



CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF BEHAVIORAL ISSUES IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Glaciers move. If the geological conditions are right, they move inexorably toward the sea. Anyone who has visited and stood on a glacier in areas such as Alaska's Inland Passage is impressed by the dynamism and fluidity of the process. Glacial moraines are amazing flowing rivers of rock. Analogously, project management has been engaged in an inexorable movement toward the human side of the enterprise. The field of project management is one that has always been characterized by its joint emphasis on a blend of technical elements (e.g., PERT charts, beta distributions, earned value analysis, resource leveling) coupled with its vital connection to behavioral and management concepts. While numerous tools, techniques, and quantitative aids were developed in the 1960s and 1970s, people and teamwork have become crucial issues at the turn of the millennium.

Our interest in this topic has been an enduring one, starting almost two decades ago (Slevin and Pinto, 1986, 1988; Slevin and Pinto, 1992). We have long noted that projects are not successful because of the use of the latest project management techniques; they occur as the result of understanding the role that people play in fostering an environment for success. Many of these issues are addressed in a recent collection of new research studies published by the Project Management Institute (Slevin, Cleland, and Pinto, 2002). Research continues to bear out this position as recent studies clearly show. Interest in the behavioral side of successful project management continues to be keen and will continue to grow in this decade (Kloppenborg and Opfer, 2002). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of some key behavioral factors impacting successful project management. We sought clarity and guidance in this task by interviewing a number of practicing project managers, many of whom wished to remain anonymous. Their insights and observations were invaluable in helping shape our thinking on these issues and providing the framework for this chapter.

A 12-Factor Model

As one examines the current literature, a number of key behavioral factors emerge as central to successful project management. We have identified 12 factors that we believe are crucial in impacting behavioral issues of project management. We developed this list by doing a quick scan of a variety of recent texts in project management, selected journal articles and papers presented at 2000 and 2002 PMI frontiers of Project Management Research Conferences. Also, a review was conducted of our own recent project management course syllabi. We then sorted the list of factors on the micro–macro continuum in an attempt to provide a useful structure for comments provided to us by practitioners. While we do not argue that this is an exhaustive list, we do feel that it takes a big bite out of the universe of key behavioral issues impacting the project manager. Our analysis has been primarily from the perspective of the individual project manager (the person on the firing line), as opposed to broader perspectives, such as a project management office or general organizational structure. These factors are listed in Figure 1.1.

As one goes down the list, the focus transitions from more micro (individual) issues to more macro (organization wide) issues. Changes in the environment over the past decade have generated increasing challenges in each of these 12 areas for the modern project manager. It is likely, in fact, that the changes we are observing at this point are simply milestones in the overall movement of the field, much as the glacier's movements may be easy to track from point to point, though the eventual destination of the glacier will always remain in question.

Key Comments from Practitioners

In an attempt to make this chapter as pragmatic as possible, we have solicited comments from practitioners concerning these key issues. Via e-mail and telephone interview techniques, a number of practicing project managers were asked to share their opinions con-

FIGURE 1.1. TWELVE KEY BEHAVIORAL FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS.

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|---|---|--|
| M | ↑ | 1. <i>Personal Characteristics of the Project Manager</i> |
| I | | 2. <i>Motivation of the Project Manager</i> |
| C | | 3. <i>Leadership and the Project Manager</i> |
| R | | 4. <i>Communications and the Project Manager</i> |
| O | | 5. <i>Staffing and the Project Manager</i> |
| M | ↓ | 6. <i>Cross-Functional Cooperation and the Project Manager</i> |
| A | | 7. <i>Project Teams and the Project Manager</i> |
| C | | 8. <i>Virtual Teams and the Project Manager</i> |
| R | | 9. <i>Human Resource Policies and the Project Manager</i> |
| O | | 10. <i>Conflict and Negotiations and the Project Manager</i> |
| | | 11. <i>Power and Politics and the Project Manager</i> |
| | | 12. <i>Project Organization and the Project Manager</i> |
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cerning trends in project management over the past decade, and where they felt the field was going in the future. Among others, this panel represents an opportunistic selection of individuals who attended PMI Research Conference 2002 (July 14 to 17, 2002, Seattle, Washington; Conference Co-Chairs: Dennis P. Slevin, Jeffrey K. Pinto, and David I. Cleland).

