history (Hubbard & Bolles, 2012). These staggering statistics are indicators that project management should be a standard, in doing business (Nicholls, Lewis, & Eschenbach, 2015).

DEFINING PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management is an organizational approach to delivering projects (Heagney, 2012), which defines the management of projects as a method, to assist organizations in optimizing their business performance and executing successful projects (Crawford, 2005). According to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), project management is the "application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities, to meet the project requirements" (Project Management Institute [PMI], PMBOK Guide, 2016, p. 6). The definition of project management is a collection of activities with a common goal (Olsen, 1971).

PMs are the individuals within an organization who spearhead and lead the project team, through the execution of the project tasks. Leadership mandates PMs to deliver projects using tools from the project management toolkit, such as responsibility matrices, resource-loaded schedules, risk analysis matrices, action item logs and cost metrics (Olsen, 1971). The practice of using those tools may aid project team members, to have a deeper understanding of how to manage a team, provide feedback, assess status and risks and finish the project successfully. The PMBOK identified best practice PM knowledge as that, which provides a common language for PMs and clarifies uniform standards of project management, quality, excellence and professionalism (Pant& Baroudi, 2008).

One of the key elements of project management is planning. Planning occurs before the project begins and throughout the entire project. The planning phase is cycled as the project moves from phase to phase. Employees who physically work on the project need to be involved in the planning of the project (Heagney, 2012). Project management is not just about scheduling tasks. The schedule is a major component of any project; however, it is critical to have a thorough understanding of what the project is, who will be performing the work, and what steps are necessary to accomplish the work (Crawford, 2005). As organizations grow and become more global in nature and activities become more diverse, it is imperative to engage all members of the team in the planning of these activities (Olsen, 1971).

PROJECT MANAGEMENT BENEFITS TO ORGANIZATIONS

There are benefits to organizations in implementing an organized approach to utilizing the project management methodologies (Braglia & Frosolini, 2014). The process of project management provides teams with pertinent information and collaborative tools to successfully implement and complete a project. Currently, organization leaders use disconnected processes poorly designed for managing complex projects (Braglia& Frosolini, 2014).

Poorly implemented project management can create issues for organizations such as a lack of acceptance in practice, limited effectiveness, a lack of understanding of the tools, and unclear applications of the tools (Ahlemann, Arbi, Kaiser, &Heck, 2012). With global organizations and the geographical separation of decision-makers in organizations, leaders have been looking at alternate ways to deal with cooperation, teamwork, and continuous improvement within their organization (Braglia& Frosolini, 2014). Effective execution of project management practices and tools, combined with a well thought-out project plan, can be useful for organizations dealing with these new global challenges.

Project management is the key to the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Turner & Müller, 2005). Successful task administration can result in vital procedure changes. Project success can be an impetus for business advancements and change required for an organization to acknowledge focused prevalence (Turner & Müller, 2005). Change is a constant in the worldwide business environment, with the outcome being insecure situations that require powerful administration (Nwagbogwu, 2011). Employing sound project management principles and practices can aid an organization and its leaders to effectively manage change and meet performance goals (Nwagbogwu, 2011).

The benefits of employing project management principles and practices, as identified in the PMBOK, can positively affect the organization and the employees. These advantages can occur throughout the project lifecycle, reducing risks, costs, and requirements/scope creep. Proper initiation and planning steps ensure the stakeholders' needs are clear with authorization to work, defining and documenting all phases of the project clearly. Working the plan or executing the work by utilizing the tools and processes as defined in the PMBOK or similar PM methodology is best.

BRINGING LEADERSHIP STYLES INTO THE PRACTICE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Making the best choice is a key part of powerful administration (Zheng, Yang, & McLean, 2010). Underlining project administration methodologies and strategies to accomplish targets in a cost-productive manner requires an efficient methodology, especially when viewing the project management office (PMO) as a socially built entity (Sarantis, Smithson, Charlabidis, & Askounis, 2010). According to Zheng et al. (2010), there can be a standardized approach to project management with differences in leadership styles that can assist companies in achieving successful project outcomes that include management best practices.

Best practices in project administration are on-going objectives of organizations (Nwagbogwu, 2011; Somerville, Craig, & Hendry, 2010). Best practices are procedures that function on a redundant premise, lead to the upper-hand, can stay within a positive execution pattern, and if necessary, help determine issues during emergencies (Summerville et al., 2010). PMs depend on best practices and encounters in boosting hierarchical execution, generally known as the triple imperative: cost, degree, and timetable (Murugesan, 2012; Nwagbogwu, 2011).

