

Organisation of Project Team, Roles and Responsibilities

1.1. The Team

According to Harold Kerzner(2009)¹, 'project management is much more behavioural than quantitative since projects are run by people rather than tools'.

Plans and project management techniques are necessary, but it is the people, the project manager and the team, that are the key to project success. This presentation is meant not only to point out the great importance of the team building procedures but also to research behaviours, roles, structures and approaches concerning people in a project.

While approaching the subject of the team and the procedure of team building it felt necessary to define, in advance, the term team and the features that lead to effectiveness.

As previously mentioned, people have a great merit in the project's success, but which people? People that work together for a project constitute automatically a team? A team is supposed to be much more than the sum of its individual team members. An effective team is described as 'any group of people who must significantly relate with each other in order to accomplish shared objectives' ². Or collections of people who must rely on group collaboration if each member is to experience the optimum success.

1.2. The Team Building

When we are about to start a new project we have to deal with different members, with particular discipline and backgrounds, diversity of skills and personalities. This features often tend to different directions, and at this point the project manager has to act. He/she is responsible to get the individual team members to view the project from the "big picture" perspective. The team efforts are directed towards the same clear goals, which are the team goals.³ The process of getting a group of diverse individuals to work together effectively as a team, is the team building process. It is supposed that projects are necessary to solve complex problems, project management to make those projects successful, but is the team building that finally assures the project management works properly. The expected benefits of the process to project management vary from synergy and collective strength to conflict resolution and reduced communication problems.

Team building can occur naturally as people work together under a common goal, but progressively and likely after a long time. Unfortunately, today's projects demand quick procedures and results. For that reason the effective project team can and must be created-built. The approaches in team building, can differ, depending on the type of the project, the managerial style of the manager, on the specific types of people on the project team.

For example, Woodcock (1979,p7) suggests that teams have to deal with certain aspects of their functioning and performance, such as individual development, support and trust among the members, openness and confrontation.⁴ Another approach is found in Wilemon and

¹ Harold Kerzner 2009, *Project Management, a systems approach to planning, scheduling and controlling*, John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.

² Woodcock, M & Francis, D 1981, *Organization development through teambuilding*, John Wiley & Sons(Halsted Press), New York

³ Pennypacker, J 1997, *Principles of project management: collected handbooks from the Project Management Institute*, Project Management Institute, Inc, USA

⁴ Woodcock, M 1979, *Team development manual*, John Wiley & Sons(Halsted Press), New York

Thamhain(1983, Piii-H-1).⁵ The authors describe their approach as a multidimensional framework to guide the team building development process. The process is composed of tasks and goals, such as role clarification, procedure development, decision-making.

The following team building process was used in the aerospace industry, incorporates most of the aspects previously mentioned and consists of actions or steps that must be carried out by the project manager. The process has been presented by the Project Management Institute.

At first a plan by the PM(project manager) must be set. The important aspects of the plan are what, how, when and who. This questions set the basis for the job assignments, so everyone understands their assignments and responsibilities. Obtain the most promising project team personnel is the next step. Criteria for the choice are considered not only the contribution of the person's expertise to the project but also the potentiality as effective team player. The organization of the team, by giving assignments to specific people or groups of people, specific responsibilities and accountabilities, follows. The next step is getting the individuals to work together as a team. One crucial step to the team building process is considered to be the kick off meeting. This start up meeting aims to get the team members to know each other, establish relationships and lines of communication, but also identify problems, set goals and objectives, obtain commitments.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities

As already noted, it is essential for good team building that every member of the team clearly understands its responsibilities within the project.

A Roles and Responsibilities Matrix is a method to identify all of the roles within a project and the associated responsibilities to the project work. This matrix is an excellent way to identify the needed roles for the project participants, identify what actions they'll need to take in the project, and, ultimately, determine if you have all of the roles to complete the identified responsibilities. The Roles and Responsibilities Matrix can help the project manager identify the needed resources to complete the project work—and determine if the resources exists within the organization's resource pool. Later in the project, the project manager will use an even more precise matrix called the Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM) to identify which tasks are assigned to which individuals.

1.4. Leadership Role

Team trust and leadership do not come automatically with the job assignment as project manager, but they must be earned as part of the team building process. Probably that is the difference between leadership and management, although both are about modifying other persons' behavior. The leader has to be a role model for team member so as people follow him willingly because he or she provides means of achieving their own desires, wants and needs.

The manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people is the leadership style. Autocratic leaders make the managerial decisions solely by themselves. They tell their employees what they want done and how they want it accomplished, without getting the advice of their followers. Consultive autocrats use information from the members, but keep all substantive decision- making authority to

⁵ Wilemon, D & Thamhain, H 1983, *A model for developing high performance project teams, proceedings of the fifteenth annual seminar/symposium*, Project Management Institute, Inc, Drexel Hill, Penn.

themselves. Consensus managers tend to throw open the problem to the group for discussion and allow or encourage the group to make the decision. Finally the shareholder managers, who provide the group the ultimate authority for the final decision. According to the U.S. Army Handbook (1973) *Military Leadership*, the styles are 3: the authoritarian or autocratic, participative or democratic and the delegative or Free Reign. Forces such as time availability, the type of the task, information availability or employees ability and skill can influence the style to be used.