We believe that selected practitioner comments provide some interesting insights into current trends in the field. They also serve as an important perspective to the academic view of these constructs. In conducting these interviews, we deliberately sought a mix of project managers from a variety of organizational or business settings, including traditional production organizations, service industries, and governmental agencies. The range of responses provided additional evidence that more and more organizations are becoming “totally projectized” as they attempt to cope with rapidly changing technology and turbulent business environments (Lundin and Hartman, 2000).

1. Personal Characteristics of the Project Manager

It has been suggested for some time that project management skills are related closely and directly to key general management skills (*PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition). While it is clear that general management is a challenging profession, it is also obvious that the project manager often faces special challenges (Meredith and Mantel, 2003). While the general manager often has formal authority and considerable power, the project manager often faces the challenge of working from a low-power, informal position. The unique setting of project management has given rise to a literature that attempts to identify the characteristics most conducive to running successful projects (Posner, 1987; Einsiedel, 1987; Petterson, 1991). Based on these studies, a number of perspectives, traits, and features of project leadership have begun to emerge. Though there is by no means a general consensus of the specific traits of successful project managers, our evaluation of the relevant characteristics from the universe of 32 behavioral dimensions would include the following list (Byham, 1981; Slevin, 1989):

Dimensions

- *Planning and organizing.* Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal; planning proper assignments of personnel and appropriate allocation of resources.
- *Control.* Establishing procedures to monitor one’s own job activities and responsibilities or to regulate the tasks and the activities of subordinates. Taking action to monitor the results of delegated assignments or projects.
- *Technical/professional knowledge.* Level of understanding of relevant technical/professional information.
- *Oral communication.* Effective expression in individual or group situations (includes organization, gestures, and nonverbal communication).
- *Listening.* Use of information extracted from oral communication. The ability to pick out the essence of what is being said.
- *Written communication.* Clear expression of ideas in writing in good grammatical form; includes the plan or format of the communication.

- *Sensitivity.* Actions that indicate a consideration for the feelings and needs of others. Awareness of the impact of one's own behavior on others.
- *Group leadership.* Utilization of appropriate interpersonal styles and methods in guiding a group with a common task or goal toward task accomplishment, maintenance of group cohesiveness, and cooperation. Facilitation of group process.
- *Job motivation.* The extent to which activities and responsibilities available in the job overlap with activities and responsibilities that result in personal satisfaction; the degree to which the work itself is personally satisfying.
- *Analysis.* Identifying issues and problems, securing relevant information, relating and comparing data from different sources, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships.
- *Judgment.* Developing alternative courses of action and making decisions that reflect factual information, are based on logical assumptions, and take organizational resources into consideration.
- *Initiative.* Originating action and maintaining active attempts to achieve goals; self-starting rather than passively accepting. Taking action to achieve goals beyond what is necessarily called for.

Two things come to mind when selecting personal characteristics of the project manager:

- *The list tends to be long and diverse.* Project management is an intellectually and physically challenging profession. It requires a wide range of capabilities.
- *Technical skills are important.* While a general manager might surround him- or herself with technical experts, the project manager must be intimately involved with the technology concerning his or her project. As technology advances, this technical proficiency challenge becomes even more significant.

It has been suggested that successful project managers are both born and made (Melymuka, 2000). Some have suggested that project managers have key management styles that account for success, focusing primarily on their ability to function well as facilitators and communicators (Montague, 2000). Others have suggested that full-time leadership skills are essential (Schulz, 2000). In fact, though many of these theories offer some face validity and surface appeal, they also reinforce the problem of trying to isolate the type of person who makes an effective project manager.

Key Comments from Practitioners

“For the most part, I find that today's project managers tend to be very achievement-oriented with strong characteristics towards working together with others in a cooperative manner, as opposed to the classical superior/subordinate relationship that was characterized ten years ago.”

“Organizations that recognize this are beginning to put more investment in team building and teamwork training.”

“In our organization, we don’t look for the ideal project manager. Too much of this job is learned as you go. We find it better to select likely candidates and work with them, giving them small assignments and testing their abilities. Can they make decisions? Are they intelligent enough to ask the right questions? Do they know what they don’t know?”

