

# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTE

**COURSE MANUAL**

**FOR**

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**PROFESSIONAL**

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***MODULE THREE***

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
PRINCIPLES**

## LESSON ONE

# Conflict Management

### Introduction

Organizational conflict occurs when two or more parties, who have different objectives, values or attitudes compete for the same resources. Conflicts can arise due to disagreements between individuals or departments due to their dissimilar focus.

Contrary to popular belief, not all organizational conflicts are detrimental to the effective functioning of the business or project at hand.

Popular management theorists have recognized the fact that groups tend to storm before performing, and in one sense, this can be advantageous, as it brings problems out into the open, addresses the need to resolve such issues satisfactorily, motivates staff to seek acceptable solutions and each department or person embroiled in the conflict learns to respect and even benefit from the inherent differences of each other.

However, some conflicts spin out of control. This lower employee morale results in unacceptable behavioral patterns, reduces productivity and causes an escalation in differences that makes bridges harder to build.

Identifying actions that aggravate conflict, others that resolve differences and the different method of coping with conflict are all part of conflict management which are discussed in detail below.

### Managerial Actions that Aggravate Conflicts

Ill-defined expectations, non-consultative changes and feelings of helplessness in the decision making process tend to aggravate conflict. Poor communication, an authoritative style of leadership and impromptu planning are at the very heart of these problems.

Ambiguous objectives, inadequate allocation of resources, be it time, money or personnel, and badly defined process structures heighten such issues even further. Egotistic behavior, battle between Alpha dogs for supremacy and poor management techniques also play a pivotal role in aggravating conflicts.

A lack of understanding, an excuse-ridden culture and avoidance of accountability to increase the detrimental effects of conflicts.

### Managerial Actions that Minimize Conflicts

Formulating well-defined job descriptions in a consultative manner, ensuring that any

overlaps are minimized and carrying out periodical reviews to ascertain that such documentation is accurate, give the employees a sense of control over their own destiny.

This participative approach goes a long way in minimizing conflicts and helps foster better work ethics.

Formulating cross-departmental teams to solve specific problems, conducting outbound training, which fosters team spirit, holding regular meeting where feedback on performance is given and where the challenges faced are addressed and the solutions are discussed are some of the other relationship building techniques used by progressive organizations.

### **Different Methods of Handling Conflicts**

The four most popular methods of handling conflict can be summarized as fight, flight, fake or fold.

To elaborate further, fighting is where one party tends to dominate another by way of repetitive arguments, labeling and name-calling.

Flight is where people run away from problems instead of confronting them and turns to avoidance as a means of handling conflict. Faking, as its name implies, means agreeing to the solution presented, although in reality, the opposite holds true.

Folding is where an individual is made to agree to a solution by means of browbeating. However, none of the aforementioned method would yield satisfactory results in the long term.

Even today, compromise and collaboration go a long way in resolving conflicts in an optimal manner, as both are win-win situations for the most part, after which, interested parties can work together to reach a common goal.

Effective dialogue paves the way for conflict resolution. If the disagreements cannot be resolved by the two parties themselves, then a third party arbitrator or counselor might need to be consulted for best results.

### **Skills Required for Conflict Resolution**

Communication skills, negotiation skills and the ability to see the whole picture are necessary skills in conflict management. Listening skills and the ability to find solutions that do not compromise any party's interest are also worth developing when handling conflict management.

### **Steps in Conflict Management**

- ▣ Identify the problem.
- ▣ Identify the limiting resource or constraint that is generally at the root cause of the

conflict.

- ▣ Engage in participatory dialogue and find a range of solutions that will be acceptable to all the parties concerned.
- ▣ See which solutions clash with the organizational objectives and are not in keeping with the company's culture.
- ▣ Eliminate those that do not promote mutual understanding or acceptance.
- ▣ Choose the best solution that satisfy most people most of the time and implement this.

## Conclusion

Conflicts are inevitable in one's personal life in organizations or even between nations.

It does have some noteworthy advantages if handled correctly as it brings problems out into the open and compels interested parties to find solutions that are acceptable to all. However, conflicts that escalate out of control are detrimental to everybody in the equation, so conflict management becomes a necessity.