The PM's leadership style as an element in evaluating project success has not been prominent in the literature (Turner & Müller, 2005). The literature on project management has not shown leadership styles or competencies of PMs as factors relative to the success of a project (Lundy & Morin, 2013; Turner & Müller, 2005). PMs work with employees who have a range of skill sets, requiring them to have strong leadership skills and adopt a variety of leadership styles, to meet business goals (Murugesan, 2012). PMs lead employees in completing project goals (Lee, 2011; Summerville et al., 2010); adjusting project managers conduct to that of the administration (Turner& Müller, 2005). PMs, finish project objectives by prioritizing the supporters' needs before their necessities, showing normal transformational initiative (Murugesan, 2012; Tessema, 2010). Individual preferences often influence PMs' leadership styles based on their competence, project phase,

and project multiculturalism (Turner & Müller, 2005).

According to Burns (1995), a transformational leader exhibits charisma, is a visionary, provides inspiration and motivation, is empathetic to individuals, and provides intellectual stimulation to others. Transformational leaders persuade the project team to work together efficiently by looking past individual interests (Turner & Müller, 2005). Strong relational equity and shared understanding of goals allows effective congruence between concepts and communications to ensure project success (Narayanaswamy, Grover, & Henry, 2013). Interchange abilities, a transformational characteristic, accept the need to advance open talks about administration desires. Project management literature authors indicated that open communication between PMs and team members is a critical factor to project success (Hagen & Park, 2013).

PMs are worried about consumer loyalty and undertaking accomplishment by measuring expense and timetable execution, in addition to the fulfillment of project goals by actualizing the start, arranging, execution, control or observing, and shutting-down stages (Nwagbogwu, 2011). One important factor affecting project success is the PM's ability to manage resources, schedule, roles, responsibilities, objectives, priorities, stakeholder relationships, and risk (Hagen & Park, 2013). Project management is loaded with difficulties and dangers in the present working environment, especially because organizations expect to make money (Karlsen, 2011). Adding components to project administration achievement incorporate the authoritative society, to be specific, human instinct, social connection, and ecological discernments (Karlsen, 2011). Categorizing these factors as project ambiguity that may affect the project success, the PM needs to be empowered and authorized to navigate through these unforeseen circumstances to achieve customer satisfaction (Hagen & Park, 2013).

Lechler and Dvir (2010) stated that PMO culture is linked to project success. The organizational structure is not linked to project success (Lechler & Dvir, 2010). The amount of power or empowerment a PM has is linked to project success. A PM with little power needs administration buy-in (Lechler & Dvir, 2010). Organization leaders are using PMs as a liaison between the business and senior management, and are hiring PMs for senior management roles (Crawford, 2005).

PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE AND ORGANIZATIONS: PMI / PMO

The Project Management Institute (PMI) developed practice standards, in addition to providing research and education. PMI defined project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to develop activities in alignment with project and company requirements (PMI, 2016). PMI created the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) to guide PMs through the phases of their respective projects using common processes and best practices (PMI, 2016). Project management has been in use for many years, the first record of effective project management projects includes the Great Wall of China, the Coliseum, and Stonehenge (Seymour & Hussein, 2014).

Because of a strained economy and complexity of projects, many organizations have implemented an organizational entity called the PMO. Organizations with PMOs have reduced the number of over-budget and overtime projects (Julian, 2011). Necessity in the improvement of performance outcomes, lessons learned, and support for PMs was an impetus for approximately 45% of the PMOs (Julian, 2011). However, there is limited research indicating the success of PMOs (Muller, Gluckler, & Aubry, 2013).

Outsourcing the project management function can negatively influence the project and outcomes (Erickson & Ranganathan, 2006). Better structure and project management, governance directly leads to better overall experiences for

outsourced projects (Erickson& Ranganathan, 2006). Each company has its culture and conduct project management with specific tools, knowledge, and goals. A Community of Practice (CoP) is a term used in the project management context in which organizations share their knowledge, successes, and failures (Jugdev, 2012). It is a form of peer-to-peer learning. Organizations using spreadsheets to track projects will continue to struggle until they implement a PMO. It is hard to use multiple sources to track a project and unlikely that the benefits of information technology (IT) occur in the tracking (Pande, 2012). According to the PMI (2016), 64% of projects meet their goals and 70% of companies report having at least one failed project in the last year.

APPLICATION OF PM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Austin et al. (2013), there is a lack of formal project management training in higher education. There are 139 institutions offering a graduate degree or graduate curriculum in project management compared to 1,555 institutions offering a graduate degree in business management and management (Grad Schools, 2016). The need for PMs increases with the complexity of projects. According to PMI (2016), 2020 will bring 15.7 million new project management roles. The lack of institutions with a project management program limits the number of students graduating with skills.