2. Motivation and the Project Manager

The project manager must be a motivational genius. The project manager must have a high level of self-motivation and also be quite skillful at motivating the project team, often under situations of insufficient resources, low team member commitment and morale, and little formal authority. The self-motivation of the project manager is often an intrinsic thing. NASA has been quoted as saying “we don’t work very hard on motivating astronauts, but we certainly are extremely careful in selecting astronauts.” In that sense, self-motivated project managers are born, not made. However, the organization can do a variety of things to make sure that the motivational structures for project managers are as well developed and carefully executed as those for functional managers (Dunn, 2001). Job satisfaction can obviously be enhanced through appropriate motivational techniques. Further, having clear career ladders for project managers is essential. In many organizations, project managers form a subclass of manager. Because they do not belong to any department, it is easy for their careers to be overlooked in favor of functional standouts. As one wag put it to us, “In our organization, there are two career ladders, but only one has rungs!” Project managers will be self-motivated to the degree they perceive that their performance is likely to earn them advancement or other positive reinforcers.

Concerning the motivation of the project team, often highly creative and unusual techniques must be exploited. Feedback to the team is often long in coming in terms of project success. A typical salesperson receives information concerning sales progress every month; however, in complex projects, there are often unclear measures of progress. While information on schedule, budget, earned value analysis, and other dimensions of project progress may be available, the typical global feedback concerning project success occurs after it is completed, transferred, and used. This presents a particular challenge to a project manager concerning motivation. Recently, one of the authors attended a Christmas party at which the president of an entrepreneurial IT consulting company presented awards to ten employees, many of whom manage projects off-site. Each person received a very nice bronze plaque indicating that he or she had been awarded the President’s Excellence in Performance Award for the year. In addition, each individual was given a very stylish briefcase. The president then said, “Each of you should open your briefcase. Who knows? One of them might have \$1,000 in it.” To the astonishment of the recipients, each briefcase contained 1,000 one-dollar bills—not an inexpensive approach to motivation, but in a competitive IT world where turnover is often a problem, this had a major impact on these lucky employees.

Another area of motivational import for the project manager concerns the management of risk. In a rapidly changing technological world, risk management becomes increasingly

important. The importance of risk has been identified by a number of researchers in the field (Turner, 1993; Chapman and Ward, 1997; Wideman, 1998). The *PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition contains a significantly revised chapter on project risk management. A new edition of a major textbook in the field contains a substantially enhanced treatment of risk (Meredith and Mantel, 2003). It is important that the organization develop an open and cooperative attitude toward risk, along with approaches that reduce the motivation for concealing risks (Schmidt and Dart, 1999).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“While organizations that recognize project management as a valid discipline and process have put into place motivational inducers such as specific job descriptions and career paths, this is not the norm in the corporate environment but rather the exception. Hence, I see more motivation coming from the individual project manager’s need to achieve any personal satisfaction than from the classical motivational means. While this serves well in most cases, the lack of tangible motivational rewards in many organizations leads to disappointment and apathy when the position of project manager is not recognized and does not lead to a specific career objective.”

“When we ask practitioners, ‘what is your motivation to stay in project management?’ the comments often include a passion, a challenge, opportunity to influence, growth, finding better ways, the variety, ability to impact, being a change agent, able to achieve results, et cetera. The people who stay in project management are often self-motivated, at least until a cumbersome management grinds them down.”

3. Leadership and the Project Manager

Leadership is crucial for effective project management in two ways:

- Leadership determines the effectiveness of the project planning process.
- Leadership style has a crucial impact on the effectiveness of the project team.

Leadership is important at the onset of the project because it provides key inputs to the project planning process. For example, leadership is crucial in definition of the project scope and the development of the project plan (Globerson and Zwikael, 2002). The implications of this finding are key: The leadership of the project manager immediately sets the stage for not only project team development but the metamorphosis of the project. Hence, effective organizations attempt to develop a positive leadership environment to enhance project success (Jiang, Klein, and Chen, 2001).