Some basic skills, some knowledge, and having the best interest of the organization at heart, together with respect for its people, will go a long way in handling conflict admirably.

## LESSON TWO

# Crisis Management

### What is Crisis Management?

In any organization or business, it is always essential that you are prepared for any problems that may arise when it is least expected.

It is in the way that you deal with these issues that the success of your business will be based on. It is a well-known fact that the biggest blow to an organization comes from the major unpredictable disasters that occur often leaving everyone, from the management to the public, involved in a state of confusion.

No organization however big or famous is immune from various crises. This may include situations such as your computer systems failing or even worse, infrastructure being completely destroyed.

Crisis management has entered the field of management only very recently but has since contributed a great deal to the prevention of major management disasters.

### Understanding a Crisis

What crisis management typically requires is that you carry out forecasting of certain crises that you think could occur in the near future, putting your organization into jeopardy.

You then also come up with a solution as to how you would go about dealing with such a crisis. This would also require you to have a clear plan of all steps that would need to be taken should such a situation arise.

However, it may not always be the case that the organization has time to prepare for such a crisis. In such a situation, the management team would need to work on mitigating the amount of loss caused and recovering from the crisis at hand.

### Types of Crises

It is important that you have a good understanding of the different types of crises that could take place at the very outset.

This is vital as all crises cannot be handled in the same manner and would require different approaches and various techniques to be applied. Although types of crises can be categorized into several kinds, the most common categories are as follows:

- **Financial crises** - This would be a huge problem for any organization, but is fairly predictable to quite an extent when compared with other types of crises. Such a crisis would basically involve the organization heading in the direction of bankruptcy.

- **Natural disasters** - This type of crisis is highly unpredictable and could come by at any time. Several examples of such situations could be given today, from example, earthquakes in countries such as China a few years ago and Haiti and other disasters such as tsunamis and hurricanes, you should always be ready to face such a situation.
- **Technological crises** - This is where a system collapses due to failure in the functioning of different equipment and machinery used. As mentioned previously, a computer system failure is one example of such a crisis. These crises could occur either because of human error or a fault in the system used which has multiple consequences. This may also include chemical spills and oil leaks. One famous case is that of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986 which caused much damage.
- **Political & Social** - With the current political climate the world over, you may also want to take into consideration any threats to security and any form of terrorist activity.

No organization is free from internal politics and disagreement between the various levels of the workforce.

It is therefore essential that you always keep in mind that high- ranking workers could always resign in the middle of an important project or the workers may plan a strike or protest to express their disgruntlement with the way certain aspects of the organization are run.

Knowing how to manage employee disgruntlement is therefore key to preventing any future fights from erupting, impeding the progress of work being carried out by the organization.

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### **Planning for an Impending Crisis**

Without a clear plan as to how to deal with the crises that could occur at the very outset, you would only drag the organization into greater problems.

It is very important that someone plays the role of a leader and chooses a dynamic team in order to carry out all aspects of planning.

It is this management team that would have to not only ascertain what types of crises may occur, but then carry on to study various strategies that could be applied to minimize or even prevent altogether any damage that could be caused.

The next step would then be to try out these strategies and see if it would work.

At times such as these, your organization would benefit greatly from other organizations that would be able to provide you with invaluable resources to help you



Leadership framework for crisis management

mitigate the crises to the greatest extent possible.

### Dealing with Crises

It is essential to keep in mind that when a crisis occurs you would need to have a response team ready to deal with the media and the various stakeholders.

All these parties would need information on the given situation and what is being done to deal with it. This also requires you to have a clear crisis communication plan with the target audience in mind.

Remember that each group needs to be handled in a different manner; customers may not require the same information as the employees of the organization, and so on.

### Conclusion

The only way to successfully control a crisis from going out of your hands is to always have a good plan and a good team ready to deal with various situations that may crop up.

With these strategies in place, you would always be able to reduce the damage caused to the organization to a great extent.

## LESSON THREE

# Decision Making Process

### Introduction

Decision making is a daily activity for any human being. There is no exception about that. When it comes to business organizations, decision making is a habit and a process as well.

Effective and successful decisions make profit to the company and unsuccessful ones make losses. Therefore, corporate decision making process is the most critical process in any organization.

