Project Management Human Resources – Planning, Execution, and Control

Marc C. McCune

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

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## Planning

You are assigned as project manager of a new project and need a new team to execute it. Where do you begin? We will start with planning. When possible, have the persons who will implement the plan also prepare it. Organize your project team and decide the task at hand using request for quotes, work breakdown structures, etcetera. Using this information you can determine staffing requirements, find team members and execute the project plan.

Team members should have the skills and ability to perform project tasks at schedule and quality required by project and specifications. The team needs to fit well with each other for the task at hand. Like a well-oiled team, if you insert even one member that does not flow with the others it slows down the whole team.

## Execution

The work break down structures and specifications and company processes will direct the team on how to execute the project. As with any well-structured element, one should occasionally step back and actually, ‘see’ what it is you are doing.

Do not get so hung up on processes and procedures that you limit yourselves to your full potential. Procedures can be changed for the better even in a highly regulated environment such as aviation. Encourage innovation. You do not want your team to become really good at doing something bad.

## Control

Keep the team focused on the mission using meetings, status reporting, and poster boards. A combination of data and visual management works well. Look for the right mix of resources that ‘play well’ together and do the task well. Satisfy the needs of the project while satisfying the needs of the individuals. Job satisfaction is great incentive to get a job well done and on time. Get feedback from team members, do they understand? Do they know what the objectives are? Is what they are doing a good fit for them?

Encourage open communications. Even reward those who bring up negative issues. If you do not know there is a problem, you cannot fix it! Admit it, even though you are a Project Manager, you still do not know everything'; concede inadequacy. Your team will appreciate your candor and it is an opportunity for some reverse mentoring and employee leadership. Face it – not knowing everything is reality. Even if you think you know about a certain issue, the critical thinker evaluates outside information. A collage of data is better than single source data.

Acknowledge that your team may go through the following stages of development. Forming, where people are feeling out where they fit in and who is at what level. The storming stage is where team members have settled in and may start to question the project motives and the person in charge. Next is the norming stage where the team begins to settle down and feel more at ease as a team and finally the performing stage, the team is working as a well-oiled machine.

You will have to manage the team through each stage of development and adapt. During the forming stage, a ‘directive style’ of leadership may be called for. Your people are looking for a leader. Do not forget the team’s social aspect during this critical phase. Allowing some non-work interaction and getting to know one another is an important part of your team’s development. This will pay off handsomely during the next stage of storming.

During storming, employees need to be assured that what they are doing is right. Demonstrate that the team is going in the right direction and doing a good job with charts or illustrations. Make certain they are doing a good job first. If there is conflict in the group meet it and deal with it. If you do not deal with it, the group may keep coming back to this issue stifling progress of the teams’ growth.

During the norming stage, the group is becoming more cohesive. They should be working as a team and have a sense of when other members need help. They can receive more responsibility and delegation. It will further their bond to the team.

At the performing stage, all of the efforts in developing the team are paying off. You can now concentrate on the analysis of team progress. As the project evolves and team members change, your team may revert to any of the stages, but fortunately, you know how to deal with it.

Remaining a team does not happen by itself and there is no one ‘laundry list’ of things to do that will work for every situation or team. Individuals are just that, individual. You need to have empathy with your employees and understand their perspective. Just tossing employee ‘A’ in with employee ‘B’ may spell disaster, but put employee ‘A’ with employee ‘C’ and it’s magic! Allow team members to interact with each other.

Match individual talents with project goals. Everyone has his or her strengths and areas he or she enjoy doing most. It is your job to match those up with the project’s requirements. If an individual cannot fit in anywhere, perhaps they are not suited for the job. Finding their niche can be challenging but the rewards are many.

Let your employees know why the project is important, do not assume they know. They probably know some of the whys, but you can fill in the blanks. Make certain each team member shares the project goals as a team. One person on a self-agenda can hurt the rest of the team; remind each other that the team is family.

We typically spend a third of the week, Monday through Friday, at work. This does not include sleeping or commuting. If your team does not feel like a family, there may be a problem with one or more of your team members. Finally, only compete with those outside the team. The team’s purpose is to lift each other up and help the team. This cannot be done if team members are competing with each other.

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