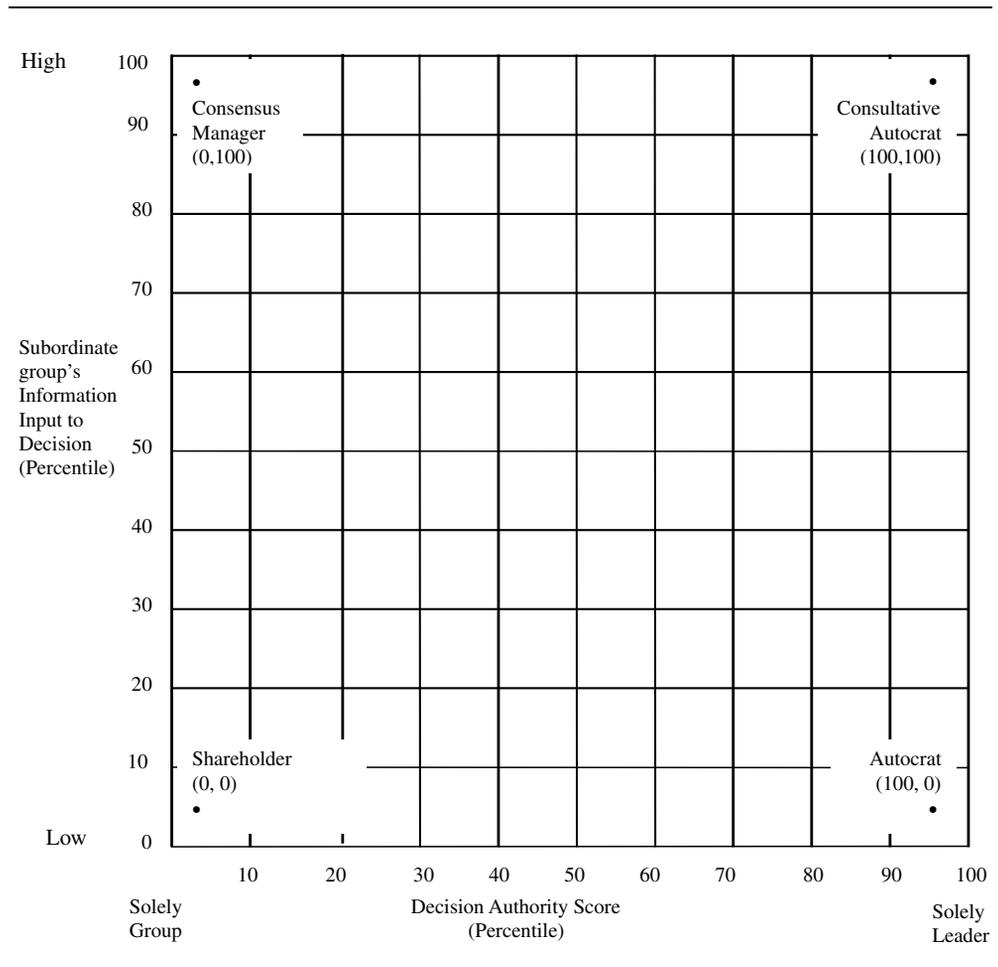
As Peg Thoms and John Kerwin explore in their chapter, leadership style issues present a particular problem for the project manager (Slevin, 1989; Slevin and Pinto, 1991). One of the key challenges of the project manager is the need to use consensus leadership approaches in working with the project team. One approach to the clarification of consensus issues is the two-dimensional Bonoma-Slevin Leadership Model. The two dimensions are *information input* and *decision authority*. Information input is represented by the subordinate groups’ degree of information inputted into the decision-making process. The decision au-

thority dimension determines whether the leader makes the decision solely by him- or herself or shares the decision making with the group. The grid below helps to define four leadership decisions (see Figure 1.2).

The four extremes of leaders (depicted in the four corners of the grid) are the following:

- *Autocrat* (100, 0). Such managers solicit little or no input from their groups and make the managerial decisions solely by themselves.
- *Consultative autocrat* (100, 100). In this managerial style, intensive input is elicited from the members, but these formal leaders keep all substantive decision-making authority to themselves.

FIGURE 1.2. BONOMA-SLEVIN LEADERSHIP MODEL.



- *Consensus manager* (0, 100). Purely consensual managers throw open the problem to the group for discussion (input) and simultaneously allow or encourage the entire group to make the relevant decision.
- *Shareholder manager* (0, 0). This position is literally poor management. Little or no information input and exchange take place within the group, while the group itself has ultimate authority for the final decision.