In the decision making process, we choose one course of action from a few possible alternatives. In the process of decision making, we may use many tools, techniques and perceptions.

In addition, we may make our own private decisions or may prefer a collective decision.

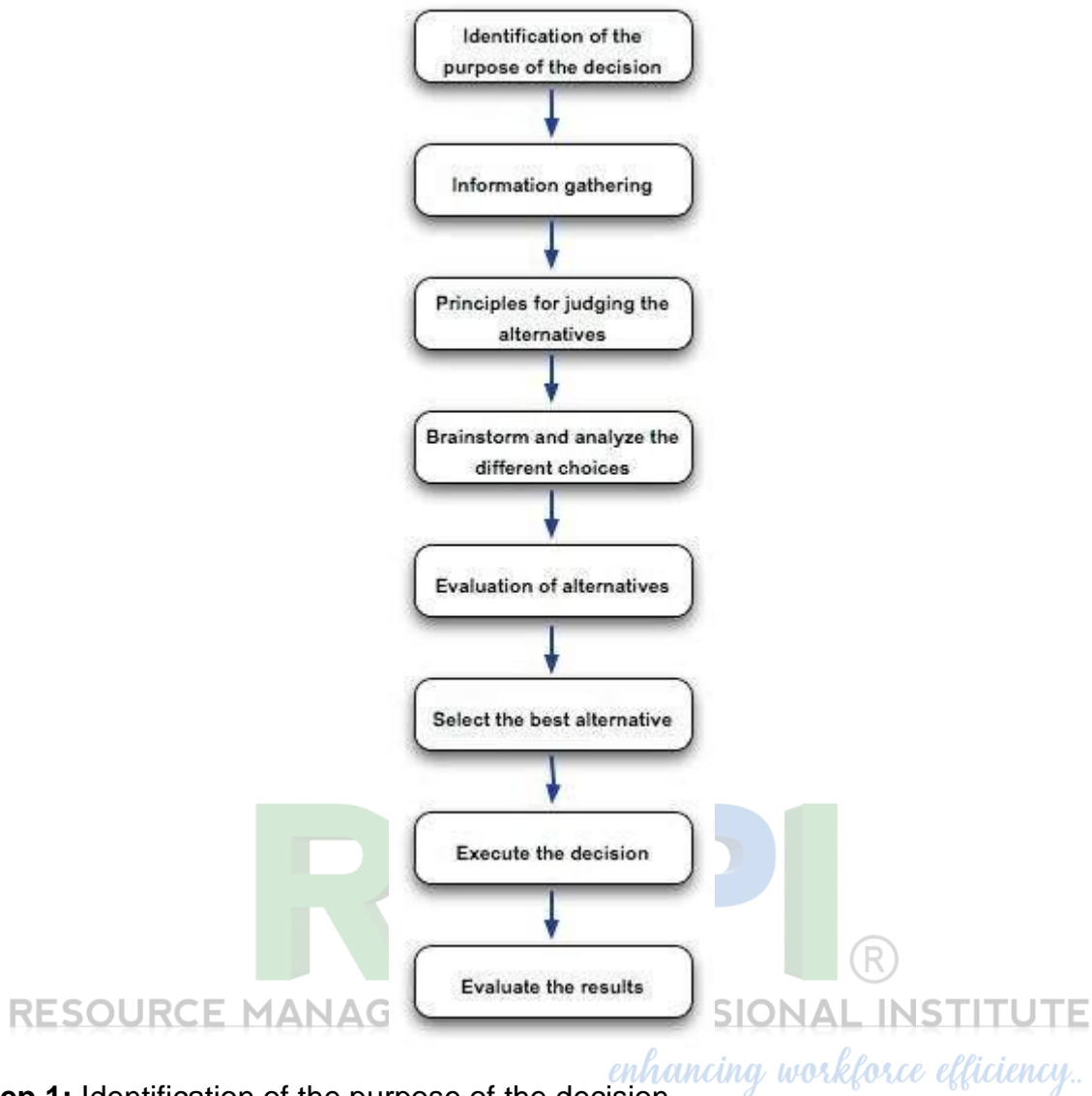
Usually, decision making is hard. Majority of corporate decisions involve some level of dissatisfaction or conflict with another party.

Let's have a look at the decision making process in detail.

