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PMI Bangalore Chapter
PM Footprints
PMP Quest

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Editor's note

Dear Project Management Professionals,

Welcome to 2008 and the first issue of PMEssence in the new year.

This year we plan to introduce several new initiatives on the Publications front.

Some of them are :-

- 1) Introduce Research topics related to Project Management
- 2) Encourage more participation (articles by PM's)
- 3) Increase flow of articles to major PMI publications
- 4) Bring out a Bangalore Chapter Journal with selected best in class articles

We would need contributors of such articles, editorial support and volunteers to be initiative owners of each of above 4 Focus areas.

We request you to indicate your interest in any of the above roles that give satisfaction in terms of professional and leadership development.

Wishing you and your families a happy and prosperous new Year.

Thanks & Regards

Madhavan S Rao
 Director Publications and Editorial
 PMI Bangalore Chapter

Sharing a Vision

by Ms. Deepa
 Program Manager, Tejas Networks

One of the engineers working on a team that I worked with, once, told me, " I live my life, fixing one bug after another, without really understanding the impact it has". He went on to narrate an incident about a new feature under development. For the development team it meant few modifications to the code. For the testing team this was a feature to be tested against an outdated list of requirements. For the marketing team, this feature was a key business enabler which was expected to be available on all products. However the development and testing teams missed out on this vital piece of information. Coding and testing was done for one product, but marketing could not leverage it as it was not tested for all products.

This is not an uncommon scenario, where the leader of the team assigns work to the team members based on his perception of the project. The actual implementers (coders and testers) do not interact with the users (marketing), leading to gaps in understanding. The implementers also do not see how their code gets propagated as final customer releases. Such situations arise when the overall goals and objectives of the project ,or the vision , has not been shared with the team.

Sharing the vision with the entire team is a beneficial activity that the project manager should undertake, typically during the kick-off session. Every project starts with a kick-off session, which introduces the project's objectives and the team coming on-board. This meeting has to be inclusive and engaging. Vision should state 'why' this project is important. It should include the impact on the organization from a market perspective, also from a revenue and a strategic viewpoint.

The project manager should ensure that every single individual contributing to it attends this session. He should make an effort to secure buy-in from all the stakeholders. This will increase awareness and understanding about the project. This will bring a sense of belonging to the individual and a sense of ownership. The individuals will get motivated and contribute more effectively. The stakeholders will often be able to highlight risks or issues that cannot be perceived by the project manager. Then the sum of the parts becomes greater than the whole. The project manager should also share the critical success factors with the team as a natural corollary of the strategic perspective. This will help him align the team with the overall project deliverables. The team would also be working with a greater sense of purpose since it is aware of the limitations that it is working within. At the end of the project, the team would be able to evaluate whether the project has been a success or not, based on the CSFs defined at the beginning.

Re-visiting the vision at regular intervals helps to see if the vision is valid and the work being done is in line with the vision. Sharing the big picture, helps the team in focusing on achieving it. It helps in creating a virtuous circle in which the teams want to build success and the organization in turn helps them succeed.

Assurance Management

by Madhavan S Rao

"It's not just enough to respond to identified risks; it is also required to respond to identified opportunities.

It's not just enough to respond to opportunities; it is also required to create them (where none exists)".

Madhavan S Rao

With phenomenal growth in the IT sector, project success has become a key to an organization's success and for this, most organizations rely on their projects, which are getting increasingly complex in terms of Expectations management and Change Management. Thus, Project Management has become a fundamental skill for managers around the globe. The Project Manager has become the focal person who is in a position to balance stakeholders' delight. This individual seldom participates directly in the activities that produce the end result, but rather strives to maintain the progress and productive mutual interaction of various parties in such a way that overall risk of failure is reduced. In whatever field, a successful project manager must be able to continually envision the entire project from current state to finish and to have the ability to ensure that this vision is realized. In spite of improvement in Processes and Tools, the reality surrounding today's projects paints a dismal picture. Only 35% of projects today are successful. This means the 65% of projects are either failed projects or come in over-budget, overtime or under-featured! This contrasts with the increasing trend of process maturity, knowledge management, historic data availability, and new tools and technologies to execute projects as per plan. What are the reasons for project failure in this situation? How does one manage this grey area in which the problem itself is not defined?

Globally, most Project Managers would agree that despite established processes on project management, there are several issues that keep recurring as challenges. Every project has its share of challenges and vulnerabilities and the Project Manager/Project leader would face multiple instances of it in the same project or single instance across multiple projects. These challenges arise out of both the hard track and the soft track. To deal with the hard track, there are already established processes in place. It is the soft track that needs to be addressed.

With the onset of globalization, the world has become much smaller and today it is just one open market place. Project Managers hence are put under increased pressures to deal with various challenges emerging from unrelated facets. Understanding the challenges of globalization will play a big part in determining how successful a project is in a global environment.

A practical approach to steering Projects to success and profitability is through an upcoming school of thought called 'Assurance Management', an innovative framework which converts unprofitable projects into profitable ones and profitable ones into excellent ones. 'Assurance Management' complements and supplements the current best practices of Risk Management that takes care of the uncertainties in a project. It encourages the mindset of identifying and expanding the opportunity spaces, and in most cases, achieving risk mitigation as a by-product. This approach recognizes the human factors in influencing perceptions and the need to practice change management amongst stakeholders to result in win-win outcomes.

Risk Management: addresses uncertainties and thus improves performance by

- Proactively dealing with threats

- Capitalizing on opportunities

The uncertainties implicit in a Project can mean opportunities as well as threats.