The leadership style challenge for the project manager concerns heavy pressures, driving the decision making in the consensus area (northwest corner) of the grid, while often time pressures induce one to behave in an autocratic fashion. The good news from this leadership model is that leadership behaviors are flexible. It would be a mistake to assume that once identified as possessing a certain style, it is impossible to alter that style for different circumstances or situations. In fact, successful project managers have been shown to employ a great deal of flexibility in their use of leadership approaches. They may employ more authoritative practices when dealing with troublesome team members, consensus styles when working with technical people to collectively solve a problem, or a consultative autocrat style when developing project plans, duration estimates, or PERT (program evaluation and review technique) schedules. The typical realities of the project environment suggest that maximum returns derive from a flexible, thoughtful approach to project leadership styles. The reactive, one-dimensional project manager will find his or her leadership style may work well under some situations but is totally unsuited for others (Kangus and Lee-Kelly, 2000).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“The project manager is becoming more of a leader than the classical view of a manager. As a leader, the project manager is beginning to meld together the leadership and management responsibilities into a well-rounded capability to not only see the trees but also see the forest . . . and what’s on the other side of the forest.”

“Leadership in our company usually consists of being out in front, being able to talk the technical talk with the engineers, the financial talk with the accountant, and the management talk with the administrators. Our project leaders have to have the respect of the rest of the team, and it is never given easily—it has to be earned!”

“The best leader I ever saw seemed to instinctively understand how to relate to different groups and different situations. I’ve watched him go from a sweet person to an SOB and back to a sweet person again in about five minutes, depending upon the situation and the person he was dealing with. It wasn’t an act—he just knew the tune he had to play with each person.”

4. Communications and the Project Manager

As technology advances, communications challenges will increase. Each time information is exchanged, time is expended and project resources are consumed (Back, 2001). Communication of the project vision to all affected stakeholders can be a tremendously important step in the process (Reed, 2002). The Internet can provide a major tool for project management communications but also can be a significant consumer of time and energy (Giffen,

2002). As a result, we are faced with a conundrum: Research demonstrates the importance of maintaining clear lines of communication with all project stakeholders to improve the chances of success, and yet, because of the manner in which many communication mediums operate, it is not always clear how to generate the most effective messages and communicate them for maximum benefit.

A number of factors have emerged that make communications a greater challenge every year for the project manager, including the following:

- Increased project complexity
- Globalization of projects
- The Internet and all of its ramifications
- E-mail
- Virtual teams

Example: A pharmaceutical company assembles a virtual project team of 30 scientists and managers in six different countries. They interact using the most advanced teleconferencing technologies. The e-mail load is enormous. Even though the technology is marvelous, scheduling and executing a meeting is a challenge because of global time zone differences. As a result, the communications network and initially approved modes for communication do not perform nearly as well as hoped, causing project delays and numerous face-to-face meetings to clarify differences: something the project manager had hoped to avoid by investing in state-of-the-art networking!

The *PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition suggests four major communication processes:

- Communications planning
- Information distribution
- Performance reporting
- Administrative closure

The manner in which each of these communications steps is approached can have a huge impact on the viability of project team and stakeholder communications. Each of these steps must be carefully considered, its strengths and weaknesses assessed, and fallback positions identified. Done well, project communications processes are a hugely important factor in project success. Done poorly, they may result in conflicting messages, priorities, isolated pockets within the team, and an information vacuum.

Key Comments from Practitioners

“Mulenburg’s 4th Law: All people problems are problems of communication. And all (at least most) project leader problems are people problems—the team, the line manager, upper management, the customer, suppliers, et cetera—or involve people that have to be convinced, persuaded, stroked, or put on the right path.”

“The project manager has become more of a communicator and facilitator than experienced years ago. With the increase in technological changes, the higher emphasis on ‘better, quicker, cheaper,’ and more complex projects, this has occurred more out

of necessity than from design. However, project managers who are good communicators are becoming more and more difficult to find.”

“There are two keys to communication: speaking well and writing well. I see some project managers that simply cannot write coherently. In fact, their writing is embarrassing. On the other hand, some project managers lack the ability to put two sentences together once they are up in front of people. We don’t have the luxury of hiding project managers who can’t communicate.”

“The key to our business is keeping the customer happy. The person who is responsible for that is the project manager. Communication skills are essential!”