### Steps of Decision Making Process

Following are the important steps of the decision making process. Each step may be supported by different tools and techniques.





**Step 1:** Identification of the purpose of the decision

In this step, the problem is thoroughly analysed. There are a couple of questions one should ask when it comes to identifying the purpose of the decision.

- What exactly is the problem?
- Why the problem should be solved?
- Who are the affected parties of the problem?
- Does the problem have a deadline or a specific time-line?

**Step 2:** Information gathering

A problem of an organization will have many stakeholders. In addition, there can be dozens of factors involved and affected by the problem.

In the process of solving the problem, you will have to gather as much as information related to the factors and stakeholders involved in the problem. For the process of

information gathering, tools such as 'Check Sheets' can be effectively used.

### **Step 3: Principles for judging the alternatives**

In this step, the baseline criteria for judging the alternatives should be set up. When it comes to defining the criteria, organizational goals as well as the corporate culture should be taken into consideration.

As an example, profit is one of the main concerns in every decision making process. Companies usually do not make decisions that reduce profits, unless it is an exceptional case. Likewise, baseline principles should be identified related to the problem in hand.

**Step 4: Brainstorm and analyse the different choices** For this step, brainstorming to list down all the ideas is the best option. Before the idea generation step, it is vital to understand the causes of the problem and prioritization of causes.

For this, you can make use of Cause-and-Effect diagrams and Pareto Chart tool. Cause-and-Effect diagram helps you to identify all possible causes of the problem and Pareto chart helps you to prioritize and identify the causes with highest effect.

Then, you can move on generating all possible solutions (alternatives) for the problem in hand.

### **Step 5: Evaluation of alternatives**

Use your judgment principles and decision-making criteria to evaluate each alternative. In this step, experience and effectiveness of the judgment principles come into play. You need to compare each alternative for their positives and negatives.

### **Step 6: Select the best alternative**

Once you go through from Step 1 to Step 5, this step is easy. In addition, the selection of the best alternative is an informed decision since you have already followed a methodology to derive and select the best alternative.

### **Step 7: Execute the decision**

Convert your decision into a plan or a sequence of activities. Execute your plan by yourself or with the help of subordinates.

### **Step 8: Evaluate the results**

Evaluate the outcome of your decision. See whether there is anything you should learn and then correct in future decision making. This is one of the best practices that will improve your decision-making skills.

## Conclusion

When it comes to making decisions, one should always weigh the positive and negative business consequences and should favour the positive outcomes.

This avoids the possible losses to the organization and keeps the company running with a sustained growth. Sometimes, avoiding decision making seems easier; especially, when you get into a lot of confrontation after making the tough decision.

But, making the decisions and accepting its consequences is the only way to stay in control of your corporate life and time.



## LESSON FOUR

# Project Charter

### Introduction

Project Charter refers to a statement of objectives in a project.

This statement also sets out detailed project goals, roles and responsibilities, identifies the main stakeholders, and the level of authority of a project manager.

It acts as a guideline for future projects as well as an important material in the organization's knowledge management system.

The project charter is a short document that would consist of new offering request or a request for proposal. This document is a part of the project management process, which is required by Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

### The Role of Project Charter

Following are the roles of a Project Charter:

- ▣ It documents the reasons for undertaking the project.
- ▣ Outlines the objectives and the constraints faced by the project.
- ▣ Provides solutions to the problem in hand.
- ▣ Identifies the main stakeholders of the project.

### Benefits of Project Charter

Following are the prominent benefits of Project Charter for a project:

- ▣ It improves and paves way for good customer relationships.
- ▣ Project Charter also works as a tool that improves project management processes.
- ▣ Regional and headquarter communications can also be improved to a greater extent.
- ▣ By having a project charter, project sponsorship can also be gained.
- ▣ Project Charter recognizes senior management roles.
- ▣ Allows progression, which is aimed at attaining industry best practices.

### Elements in Project Charter

Since project charter is a project planning tool, which is aimed at resolving an issue or an opportunity, the below elements are essential for a good charter project.

