LESSON 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management is a broad discipline, it can include anything from a change in a work procedures e.g. for health and safety, a new IT system, providing a new service, developing a product, undertaking research through to the construction of a new building, a park, or even the way in which a company or instrumentality (e.g. railway) is run.

Project management is done in a linear fashion – with a defined outline to include:

- A start date for commencement.

- A set completion date.

- Step by step procedures on how the project will be run.

It draws on resources (money and tools) and people as needed, to accomplish a set of outcomes (deliverables).

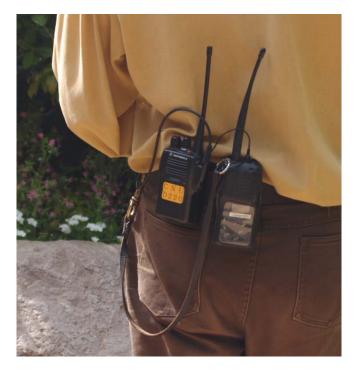Projects are managed using the following elements:

1. Money

2. Time

3. People

4. Scope

The first three are self-explanatory. Scope defines what the project's aims and objectives (what it is meant to accomplish i.e. its deliverables). Scope draws on the first three elements – time, money and people. If the scope of the project is altered, then this affects the way the project is managed; it changes the budget and therefore also the time

and people needed to accomplish the project's goals.

Project Management is a job that is found in almost every conceivable place and industry around the world. Wherever you find a project, there will be the need for someone to manage it. It can be a very exciting and creative job that allows you to use a very wide range of skills: technical skills, people skills, organisational skills.

Project management is never 100% predictable and for some people that is an unsettling prospect - but for others it is a thrilling opportunity.

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Suggested Tasks

Before we start, how would you define a project?

When you have finished writing down what you think a project is, please read the article entitled "What is a Project?" at the end of this lesson.

THE ROLE OF A PROJECT MANAGER

There are a number of mistaken assumptions about what project managers do. Some think they spend a lot of time dealing with paper work in an office, although this is a large part of the job, this is not necessarily true. Many projects require the project manager to oversee the day to day workings of a project. They may make site visits on a daily basis, or many times a day, depending on the project they are managing at the time. For example in the construction of a new building or park, the project manager's responsibility includes the smooth running and also the quality of the project. This entails meetings with builders, supervisors, and on-site inspections to ensure that the project is on time and that quality is also assured.

DEFINITIONS

Here are some definitions from a variety of sources:

"A temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service"
Definition adopted by the Project Management Institute, USA

"Project management is the discipline of planning, organising and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives. The Project Management Institute (PMI) defines project management as, "The application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities in order to meet or exceed stakeholder needs and expectations."
Definition from ProjectSmart.co.uk

"Project management is the process by which projects are defined, planned, monitored, controlled and delivered such that the agreed benefits are realised. Projects are unique, transient endeavours undertaken to achieve a desired outcome. Projects bring about change and project management is recognised as the most efficient way of managing such change".
Definition from the Association for Project Management, UK

Not all project managers are necessarily at the top of the management tree. In a small event management business, or engineering firm (for example), the project manager may well be the business owner. In a larger enterprise though, there may be several project managers each running projects concurrently – all of them responsible to a general manager or department head.

- Often people become a project manager by accident.

- Architects may start their career designing buildings, but end up moving into managing building construction projects.

- Hospitality managers may start out managing a hotel restaurant, but end up managing conferences, weddings and other events.

■ Doctors may start out as a medical practitioner, but end up managing aid projects in overseas countries.

Many project managers may have a "dual role" in their job. They may have routine responsibilities, but are also given projects to manage (e.g. the municipal parks manager who manages the daily maintenance of parks and gardens in a city, but is occasionally given a major development project such as construction of a new sports ground).

A project manager is responsible for controlling and introducing a set outcome – defined by a set of steps. He or she requires a set of well-formed skills and disciplines in order to achieve this outcome, to include:

■ Understanding all the stakeholders' objectives and requirements.

■ Knowing how to plan outcomes i.e. what needs to be done, who needs to be involved what time it needs to be done in, and what standards are expected.

■ Selecting the right team, motivating them, and coordinating their work.

■ Monitoring the project through all steps.

■ Introducing changes to the project plan as the need arises without compromising the project's outcomes.

■ Concluding the project on time and successfully.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROJECT

■ Each project is a separate to other projects – tasks within a single project will be unique to that project.

■ A project is focused on achieving a well-defined objective.

■ A project is finite - it has a life-cycle i.e. a pre-determined time frame; a start and a finish date.

■ Most projects will operate using dedicated resources for a variety of allocations.

■ Projects will have a budget.

■ Projects usually have a single point of responsibility (the Project Manager).

■ Project usually consist of a team that have defined roles but that inter-relate with others on the project.

STAGES OF A PROJECT

Different experts will have varying ideas about the stages of a project. A good manager needs to have a framework of stages to work within, but should not allow their thinking to be confined by following the same 4, 5, 6 or more stages in every project.

There are different ways of breaking down the stages of a project and best way to do that might differ from one project to another or one industry to another.

Terminology may also vary from one reference to another, but the basic methodology is always logical and chronological, for example:

One structure might be:

- Phase 1. Conceptualisation

- Phase 2 Planning

- Phase 3 Implementation (Execution)

- Phase 4 Termination

("Project Management, an International Perspective", by Ralph Keeling, Published by Macmillan, 2000)

Another structure could be:

1. Identification and Initiation

2. Planning

3. Implementation, Execution and Control

4. Completion and Evaluation

From the ACS Project Management Course

The Project Management Institute in the USA suggests five stages as follows:

1. Project conception and initiation

2. Project definition and planning

3. Project launch or execution

4. Project performance and control

5. Project close

Mind tools.com suggests seven phases in a project:

1. Project strategy and business case.

2. Preparation

3. Design

4. Development and testing

5. Training and business readiness

6. Support and benefits realization

7. Project close

SCM Wise.com lists five steps as follows:

1. Initiation

2. Planning

3. Execution

4. Control

5. Closure

Whichever structure you follow, the basic rule is to have a well-organized and controlled start, middle and finish.