Slevin(1983) supports: ‘ *the key to successful leadership is knowing what your dominant style is and being able to modify that style depending upon the contingencies of the various leadership situations that you face*’.⁶

In modern management there has been a change from dealing with problems on a one-on-one basis to solving problems collectively, involving everyone who has a contribution to make in solving or implementing. This concept is known as shared leadership. As the complexity of knowledge work increases, the need for shared leadership also increases. Shared leadership is about letting the project team take over as much of the leadership role as they will accept. The project manager is supposed to let go some authority and share it with the team. As the team members assume more of the leadership role, increased willingness of the team to participate in problem solving is being observed.

1.4.1 The Group Leader

The project manager has to direct and integrate resources in the production and development of a system, but at the same time he must meet performance standards, schedule, dates, and cost objectives. He is responsible for the team’s guidance, motivation, output and control and for successfully organising the project by carefully mixing human, financial, and physical resources, at the proper time, and under a single direction of authority.

As a leader, he is at the same time the project integrator, planner, communicator, administrator but also the team’s ‘mother’. Essential features for the leader are his ability to work well with others, his experience in his area of expertise, his good communication and negotiation skills and the ability to retain control of the team and the project.

1.5. Team Member Role

The team members are unavoidably different kinds of people, with special contribution to the team. In terms of this contribution to the communication and in general in the progress of the project their roles can be constructive or destructive. Constructive roles move the group towards action and accomplishing results, while destructive roles hinder accomplishing the group goals. Types of constructive behaviours are: the initiators, the information seeker, the information giver(who contributes with knowledge and experience), the encouragers, the harmonizers(who try to maintain a good climate within the team), the clarifiers, the summarizers, the gatekeeper(who helps other participants to contribute or join conversations). On the other hand we conceive as destructive the: aggressor(who criticizes and deflates status of others), the blocker(who constantly rejects), the withdrawer(holds back and doesn’t participate), the recognition seeker, the topic jumper, the dominator(who tries to

⁶ Slevin, D 1983, *Leadership and the project manager. Project management handbook*, edited by Cleland and King, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York

take over conversation). The devil's advocate who brings up alternative viewpoints, can be positive or very negative.⁷

1.6. Conflict

Typically, each organization's goals and objectives are set by its top management, respecting the organization's values, purposes and missions pursued. Usually the employees, the members, have to abide to these, which may differ strongly to their own goals, objectives and personality.

As previously mentioned in each organization(group,team) a certain model of leadership and authority exists. Each individual has certain responsibilities and roles, and also a certain educational or expertise background. Conflict can be created due to many different factors, such as overlapping or contradicting goals, roles, authority, ideas, personalities, etc., but it shouldn't always be perceived as something negative, rather as something productive. Conflict is inevitable in organisations and teams and its intensity is always relevant to the scale and the phase of the life cycle of each project.

Constructive conflict occurs when people change and grow personally from the conflict, involvement of the individuals affected by the conflict is increased and a solution to the problem is found. However, if conflict is not managed properly, it can be detrimental to an organization by threatening organizational unity, business partnerships, team relationships, and interpersonal connections. Deconstructive conflict occurs when a decision has not been found and the problem remains, energy is taken away from more important activities or issues, morale of teams or individuals is destroyed, and groups of people or teams are polarized.

Conflict can be born between parties with related responsibilities, when they have unclear work boundaries and role definitions(ambiguous jurisdictions) or between parties wanting to achieve different or inconsistent goals(Conflict of interest and personality). Other conditions leading to conflict can be communication difficulties creating misunderstanding and finally blocking of efforts to explain needs, viewpoints and actions, disagreements concerning scheduling and timing constraints, differing ideas over the sequence of activities and tasks or differences between and within project team and support groups, disagreements over technical issues.

As far as the project manager is concerned, he is typically responsible for handling conflict during a project. He is responsible for managing the conflict and avoiding destructive results. Furthermore, he should propose or intervene in the problem solving procedures by directing, coordinating and controlling. According to the situation and the phase of the project, different available powers can be used. These powers are his legitimate power(derived from his position and title), coercive power, reward power, expert power and referent power.

The 'managing the conflict' procedure involves different kinds of managing models. The withdrawal model, which suggests retreating from actual or potential disagreements or conflict situations, only used under certain circumstances. The smoothing approach, that suggests de-emphasising differences and emphasising commonalities over conflicting issues, appropriate for keeping a friendly atmosphere. The compromising model, trying to achieve a degree of satisfaction to both parties. The forcing model, which implies a win- lose situation, and can lead to further conflict. The problem solving approach, addresses directly to the disagreement and searches a solution.

⁷ Pennypacker, J 1997, *Principles of project management: collected handbooks from the Project Management Institute*, Project Management Institute, Inc, USA

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