For an effective charter project, it needs to address these key elements:

- ▣ Identity of the project.
- ▣ Time: the start date and the deadline for the project.
- ▣ People involved in the project.
- ▣ Outlined objectives and set targets.
- ▣ The reason for a project charter to be carried out, often referred to as 'business case'.
- ▣ Detailed description of a problem or an opportunity.
- ▣ The return expected from the project.
- ▣ Results that could be expected in terms of performance.
- ▣ The expected date that the objectives is to be achieved.
- ▣ Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the participants involved.
- ▣ Requirement of resources that will be needed for the objectives to be achieved.
- ▣ Informed and effective communication plan.
- ▣ Barriers and the risks involved with the project.

Out of all above elements, there are three most important and essential elements that need further elaboration.

### **Business Case**

This outlines the need for a project charter to take place. A business case should set out the benefits gained from carrying out a project charter. Benefits need not only be in terms of finance such as revenue, cost reduction, etc., but also the benefit that the customer receives.

Following are the characteristics of a good business case:

- ▣ The reasons of undertaking the project.
- ▣ The benefits gained from undertaking the project now.
- ▣ The consequences of not doing the project.
- ▣ The factors that would conclude that it fits the business goals.

## Project Scope

As the name denotes, it refers to the scope that the project will give the business if they undertake the project.

Before doing a project, the following concerns need to be addressed:

- ▣ The within scope and out of scope needs to be considered.
- ▣ The process that each team will focus upon.
- ▣ The start and end points for a process.
- ▣ Availability of resources.
- ▣ Constraints under which the team will work.
- ▣ Time limitations .
- ▣ The impact on the normal workload if the project is to be undertaken.

## The Need for a Good Communication Plan

The need for a good communication plan is at its utmost necessity when it comes to planning a project. Project managers need to work on building a good communication plan which will help in meeting the overall objectives of a Project Charter.

When creating a communication plan, the project manager needs to take the following into consideration:

- ▣ **Who** - responsibility of each individuals participating in the project.
- ▣ **What** - the motive and the reason for communication plan.
- ▣ **Where** – location where the receiver could find information.
- ▣ **When** – the duration and the frequency of the communication plan.
- ▣ **How** - the mechanism which is used to facilitate the communication.
- ▣ **Whom** - The receivers of the communication.

## Conclusion

The project charter is not only a tool that is used for planning projects but also a communication mechanism that acts as a reference. A well-planned project with an effective communication plan will definitely bring in success for the project undertaken at hand.

Therefore, the Project Charter should be one of the frequently referred documents in a project and the entire project team needs to be aware of the content of the Project Charter. This is a key element for a successful project.



## LESSON FIVE

# Project Contract Types

### Introduction

In the world of business, contracts are used for establishing business deals and partnerships. The parties involved in the business engagement decide the type of the contract.

Usually, the type of the contract used for the business engagement varies depending on the type of the work and the nature of the industry.

The contract is simply an elaborated agreement between two or more parties. One or more parties may provide products or services in return to something provided by other parties (client).

The contract type is the key relationship between the parties engaged in the business and the contract type determines the project risk.

Let's have a look at most widely used contract types.

### Fixed Price (Lump Sum)

This is the simplest type of all contracts. The terms are quite straightforward and easy to understand.

To put in simple, the service provider agrees to provide a defined service for a specific period of time and the client agrees to pay a fixed amount of money for the service.

This contract type may define various milestones for the deliveries as well as KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). In addition, the contractor may have an acceptance criteria defined for the milestones and the final delivery.

The main advantages of this type of contract is that the contractor knows the total project cost before the project commences.

### Unit Price

In this model, the project is divided into units and the charge for each unit is defined. This contract type can be introduced as one of the more flexible methods compared to fixed price contract.

Usually, the owner (contractor/client) of the project decides on the estimates and asks the bidders to bid of each element of the project.



After bidding, depending on the bid amounts and the qualifications of bidders, the entire project may be given to the same service provider or different units may be allocated to different service providers.

This is a good approach when different project units require different expertise to complete.

### **Cost Plus**

In this contract model, the services provider is reimbursed for their machinery, labour and other costs, in addition to contractor paying an agreed fee to the service provider.

In this method, the service provider should offer a detailed schedule and the resource allocation for the project. Apart from that, all the costs should be properly listed and should be reported to the contractor periodically.

The payments may be paid by the contractor at a certain frequency (such as monthly, quarterly) or by the end of milestones.

