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Working with People on Projects

Overview

This chapter aligns with Chapters 3 and 9 of the PMBOK and 18% of the CAPM questions come from these chapters. The content connects to the Planning and Executing category of the PMP questions.

Few skills are more essential to the project manager than the ability to lead, inspire, and manage people effectively. By effectively managing relationship dynamics and enhancing communication among team members, a project manager can contribute enormously to the success of any given endeavor. Moreover, as project scope and complexity increase, these skills become increasingly important lest the project fall into a tangle of petty factions and unclear expectations.

Some of the key skills include:

1. The ability to work well with individuals. This includes skills such as responsiveness to the needs and motivations of team members and the ability to effectively negotiate and resolve disputes.
2. The ability to create effective team dynamics. The project manager must take the lead in ensuring that trust and accountability are engendered, developing goals, effectively managing meetings, and monitoring team progress.
3. The ability to create a project culture. Successful project cultures are characterized by a strong shared vision of success and a consistent set of values that guide members of the project team in their independent decision making.

The concepts discussed in this chapter are not meant to be an exhaustive description of the skills required to successfully work with people on a project, but instead are meant only as a starting point. Some students of social dynamics mistakenly think that they can learn people skills solely from what they read in a book. This notion would be tantamount to an aspiring violinist hoping to learn the instrument by reading about music theory without ever physically touching the instrument! The principles that follow are the groundwork as you begin to build your own mental map of what effective people management and leadership looks like.

Note for ID: Effective people management is perhaps more important within instructional design than it is within a more prototypical setting, such as within a software company or building construction business. Instructional design projects are often characterized by small teams, vaguely specified client deliverables, the requirement to work closely with many individuals who do not have a vested interest in the outcome of the project, such as the subject matter experts (SMEs), and oftentimes a limited budget. Although no specific domain of project management has a monopoly on difficulty, the instructional design project manager has his or her own unique set of challenges and needs -

especially when it comes to working with people.

Designers Share Their Experiences

Dr. Andy Gibbons - Instructional Psychology and Technology - BYU



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Well on this project where we were—we were training our diverse group. We were training submarine, excuse me, we were training helicopter pilots and we were training sensor operators who sit in the back and are completely different. One group was officers. One group was not officers, they were enlisted people. So, there was a great diversity of people we had to communicate with. I was very fortunate in this project because of some staffing. You know, it was not skill on my part or good choices on my part. We had two people whose personalities really spelled the success of the project. One was an untrained instructional designer. He was a Harvard graduate, he had his Bachelors from Harvard, and yet he wasn't employed in a law firm, you know, he wasn't advancing in his career. He was kind of in-between trying to decide what he wanted to do, but he had this wonderful outgoing personality, people just loved being around him, they wanted to talk to him all the time. And so he was kind of the heartbeat of the project. He was the glue that made all this diverse group of people, he was a motivator, he was exciting to be around. The second person was a Navy, former Navy, was a retiree. He had been in the Navy for so long and we were working with Navy personnel, both officers and enlisted people. He had been a fairly high ranking enlisted person. And he knew how not to take "guff" from enlisted people. He knew how to address officers, and he was on the technical side of things. He was very skilled with people within the military world. Without those two guys this would have been the biggest disaster. This project would have not worked, so personalities were incredibly important.

Heather Bryce - Independent Studies - BYU



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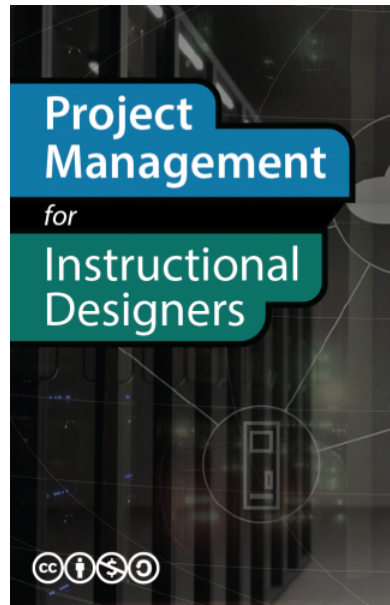
Well on Art 45, it's unusual because the instructor is actually an artist. Then we have an art director. Our flash supervisor has an art background, and he also has his masters in Instructional Design. And then we have our videographer who is artistic. So we had a lot of artistic personalities on this project. I think most of our team is used to working together, so I think the synergy was really great there, they had great ideas supporting because they're aware of what each role can do. I think the only, probably one thing that made this course, this project a little more interesting was our art director and our flash supervisor are both artists, and then of course the author is an artist. So they sometimes differed on how things should be presented. So I was really, they did a fantastic job in finding compromise. Because at the end of the day with our courses we have the final say with what is in a course. The author will give us the material, but we have the final say in how to present it. I think we found a nice way. Some things we went with the way that the author wanted to present certain concepts. And other ways, we went with the ways that our team thought it should be presented and I thought it was a good compromise.

Dr. Larry Seawright - Center for Teaching and Learning - BYU



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Our Center, we have about 20 full-time employees, and we have a wide variety of personality types. We have some folks who spend a lot of years in industry and kind of got tired of doing that. That would be me. I worked for IBM, Intel, Xerox, companies like that. And then went back, got a Ph.D., and now I'm working at the University. So we have folks that have a lot of industry experience, and we have people who have just come up through the University. Ph.D., you know, maybe a few years working as high school teachers, get a Ph.D. and now they're working with us. And so their experience with real world kinds of applications is kind of limited. Sometimes you get clashes there because you have people who have been used to running in industry large teams, and they have lots of resources and they expect things to be done like this. When I worked at Intel for example, there were lots of meetings where, you know, folks were yelling at each other. Literally yelling at each other in the meeting, and then you walk out the door and you talk about, you know, see you at the tee at four o'clock. Like they're bitter enemies, but they're best of friends. But that's the corporate mentality, the corporate culture. Here, the culture is let's all get along, and so when we had these personalities that have different, very different backgrounds it takes a little massaging. So as project manager it's my job is to smooth some ruffled feathers here, and to keep the kind of egos from getting bruised and keep doing the great work that they're doing without taking offence at what appear to be slights. And that is all communication when it comes down to it. Folks say things and we don't understand it because of different contexts. So frequently you have to have separate meetings. This is what this person meant and this is what this person meant so we can all get along right? A large part of what the role of a project manager is, is to make sure that those kind of communication issues get smoothed over. Not covered up, but smoothed over and clarified so that the project can keep moving forward.



Wiley, D. et al. (2018). Project Management for Instructional Designers. EdTech Books.
<https://edtechbooks.org/pm4id>



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