

## Removing Barriers to Project Team Development

Building a project team is one of the main responsibilities of a project manager. Developing that team to be as effective and efficient as possible always presents challenges and barriers. Doing so requires that project managers possess skills in areas such as leadership, team building, planning, organizing, resource allocation, and conflict resolution. Some common barriers to developing project teams may include:

- Communication problem. When stakeholders are unclear of, or possess varying, priorities, interests, outlooks, and expectations related to project activities, deliverables, and outcomes.
- Changes in scope, budget, objectives, regulatory or resource requirements, etc.
- Conflicts amongst team members resulting from uncertainty in team roles and responsibilities.
- Competition amongst team members over positions of authority, power, and/or influence.
- Lack of a clearly defined and understood team hierarchy, structure, and objectives.
- Lack of credibility of, or support from, senior management and/or project leaders.
- Lack of commitment by team members.

Many of the barriers that challenge project managers when developing their team can be avoided, or at least mitigated, through effective and detailed planning. The human resource plan and accompanying staffing plans are key component to removing such barriers. These documents are the output result from organizational resource planning in support of the specific project.

The Project Management Institute's, A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge - Fourth Edition defines project human resource management as a knowledge area that includes the processes to organize and manage the project team. It defines a human resource plan as a document describing how roles and responsibilities, reporting relationships, and staffing management will be addressed and structured for the project. The processes associated

with this knowledge area and its associated tools, techniques, and outputs include:

- Developing a human resource plan
- Acquiring the project team
- Developing the project team
- Managing the project team

A major risk to projects is not having resources with the right skills available at the time they are required. The human resource plan identifies the staffing requirements, how they will be met, and specifies the process and procedures used to manage staff throughout the project's life. The plan describes the planning and acquisition of both FTE and non-FTE staff, the responsibilities assigned to each, and details any training activities necessary to ensure the right skills are available at the correct time for successful project execution.

The core project team is made up of individuals that make up the main part of the project's infrastructure (e.g., project manager, key staff, etc.). Acquiring the additional staff to populate the project team is just as important as planning for this. This process involves confirming resource availability and obtaining the right staff at the appropriate time of the project to deliver successful results. This process should be removed of emotion or sympathy and focus on selecting and obtaining the best available person for the job.

Depending on the organization, project managers and their level of authority can vary drastically in both perception and reality. For a project manager to be successful they must understand their level of authority and the potential boundaries influencing development of their team. Managers that can affectively build and develop teams often possess a deep understanding of social and organizational variables that influence this. These managers work within the confines of such influences to foster an environment of active participation, minimal conflict, recognition, and reward in an effort to develop the best possible team. Some suggestions to removing barriers to project team development may include:



- Alleviate any potential communication issues. Develop a communication management plan that defines project structure and methods of information collection, screening, formatting, and distribution. Affective execution of such a plan will outline and clarify understanding among stakeholders regarding the actions and processes necessary to facilitate the critical link amongst people, process, ideas, and information necessary for project success.
- Frequently communicate with stakeholders to ensure continued understanding and agreement of project objectives and outcomes.
- Investing more in planning, requirements, and design will minimize the possibility of unwarranted change.
- Application of an Agile delivery methodology may reduce the consequences of any prospective change through the benefits gained from the iterative gathering of requirements, designing, and delivering incremental benefit.
- Educate senior management and customers on the potential consequences of unwarranted change and how such consequences grow exponentially later in the project's life cycle.
- Clearly define team roles and responsibilities.
- Conduct regular meetings to keep stakeholders abreast of project activities.
- Reinforce defined roles and responsibilities throughout daily business.
- Encourage team mentoring and coaching cross-train staff to further develop specialized skills.
- Include team training activities designed to increase core competencies.
- Provide unique options for specific project roles that may require more specialized training.
- Co-locate teams and groups whenever possible.
- Reward success and encourage recognition of outstanding achievements.

When barriers to project team development are removed, teams and projects excel. They are more innovative and display greater commitment. They deliver results more effectively and efficiently, communicate better and trust greater.

For more information on project management, removing barriers to project team development, the Project Management Community of Practice or the CDC UP please visit the CDC Unified Process website at <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/>. ■

## Project Management Community of Practice

- **February 25, 2011**  
*CPIC for Project Managers*
- **March 25, 2011**  
*Managing Change*
- **April 29, 2011**  
*Developing Meaningful and Measurable Metrics*
- **May 27, 2011**  
*SharePoint for Success*
- **June 24, 2011**  
*A Conversation with CDC's COO*
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For more information on the Project Management Community of Practice visit the PMCoP website at <http://www2.cdc.gov/cdcup/library/pmcp/> ■

## CDC Unified Process Presentations

The CDC UP offers a short overview presentation to any CDC employee and/or contractor group. Presentations are often performed at your facility, on a day of the week convenient for your group, and typically take place over lunch structured as one hour lunch-and-learn style meeting.

Contact the CDC Unified Process at [cdcup@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcup@cdc.gov) or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup> to arrange a short overview presentation for your group. ■

## Contact the CDC Unified Process

The CDC Unified Process Project Management Newsletter is authored by Daniel Vitek, MBA, PMP and published by the Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services.

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