### **Incentive**

Incentive contracts are usually used when there is some level of uncertainty in the project cost. Although there are nearly- accurate estimations, the technological challenges may impact on the overall resources as well as the effort.

This type of contract is common for the projects involving pilot programs or the project that harness new technologies.

There are three cost factors in an Incentive contract; target price, target profit and the maximum cost.

The main mechanism of Incentive contract is to divide any target price overrun between the client and the service provider in order to minimize the business risks for both parties.

### **Retainer (Time and Material - T&M)**

This is one of the most beautiful engagements that can get into by two or more parties. This engagement type is the most risk- free type where the time and material used for the project are priced.

The contractor only requires knowing the time and material for the project in order to make the payments. This type of contract has short delivery cycles, and for each cycle, separate estimates are sent of the contractor.

Once the contractor signs off the estimate and Statement of Work (SOW), the service provider can start work.

Unlike most of the other contract types, retainer contracts are mostly used for long-term business engagements.

### Percentage of Construction Fee

This type of contracts is used for engineering projects. Based on the resources and material required, the cost for the construction is estimated.

Then, the client contracts a service provider and pays a percentage of the cost of the project as the fee for the service provider.

As an example, take the scenario of constructing a house. Assume that the estimate comes up to \$230,000.

When this project is contracted to a service provider, the client may agree to pay 30% of the total cost as the construction fee which comes up to \$69,000.

### Conclusion

Selecting the contract type is the most crucial step of establishing a business agreement with another party. This step determines the possible engagement risks.

Therefore, companies should get into contracts where there is a minimum risk for their business. It is always a good idea to engage in fixed bids (fixed priced) whenever the project is short-termed and predictable.

If the project nature is exploratory, it is always best to adopt retainer or cost plus contract types.

## LESSON SIX

# Project Cost Control

### Introduction

Almost all the projects need to be guided right throughout in order to receive the required and expected output at the end of the project. It is the team that is responsible for the project and most importantly the project manager that needs to be able to carry out effective controlling of the costs. There are, however, several techniques that can be used for this purpose.

In addition to the project goals that the project manager has to oversee, the control of various costs is also a very important task for any project. Project management would not be effective at all if a project manager fails in this respect, as it would essentially determine whether or not your organization would make a profit or loss.

### Cost Control Techniques

Following are some of the valuable and essential techniques used for efficient project cost control:

#### 1 - Planning the Project Budget

You would need to ideally make a budget at the beginning of the planning session with regard to the project at hand. It is this budget that you would have to help you for all payments that need to be made and costs that you will incur during the project life cycle. The making of this budget therefore entails a lot of research and critical thinking.

Like any other budget, you would always have to leave room for adjustments as the costs may not remain the same right through the period of the project. Adhering to the project budget at all times is key to the profit from project.

#### 2 - Keeping a Track of Costs

Keeping track of all actual costs is also equally important as any other technique. Here, it is best to prepare a budget that is time- based. This will help you keep track of the budget of a project in each of its phases. The actual costs will have to be tracked against the periodic targets that have been set out in the budget. These targets could be on a monthly or weekly basis or even yearly if the project will go on for long.

This is much easier to work with rather than having one complete budget for the entire period of the project. If any new work is required to be carried out, you would need to make estimations for this and see if it can be accommodated with the final

amount in the budget. If not, you may have to work on necessary arrangements for 'Change Requests', where the client will pay for the new work or the changes.

### 3 - Effective Time Management

Another effective technique would be effective time management. Although this technique does apply to various management areas, it is very important with regard to project cost control. The reason for this is that the cost of your project could keep rising if you are unable to meet the project deadlines; the longer the project is dragged on for, the higher the costs incurred which effectively means that the budget will be exceeded.

The project manager would need to constantly remind his/her team of the important deadlines of the project in order to ensure that work is completed on time.

### 4 - Project Change Control

Project change control is yet another vital technique. Change control systems are essential to take into account any potential changes that could occur during the course of the project.

This is due to the fact that each change to the scope of the project will have an impact on the deadlines of the deliverables, so the changes may increase project cost by increasing the effort needed for the project.

### 5 - Use of Earned Value

Similarly, in order to identify the value of the work that has been carried out thus far, it is very helpful to use the accounting technique commonly known as 'Earned Value'.