Phases of Risk management-

- Risk Management Planning- The process of deciding how to approach and plan the risk management activities for a project. It defines the type, level and activities of Risk Management.
- Risk Identification- Iterative process by which all significant types and sources of risks are identified and their characteristics documented
- Risk Analysis
- Qualitative Risk analysis-Probability and impact estimated for each risk. Risks get prioritized according to an overall risk ranking
- Quantitative Risk analysis-Quantifies the risk exposure and determines probabilities of not achieving the project objectives
- Risk Response Plan
Taking a decision to tackle the risk based on several factors including the severity of the risk. The response can be any of - 'Risk mitigation', 'Risk avoidance', 'Risk transfer' and 'Risk acceptance'.
- Risk Monitoring and Control-
Ensures the execution of the Response plan while keeping track of the identified risks.

In spite of all this, projects fail due to challenges that come in the way and one has to determine what it takes to think beyond the Project and overcome some of the project challenges as a by-product. The opportunities and the factors to be leveraged upon are also to be considered. Some of the common challenges that come up during projects are unclear project objectives; project scope is ill-defined, lack of active sponsorship, strong resistance towards the change, unrealistic time pressures, etc. The level of sophistication with which the risk management function is performed has advanced significantly in recent years. However, there are still scope for solutions which would improve the function's effectiveness even more. It is in this context that a new School of thought called Assurance Management was conceived.

Assurance Management provides a framework for enhancing the leadership mindset by visualizing and utilizing all opportunity spaces to the fullest potential in a real-time manner to steer a project/Business to success.

Opportunity Spaces may be defined as 'situations that can be used to improve project outcomes' and are created or visualized by defining assurance levels in the project. Like different levels of risk, Assurance levels can be stated as different levels of a positive indicator of a project being on the right track. It is necessary to think of ways for taking Assurance levels to the next state of maturity.

ASSURANCE MANAGEMENT

Contd from Page 2

Principles of Assurance Management

There are 4 principles that can effectively explain Assurance Management:

- **Seeding**

Any activity performed in order to create opportunities that will positively affect the project and also the relationship with the customer

- **Ecosystem Engineering**

The Project ecosystem needs to be engineered to make the context and situation most favorable to the growth of the initiative or project. Ecosystem engineering also involves the creation and maintenance of this favorable ecosystem to assure real-time buy-ins by the relevant stakeholders.

- **Pre-emption**

It refers to the deliberate creation of the right circumstances that will 'pre-empt' or negate any troubled situation arising in the project

- **Innovative Paradigms**

It is all about having a framework in place that enables stakeholders to break out of the existing paradigm of doing things.

For successful transformation of Assurance Management into practice in the world of Projects/Programs/Portfolios/strategic initiatives and Enterprise rollouts, the following Seven Mantras are to be followed;

1. Investing in customer and Team education

2. Information seeding.

3. Perception management

4. Learning to say a Positive NO / Conditional Yes

5. Foreseeing the big picture

6. Steering the comfort levels

7. Thinking \$ for stakeholders

The book '**Steering Project Success**' authored by **Madhavan S Rao** describes these 7 mantras as an innovative solution to deal with soft track problems which projects face.



The Book

'**Steering Project Success**' is about effective project management in a globalised ecosystem extending unlimited opportunities. It is about developing a profitability mindset amongst project managers for steering projects to success. The world of project management is evolving from the traditional philosophy of project control to empowerment of project teams. The project stakeholders are challenged with the need to be more responsive to changes, uncertainties and vulnerabilities in the environment.

This paradigm evolution demands that the project team learns to think like entrepreneurs and leaders. The book addresses this evolving dimension of project management and presents an innovative approach to managing project challenges. It complements and supplements the current best practices in risk management.

The essence of this book is captured in a framework of Seven Mantras which can enable the project managers to be more successful and is designed to assist them in nurturing entrepreneurship in their team. The author recommends the readers to soak these Seven Mantras in their thought process and apply them with discretion to steer projects to success. The book provides real-life project experiences and presents them in a form that will provide both conceptual clarity and a practical perspective.

The author believes that the partnership mindset and the ability to create win-win outcomes amongst project stakeholders is going to be fundamentally important for steering project success. The author hopes that this guide will assist project managers to equip their team with the required mindset to ensure for project success.

Book has been commended by leaders across the industry.

"Steering Project Success encourages project stakeholders to discover new opportunities for creating win-win solutions, even in the most complex engagements. It provides 'Thinking' triggers and practical examples that help project managers to generate greater value creation for all stakeholders."

Ramalinga Raju, Chairman, Satyam Computer Services Ltd.

"It is a useful guide to all fellow project managers in the IT industry. It is a great piece of work with hard efforts put in to compile them in a unique way the Seven mantras for success. On reading the book, I do feel that project management professionals would get another view point."

Amar V Bhaskar PMP, President PMI Bangalore Chapter and leads the PM Competency in IBM Global.

"Steering Project Success provides a context based approach on some key elements for a practicing Project Manager. The seven mantras link up to the typical knowledge areas of project management. Gaining better understanding of the concepts pointed out by these mantras helps professional project managers steer projects to success."

Jayaram B G - PMP , AVP & Head, Project Management Centre of Excellence, Infosys Technologies, Ltd

The book thus talks about the human factor involved, that is, the mindset with which the opportunity space is to be addressed. When the Seven Mantras framework become a part of the Project Manager's thought process , they can arrive at a discrete list of action items to tackle the challenges in the soft track, help steer the success of Projects and deliver maximum Stakeholder Value.

Considering this as well as the four golden principles that make up Assurance Management, it can be said that dealing with opportunities are often more positive, engaging and energizing, and decreases the need to engage with Risk Mitigation In these times of unlimited opportunities and globalization, it is more rewarding to the stakeholders to identify and further the opportunity spaces as a complementary approach to pure Risk Management.

Author Madhavan S Rao , PMP.



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2008

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