Best practices include alignment, benchmarking and metrics, change management, constructability, disputes prevention and resolution, front-end planning, implementation of research, lessons learned, materials management, partnering, planning for startup, project risk assessment, quality management, team building, and zero accidents techniques (Azhar, Grau, Burts, & Gibson, 2014). Of these best practices, nine are soft skills. Formal project management practice is lacking in academia (Austin et al., 2013). However, project management skills are the third most sought after skill by employers (Austin et al., 2013). Portz (2014) suggested project management students need to learn to use projects, but professors avoid team-based learning because of the challenges of personality and motivational differences.

Businesses historically used engineers as PMs because of their technical knowledge. In the 21st century, business leaders realize that PMs need to understand the business operations (Richardson, Earnhardt, & Marion, 2015). Students need to learn about project management and sound characteristics and skills associated with a PM. In a study of IT PMs, necessary skills were personal integrity, team development, client management, planning and control, and problem solving (Richardson et al., 2015). According to Williams van Rooij (2011), effective PMs need to understand the project's technology and industry, management skills, and interpersonal skills. Williams van Rooij added that, communication and leadership skills were essential. A mission of academia is to produce graduates who are knowledgeable about project management but also soft skills. According to Anthony and Garner (2016), college graduates are not receiving adequate training in soft skills. There are fewer students graduating with project management skills than demanded, and they are not learning the necessary soft skills to be successful. With an unpredictable economy, businesses are reducing training and development budgets (PMI, 2016). Developing PMs in the workplace is challenging, and business leaders are relying on project management graduates to fill the gap.

LEARNING THROUGH INTERACTIONS

Bigger organizations may have a PMO for the formality of structure and collaboration identified with task administration; small- and medium-sized organizations might not have the minimum amount of employees or projects to legitimize a PMO. Thus, different instruments for learning and development are the key tasks. One such component that the undertaking may influence is an intra-authoritative group of practice.

Groups of practice are one component for business experts to learn and advance in the work environment (Brown & Duguid, 1991). For task administrators, particularly working in organizations with generally few companion project supervisors, investment in an outside group of practice can be a basic means for enhancing project administration abilities. Research discoveries point to a few bland drivers and advantages got from groups of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The mid-21st century saw a rising reception of Web 2.0 advances (e.g., Online networking, web journals, online classes) to build the intelligence among representatives to energize support in activities and improve the sharing of thoughts (McKinsey & Company, 2009).

DEVELOPING FRAMEWORK

Cooke-Davies (2001) examined a comparable examination question: What can enhance project administration practices and extend execution? As contended by Shi (2011), effectively executing and enhancing project administration is still an application subject to consider. In spite of the fact that researchers of undertaking administration give some explanations on the best way to enhance project administration, organization, authority needs direction on which key task administration changes activities they ought to focus their endeavors on (Mullaly & Thomas, 2009; Shi, 2011).

Shi (2011) exhibited a methodology called the Value Adding Path Map (VAPM), which can control an organization, methodology, in presenting and executing project management. As indicated by Shi (2011), it is the coordination of the "hard" and "delicate" undertaking administration framework executions that make the biggest worth to an organization with the minimum project. The "hard" project administration framework implies the conventional methods for task administration, execution, including the undertaking administration procedures, preparing and information administration, and devices and strategies (Shi, 2011).

Project management incorporates a process-based approach that takes advantage of a project-centric vernacular; the language of project management is a key to understanding how to attain the efficiency project management offers to an organization (Brière, Proulx, Flores, & Laporte, 2015). The soft project management framework incorporates the general administration framework and the task administration society, which implies that the organization perceives that project administration adds to the achievement of the organization.

In a phenomenological study, Hamersly (2015) found 10 themes culminated in the identification of strategies for implementing best practices relevant to the integration of successful virtual project management. The major themes pertained to three broad areas: (a) structure that accommodates skills and technology for success, (b) governance leading to efficient project management, and (c) collaboration practices across diverse environments (Hamersly, 2015). Employees in small companies must do more with fewer resources (O'Sheedy, 2014). Small businesses with small projects do not implement the "hard" project management system because the projects are simple (O'Sheedy, 2014). Small companies should adopt project management methods because there is potential for improvement (O'Sheedy, 2014). To stay competitive, small businesses need to accommodate large projects requiring "hard" and "soft" project management system implementations. Gustavsson and Hallin (2013) indicated that the terms "hard" and "soft" belong together in project management.