This is particularly helpful for large projects and will help you make any quick changes that are absolutely essential for the success of the project.

### The Additional Steps for Project Cost Control

It is advisable to constantly review the budget as well as the trends and other financial information. Providing reports on project financials at regular intervals will also help keep track of the progress of the project.

This will ensure that overspending does not take place, as you would not want to find out when it is too late. The earlier the problem is found, the more easily and quickly it could be remedied.

All documents should also be provided at regular intervals to auditors, who would also be able to point out to you any potential cost risks.

## Conclusion

Simply coming up with a project budget is not adequate during your project planning sessions. You and your team would have to keep a watchful eye on whether the costs remain close to the figures in the initial budget. You need to always keep in mind the risks that come with cost escalation and need to prevent this as best as you can. For this, use the above techniques explained and constantly monitor the project costs.



## LESSON SEVEN

# Project Kick-off Meeting

### Introduction

A project kick-off meeting is the best opportunity for a project manager to energize his or her team. During this meeting, the project management can establish a sense of common goal and start understanding each individual.

Although a project kick-off meeting appears to be a simple meeting with all the stakeholders of the project, a successful project kick-off meeting requires proper planning.

The following steps are some of the important preparation points for a successful project kick-off meeting. These steps help you to stay focused, establish and demonstrate leadership, and help integrating individual members into the project team.

### The Agenda

A strong and clear agenda is a must for a project kick-off meeting. If you have no clue of what the agenda should be, ask your experienced subordinates or get hold of some of the agendas used for earlier kick-off meetings by others.

The agenda usually includes purpose of the project, deliverables and goals, key success factors of the project, communication plan, and the project plan.

In advance to the project kick-off meeting, make sure that you circulate the meeting agenda to all the participants.

This way, all the participants are aware of the structure and what to achieve at the end of the meeting.

### Getting Started

When the meeting starts, the project manager should take charge of the meeting. Next, all the participants should be welcomed and a round of self-introduction should take place.

Although you have already shared the meeting agenda with the participants, briefly take them through the agenda while giving a brief introduction to each item in the agenda.

Pay more attention towards introducing the project roles and emphasize the reasons why the team members were assigned to respective roles.

If there are people playing stretched roles, acknowledge about it. When you do all these things, do not go into detail. The purpose of this meeting is to take everyone on to the same platform.

### **Project Presentation**

Once the tone is set, present the agenda in a structured manner. First of all, talk about the project assumptions and how you developed the project plan.

Present your reasoning behind the plan and convey the message that you are open to suggestions when the project progresses. Go through each task in the project plan and elaborate sufficiently.

Emphasize the fact that the project plan and the schedule are still at the initial stage and that you are expecting everyone's assistance for making it complete.

Identify and acknowledge the potential bottlenecks or challenging tasks in the project schedule.

### **Setting the Expectations**

Decide on a convenient time to hold regular meetings to talk about project progress. Emphasize the need of everyone's participation for the regular meetings.

Teamwork is one of the most important expectations to be set. You need to elaborate more on teamwork and plan some teamwork activities just after the project kick-off.

Talk about the time sensitive nature of the project and how the leaves are granted during the project period.

If the project requires working long hours, letting them know in advance and showing them how you can help them to maintain the work-life balance is a good strategy.

During the meeting, empower the team members to carry out certain tasks and make them responsible.

### **Communication Plan**

Communication is one of the main aspects of a project. Therefore, the project kick-off meeting should emphasize more on the communication plan for the project.

This usually includes the meetings and escalation paths. Following are some of the meetings that take place during the project life cycle:

- ▣ Weekly status meeting
- ▣ Project plan updates
- ▣ Task and activity planning sessions

- ▣ Management updates

In addition, you can emphasize on the other communications channels such as e-mail communications, forums, etc.

### Feedback and Closure

At the end of the kick-off meeting, open up a Q&A session that allows the team members to freely express themselves.

If the time is not enough to facilitate all the team members, ask them to send their queries and feedback via e-mail. Once you have a look at those e-mails, you can set up another discussion to address those.

Never drag a planned meeting too much, since it could be a bad example. Before everyone leaves, summarize the meeting and call out the action items and next steps.