5. Staffing and the Project Manager

Careful staffing of organizations has long been known as a secret to success. There are two common problems found in staffing project teams: (1) taking the first available resource regardless of their level of motivation, skill, or background in the project being considered or (2) having functional managers use project teams as a dumping ground for their poorer performers. Unfortunately, while successful project teams should be staffed by the best and brightest available, often the reverse is true. It is not difficult to see the end result from creating a team made up of personnel with low motivation or the suddenly discovered news that their boss considers them expendable. Alternatively, research suggests that when care is taken to staff project teams from available talent pools, the end result is much more promising for creating an environment for success. It has been suggested that the interview process can be made more effective by following these ten steps:

1. Write the job description.
2. Conduct the job analysis.
3. Select the behavioral dimensions.
4. Construct an interview form.
5. Recruit qualified candidates.
6. Study the résumés or applications.
7. Interview the applicants, record the data, defer judgment.
8. Score the interviews.
9. Use multiple interview consensus.
10. Make the hiring decision (Slevin, 1989, p. 287).

The implications are clear: Project teams that are staffed carefully, based on the hunt for the best talent available, are more likely to perform well. At a time when turnover in many critical knowledge-based industries is high (Abdel-Hamid, 1992), it would be a mistake to approach project team staffing in a way that will turn off potential valuable contributors to the project. Research suggests that individuals should be selected not only for their skills but also for the interpersonal capabilities and diversity that they bring to the team (McDowell, 2001; Melymuka, 2002).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“I have not seen many changes. Most project managers within organizations indicate that they have little, if any, impact on staffing of the project. In most cases, PMs inherit their staff and simply have to live with who they have. While this works in some cases, in some cases it does not work. High success has been shown in organizations who involve the project manager in determining, negotiating, and in some cases actually hiring staff for the project.”

“As mentioned, project management is still pretty much an accidental profession in [our organization], which appears consistent with much of industry from the literature.”

“Project managers (and team members) are selected based on technical expertise, not on managerial skills, especially not on communication skills, unless they have already shown capability in project management.”

6. Cross-Functional Cooperation and the Project Manager

Most projects have long required a team that includes members of different functional groups or members with diverse backgrounds. The cultures of their departments and differentiated manner in viewing the world often combine to make it extremely difficult to achieve cross-functional cooperation. Because cross-functional teams can greatly facilitate the successful implementation of projects, it is critical to better understand the mechanisms and motivations by which members of different functional groups are willing to collaborate on projects. Research suggests that four antecedent constructs can be important in accomplishing cross-functional team effectiveness (Pinto, Pinto, and Prescott, 1993):

- *Superordinate goals.* The need to create goals that are urgent and compelling, but whose accomplishment requires joint commitment and cannot be done by any individual department.
- *Accessibility.* Project team members from different functional departments cooperate when they perceive that other team members are accessible, either in person or over the telephone or e-mail system.
- *Physical proximity.* Project team members are more likely to cooperate when they are placed within physically proximate locations. For example, creating a project office or “war room” can enhance their willingness to cooperate.
- *Formal rules and procedures.* Project team members receive formal mandates or notification that their cooperation is required.

Cross-functional/multifunctional members of the project team can present a challenge for harmonious and enthusiastic teamwork, but able leadership can overcome the challenge (Rao, 2001). Cross-functional teams have been found particularly useful the greater the novelty or technical complexity of the project (Tidd and Bodley, 2002).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“Project managers tend to be very cooperative with cross-functional relationships. I do not believe this is a problem. The problem I have seen, and continue to see, is just the reverse. The cross-functional individuals—especially functional managers and personnel—tend not to cooperate with the project managers. This creates serious problems, since cooperation is a two-way street.”

“In our organization, marketing and engineering do not get along. We have developed this mentality where these two groups actively work to discredit each other. Of course, no one stops to think about who the real loser in this situation is!”

