

Project Management

The Inadvertent Project Manager

Regardless of project size, or type, effective application of best practice project management techniques is often what distinguishes an easy, successful project from one that is painful and unsatisfactory.

Managing projects is challenging and often demands an individual with specific project management experience. However, sometimes project managers (PM) leave unexpectedly before the project work is completed. This leaves organizations to pick up the pieces of what is now a project in disarray. One of the first actions in response to this emergency is to assign a new PM. Many times the new PM may be procured from within the existing project team.

Let's assume that the project you've been working on for the past 6-months has lost its PM. You've been on the project team from the beginning and are perceived as a hard working, knowledgeable individual. You get assigned the role of new PM – now what?

You are new on the job. You may not even know what to do in the role of PM or even how to do it. Don't panic! Start by using the CDC Unified Process to help get you up to speed fast on best practice project management techniques.

- Educate yourself on what it is that you will be dealing with as the new PM
- Analyze the project situation to determine the current state of project deliverables and related artifacts such as schedule, budget, staffing, etc
- Review lessons learned resulting from any completed project effort, past projects, and experiences from other PMs within the performing organization
- Understand and execute proper communication in all directions - up, down, and horizontally across the project team and organization. Performing this affectively is critical to project success
- Identify and manage stakeholders. Educate yourself bout them and the politics of the work and project team environment
- Build allies wherever possible

- Identify if the project is a high-visibility project
- Focus on the customer. Understand their requirements, needs, and expectations
- Review and update the risk management plan and risk log to include your perceived risks, mitigation strategies, and contingency plans

Apply best practice project management to your work. Start by using the CDC Unified Process, assess the project, understand, and execute items such as:

- Seek out assistance from experienced project managers if available
- Determine criteria or requirements surrounding project delivery
- Determine changes that may need to be addressed to deal with any emergencies resulting from the PM loss
- Perform a detailed risk analysis, identify mitigation strategies, and develop contingency plans
- Proactively engage and communicating with stakeholders
- Review requirements and associated project documents to understand what this project really is and what is expected of the work effort
- Understand any specific client expectations
- Review options and different approaches to select the best approach to tackling the activities ahead
- Review staffing requirements, allocation, availability, and budgets. If gaps exist work to resolve them. Attempt to utilize resources from other areas of the organization to fill the gaps
- Plan, prepare and execute project activities

Portions of the content of this newsletter were paraphrased from a presentation by Mark Britton, MBA and Sherry Brown-Scoggins, PMP during the December 2007 meeting of the CDC Project Management Community of Practice (PMCoP). For more information regarding effective project management, Mark and Sherry's presentation, the CDC PMCoP, or the CDC Unified Process (UP) please visit the CDC UP website located at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/>. ■

CDC Unified Process – Process Guides

The CDC Unified Process (UP) is a collection of processes, tools, and artifacts that any project can use to structure, track, and manage their activities and deliverables. The CDC UP is a defined and clear approach to successful project delivery through a consistent and repeatable integration of practices and processes that comply with Federal regulations and policies, industry best practices, and PHIN and CDC standards. Examples of these processes include Goals Management, Security Certification and Accreditation, Privacy Impact Assessment, Enterprise Architecture, Procurement and Contracts, Project Management, and Capital Planning and Investment Control.

The CDC UP can be applied to projects across the CDC (e.g., IT, campaign, and construction), not just informatics projects, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of project management processes. It will also accommodate a fast-track approach for quickly developing solutions in the event of a public health emergency.

CDC projects are required to comply with various federal regulations and CDC policies and standards. The specific processes a CDC project team must

Upcoming Project Management Community of Practice Meetings and Topics

- **Friday, February 29**
Project Server
- **Friday, March 28**
Mid Tier Data Center and DSS
- **Friday, April 25**
Program Management Professionals Certification
- **Friday, May 16**
Security Issues that a Project Manager at CDC Need to Address
- **Friday, June 27**
PGO Processes
- **Thursday, July 24**
Project Management Career Framework
- **Friday, August 22**
General Management vs. Project Management
- **Friday, September 26**
Records Management, PIA, and Classified Information
- **Friday, October 24**
Facilitation – A Key to Project Success
- **Friday, December 5**
Influence – A Critical Skill for Successful Project Managers

complete for compliance vary from project to project based a number of characteristics. Information about these required processes is available from such sources as government websites, the CDC intranet, and CDC policy documents. However, the information currently available about these requirements is often not presented from the perspective of the project team's activity.

One type of artifact available on the CDC UP website is referred to as a Process Guides. CDC UP Process Guides were developed to provide that perspective. These guides help project teams comply with federal regulations along with PHIN and CDC policies and standards by:

- Presenting requirements in a concise, easy-to-understand, and consistent format that is available on the CDC Intranet
- Setting requirements in the context of their purpose
- Providing step-by-step instructions for completing activities required for process compliance
- Showing integration points between processes

The CDC UP website also offers a quick project assessment questionnaire to help project managers determine which compliance-related processes may apply to their project.

Over this year the CDC UP Project Management Newsletter will begin profiling at least one process guide per monthly newsletter to bring further awareness to this invaluable CDC UP tool. For more information regarding CDC UP Process Guides or the CDC Unified Process (UP) please visit the CDC UP website located at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/>. ■

Contact the CDC Unified Process Team

The *CDC Unified Process Project Management Newsletter* is authored by Daniel Vitek MBA, PMP and published by the National Center for Public Health Informatics.

For questions about the CDC UP, comments regarding this newsletter, suggestions for future newsletter topics, or to subscribe to the CDC UP Project Management Newsletter please contact the CDC UP Team at cdcup@cdc.gov

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/>