### Conclusion

To conclude, there are four main areas that should be emphasized about holding project kick-off meetings.

- ▣ Be prepared for the kick-off meeting.
- ▣ Demonstrate your ability to organize and lead.
- ▣ Empower your team members.
- ▣ Assign them responsibilities.
- ▣ Develop and nurture teamwork.
- ▣ Demonstrate your leadership qualities.





## LESSON EIGHT

# Project Lessons Learned

### Introduction

Projects vary in terms of purpose, cost, magnitude and the timelines involved.

Yet, they all have common features and the lessons learned from one project can easily be incorporated in another, circumstances permitting.

Some of the experience thus gleaned is revealed below. This is by no means an extensive list of all the project lessons learned, but a few of the most relevant, are stated herewith:

### 20 Useful Project Lessons Learned

- ▣ The success of a project is largely dependent on the skills and strengths of the people involved. Therefore, a project needs to have a dedicated, talented set of individuals working towards a common goal.
- ▣ Together with leadership skills, the project manager needs to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his/her staff, so that the talents are harnessed and the shortfalls downplayed for the benefit of the project.
- ▣ A champion team and a team of champions are indeed different. The former would lead to a successful project whilst the latter would yield to a conflict of egos, each chasing an individual goal.
- ▣ It pays to know who the decision makers are. Such individuals may not always be readily visible, but they will be calling the shots, so developing a strong line of communication with such individuals will reap benefits in the long run.
- ▣ If you have the knowledge and experience to make a decision, then you should go ahead and so, without expecting top managers to spoon feed you at every turn.
- ▣ Procrastination does not work. After assimilating the relevant information, decisions need to be made. Wrong decisions can be salvaged, if discovered early; but right decisions cannot be postponed. So, Carpe Diem, (seize the day), as advocated by the popular maxim.
- ▣ When things go wrong, as they invariably will; excuses will not work. Find an alternative course of action or remedial propositions instead. Allocating blame only causes dissention and hostility, searching for solutions will bring the team together.
- ▣ Be pro-active in your approach. Reactivity is just not good enough.

- ▣ Be open to change. Sometimes, you may find that the things you knew along may not be correct at this given time, under these specific conditions.
- ▣ Know what resources are available. Not just those under your purview but those which are at the discretion of other teams. Sometimes, others may be happy to help. After all, the *favor bank* concept which is colloquially referred to as the 'you scratch my back and I will scratch yours' philosophy, is apparent in the business world too.
- ▣ Paperwork and documentation are necessary for reporting purposes. But when making decisions, placing too much reliance on data which may have changed within a surprisingly short timeframe pays few dividends, especially in an unpredictable environment.
- ▣ Know your customer and know the objectives of the project at hand. If any significant changes need to be made, do so, but remember you need to consult the customer first.
- ▣ Respect your leader and his/her decisions. Sometimes, you may not agree with these. That is fine. Voice your objections, especially if they are reasonable. But once an action has been decided upon, even if it is contrary to your idea of what should have been done, support it, and try to make it a success.
- ▣ Take account of all the known facts. Try to make sense of it, but don't blindly force-fit scenarios into a pre-established mould. Such scenarios may have been right before, and will, in all likelihood, be right once again, but maybe just not in this case.
- ▣ Do not be afraid of taking calculated risks. After all, as the adage goes, *a ship is safe in the harbor, but that is not what ships were built for.*
- ▣ When things go wrong, know who you can turn to for help.
- ▣ Always disclose information to those, who will need it. This is not the time or place for obtaining an edge over another by keeping crucial data close to your chest. People, who know what is expected of them and have the means of doing so, will play a pivotal role in making the project a success.
- ▣ Use modern technology and time tested management skills to your advantage.
- ▣ Good communication is that which will stop mistakes from becoming failures. Mistakes happen and recovery is always possible. But failure is a dead-end street.
- ▣ Do not blindly rush into decisions. Careful thought needs to be given to the circumstances at hand prior to engaging in decision making. This will save time in the long run by minimizing the need to redo work.

## Conclusion

Repetitive mistakes are the best avoided. Project lessons learned should be documented so that future team leaders can make use of the learning experience of others in order to avoid the same pitfalls themselves.