7. Project Teams and the Project Manager

Organizations of the future are relying more and more on project teams for success. This movement implies that the team-building processes themselves may be a subobjective of the project (Bubshait and Farooq, 1999). One important discovery in team research in recent years has been the work of Gersick (1988; 1989), who investigated the manner in which groups evolve and adapt to each other and to the problem for which they were formed. Her research suggests that the old heuristic of “forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning” (Tuchman, 1965) that has been used to guide group formation and development for decades does not stand close scrutiny when examined in natural settings. Rather, coining a term from the field of biology, “punctuated equilibrium,” she found that groups tend to derive their operating norms very quickly, working at a moderate pace until approximately the midpoint of the project, at which time a sense of urgency, pent-up frustrations, and a desire to re-address unacceptable group norms lead to an internal upheaval. The result is to create a better-performing project team. Gersick’s work has been important for helping project managers understand how to better and more proactively manage the process by which their teams develop.

The chapter by Larson refers to the strengths and weaknesses of organizing projects as dedicated teams, an important issue.

Another crucial element to team success is knowledge management (Drew, 2003). Assembling knowledge management teams and distributing knowledge across the players can be extraordinarily important. The use of project management offices (PMOs) has been a useful tool in maintaining this center for knowledge management. Though the transition to PMOs is not always a smooth one, the ability to apply a centralized base of project knowledge to ongoing problems makes this process a useful one for promoting project success and helping develop the expertise of project team members.

Key Comments from Practitioners

“A proliferation of books and articles address the issue of teams without much emphasis on the project manager’s role for how to become the leader of these teams.

Everyone is supposed to ‘get along’ somehow. The only well-oiled teams I have seen are that way because of a project leader with the skills to make it work.”

8. Virtual Teams and the Project Manager

The world is going virtual. Two major universities recently received a multimillion-dollar grant to perfect the use of supercomputers in an application that enables people several thousand miles apart to work jointly together as if they were in the same room. With the increasing globalization of project management, teams comprising individuals who may never directly interact with each other are becoming commonplace. Their primary means of communication is through Internet, e-mail, and virtual meetings. This increase in virtual teamwork creates an entirely new level of complexity to the challenge of team building for project success (Adams and Adams, 1997; Townsend, DeMarie, and Henrickson, 1998).

Issues of cost, transportation, globalization, skill distribution, and a variety of other pressures have hastened the movement toward virtual team use in recent years (Elkins, 2000). Likewise, more and more global companies are experimenting with the process of partnering, which implies additional pressures on the virtual team (Bresnen and Marshall, 2002). However, because of a variety of factors beyond the control of project managers, such as organization structure or corporate culture, the degree to which project teams quickly acclimate to the virtual environment is quite variable. Some organizations have been able to develop and employ effective virtual teams, including adopting quite effective virtual team-building processes, while others have continued to find the technology difficult to master (Delisle, 2002). (See the chapter by Delisle.)

Key Comments from Practitioners

“With improved conferencing technology, virtual teams have become a reality (no pun intended). Distance and cost combine to make virtual teams a necessity in many instances. A major change that seems obvious is that to work, they need face time together initially, and periodically throughout the project.”

“The big challenge we face is trying to make virtual teams act and work just like real teams. When you lose the sense of proximity to others working on the project, there is a feeling of disconnect. We require our virtual teams to make up in frequency of communications what they lack in proximity of communications.”

9. Human Resource Policies and the Project Manager

For decades, human resource policies have been designed primarily to fulfill the needs of line management activities. Recent experiences have shown that the human resource function can become a full business partner with a project management process without losing integrity to line managers (Clark, 1999). In other words, the HR function is being designed more carefully to expedite project team development and staffing. The *PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition suggests the following major processes concerning project human resource management.

- Organizational planning
- Staff acquisition
- Team development

Another way in which HR is becoming more attuned to project management needs is through legal issues, compliance, and safety and health in the workplace. As projects are occasionally created in less than optimum work conditions, such as harsh environmental conditions or to work on projects with health or safety risks, human resource expertise has been tapped by project managers so they have a clearer understanding of issues of corporate liability and due diligence regarding safety and hiring practices.

Key Comments from Practitioners

“In general, organizations have not responded to the needs of project management with respect to human resource policies. Most HR policies address the organizational needs from an ongoing, functional aspect with few addressing the particular aspects of project management. Key ‘holes’ exist in addressing the temporary nature of projects, matrix management, and the classical problem in accounting of accruals (organization) versus committed (project) costs.”