TRAINING THE TRAINER: SNOWBALL EFFECT

According to Ramazani and Jergeas (2015), "Clearly, there appears to be a gap between what education providers are offering and what is needed to deal with projects in today's work environment" (p. 42). Train-the-trainer is not a new

method; however, it seems to be especially effective in groups with a common goal, such as PMs (Stoyan, 2008). The train-the-trainer method has the benefit of the experiences of the trainers and curriculum managers (Brière et al., 2015). Based on research conducted in 2012, a PM training plan utilizing the train-the-trainer methodology at a small aerospace company resulted in certifying over 40 PMs, resulting in increased revenue and value within the aerospace and defense markets (Leavitt, 2012).

Train-the-trainer methodology was successfully implemented to improve project management knowledge and performance of the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INLA) contract for the U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2010). The INLA contract was a global operation operated by a major U.S. government contractor; the PMO of the contract benefitted by a train-the-trainer in sourced Project Management Professional (PMP) certification program (Stoyan, 2008). The INLA training program was successful in certifying 10 PMPs in the first 12 months. A premise of the training program was that newly certified PMPs were expected to help teach the next course, creating a snowball effect of training resources (Stoyan, 2008). Participants in the snowball system of know-how transfer also need to be included in other planning and interdepartmental activities (Mühlemeyer & Clarke, 1997). At leadership conferences, PMI has encouraged their chapters to provide professional development, such as a PMP certification course (Mounir, 2006). The PMI-Space Coast (PMISC) Florida chapter successfully adopted the method to insource their PMP certification course in 2015; training their own chapter PMPs to teach PMs in their specific area of expertise *(*PMISC, 2015). In the examples, successful training enabled PMs to attain the PMP certification. The idea of utilizing a train-the-trainer method to improve efficiency results was not new, just repackaged for PMP certification training. Once trainees passed their PMP exam, these newly certified PMs would train others, creating a snowball effect responsible for providing a high value of training at a reasonable cost (Stoyan, 2008). The train-the-trainer method is an efficient solution to professional development needs because a workshop for a small group of trainers takes limited readiness, resources, and materials for a limited target population that will later have a multiplier effect resulting in training large groups in diverse locations (Levine et al., 2007)

EMPLOYEE BUY-IN

Employees expect and value training with the benefit of employee satisfaction and retention (Sandhya & Pradeep Kumar, 2014). Viewing organizations as rational, logical entities with a hierarchy, role and offices, cooperation is unnatural and requires standardization of work practices, a hierarchy of authority, formal system of rules, and communication for success (Analoui, 1994). Jerbrant (2014) stated: "Current theory falls short in its ability to explain how the management of project-based companies evolve because of their need to be agile and adaptable in a changing environment" (p. 33). Jerbrant inferred that arranging an interdepartmental training camp on project-based procedures would resolve common reasons for conflict. Jugdev and Mathur (2013) asserted that "companies that develop effective intra-project and inter-project learning practices can improve their competitiveness, since these learning practices are intangible knowledge-based assets" (p. 633). Organizational leaders who implement project management methodologies should ensure that departments outside of the PMO understand the processes and the requirements of the PMO (PMI, 2013). One solution to ensuring interdepartmental cooperation in project management is to include representatives from other departments that the PMO interfaces within PM training programs. Once trained in PM methods, processes, and procedures, interdepartmental bias becomes less evident by reducing interdepartmental stress by embracing project management methodology across the organization (PMI, 2013). After project management training, departments that were

slow to provide timely data in the proper framework useful to the PMO will be advocates of the PMO and efficiencies that were once elusive become prevalent. PMI considers training a PM governance issue, which may explain why once an entire organization has access to and is encouraged to participate in project management training, the organization benefits (PMI 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

Project management adds to the achievement of an organization. An effective and skilled supervisor is a critical element in a successful project. Organizations that have numerous employees and projects have the assets to keep up a PMO. Smaller organizations have restricted assets and may not run projects utilizing the norms of project management for undertaking project activities. Small- and medium-sized organization leadership is urged to receive the key ideas of project management and connect with representatives in those practices.

Adopting and characterizing project management as capacities performed using standard procedures, strategies, and measures to finish cost and time targets of a task while enhancing asset use is a small- and medium-sized organization best practice. PMs are concerned with consumer loyalty and undertaking accomplishments by measuring expense and calendar execution, in addition to the fulfillment of task targets by actualizing the start, arranging, execution, control or observing, and shutting periods of a project.

Project management is a delicate aptitude that requires the PM to join his or her specialized learning imaginatively with his or her initiative capacities in executing the activities. There is mounting weight for organizations to have compelling project management and have the capacity to execute projects with a reasonable procedure while looking after productivity. With the worldwide development affecting the manner in which organizations conduct business, the requirement for proficiency and compelling management of activities is more prominent than at any other time. These stunning insights are markers that project management ought to be a standard in working together.

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