10. Conflict and Negotiations and the Project Manager

The project manager is in a constant environment of conflict and negotiations (Kellogg, Orlikowski, and Yates, 2002). As Jeff Pinto and John Magenau explain in their chapter, the need to exercise the influential side of project management occurs for a number of reasons. For example, many organizations run projects within structures where departmental heads retain all control over project resources, requiring project managers to negotiate for their team resources. Other reasons for conflict and negotiation occur within projects where it is vital that the project manager and key team members understand important terms and conditions of contracts. The result is a circumstance in which project managers routinely exercise influence, deal with conflict, and negotiate with parties both inside and outside their own organization. Consequently, negotiation skills are considered to be an important part of the project manager’s tool kit (Pravda and Garai, 1995). Project managers face a constant dilemma of determining how they are to acquire the authority to overrule resource and line managers in order to accomplish project objectives (Pinto et al., 1998; Vandersluis, 2001).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“Project managers continue to be very involved with conflict management and negotiations. However, very little formal or informal training and development in these areas is prevalent. There still tends to be the concept of the ‘accidental project manager,’ resulting in throwing individuals into situations for which they are really not prepared.”

“As with most elements of project management, organizations need to have specific and structured training and development programs that address project management in general and the specific areas of conflict management and negotiations.”

“Our most productive project managers are the ones who instinctively understand that their job does not start and stop with the scheduling and administrative duties. They have to handle the hard duties, like negotiation and conflict, every day.”

“Our brand-new project managers (the people who have never run projects before) are always shocked at how little power they have in this company. If they want to succeed, they learn that they better sharpen up their negotiation skills real fast!”

11. Power and Politics and the Project Manager

One of the least-talked-about aspects of project management duties involves the necessity of mastering the art of influence and political behavior. Attitudes regarding the use of politics, in this sense, point to an interesting dichotomy among managers in organizations. On the one hand, by a margin of almost 4 to 1, successful mid-level managers acknowledge that politics and influence are vital to performing their jobs effectively. On the other hand, by the same margins, these managers routinely affirm that the use of politics wastes company resources, is unpleasant to engage in, and is personally repugnant to them. The implications are interesting: On the one hand, managers do not like to use politics in their jobs, and yet on the other hand, they recognize that in order to successfully manage their projects, it is a vital skill to master.

Often negotiating the political terrain can be a greater challenge than the technical details of the project itself. All projects have numerous stakeholders. The political processes that characterize interactions between project managers and top managers are becoming evermore important in the success of new forms of organizations such as the project management office (Vandersluis, 2002). One solution to enhancing the project management process from the power and politics perspective is the institutionalization of an executive champion (Wreden, 2002). Champions can often serve to alleviate some of the political headaches that project managers accrue by serving as the point man for the project with key stakeholder groups. Champions exert their own kind of influence on behalf of the project. The difference is that because of the authority of status of champions, they are in a better position to help the project along.

Key Comments from Practitioners

“Many organizations are beginning to focus on the results of the two types of power: organizational power resulting in either compromise or compliance, and portable power resulting in commitment or loyalty. When faced with the question “would you rather have a project team that is committed and loyal or one that compromises and complies?” most recognize that the former creates a stronger project team and leads to a higher success rate. By focusing on this analysis, power and authority concerns tend to become resolved.”

“I get a real kick out of the reaction of people who join our organization right out of college and are confronted with their first real taste of company politics. They can argue until they are blue that their opinion should win out because their way is ‘the best,’ but until they learn how to get things accomplished around here through the back door, they will never really be successful. All our successful project managers are successful politicians.”

12. Project Organization and the Project Manager

The *PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition suggests two extremes of organizational form to a project:

- *The functional organization.* People and positions are grouped together according to the work they perform.
- *The projectized organization.* People are grouped together by project commitments, regardless of the functional background or expertise they possess.

As one moves toward the projectized organization, *PMBOK Guide*, 2000 Edition suggests four levels of matrix:

- *Weak matrix organization.* Limited project manager authority; 0 to 25 percent of personnel time dedicated to project management work; part-time project management administrative staff.
- *Balanced matrix organization.* Low to moderate project manager authority; 15 to 60 percent of personnel time dedicated to project management work; part-time project management administrative staff.
- *Strong matrix organization.* Moderate to high project manager authority; 50 to 95 percent of personnel time dedicated to project management work; full-time project management administrative staff.
- *Projectized organization.* High to almost total project manager authority; 85 to 100 percent of personnel time dedicated to project management work; full-time project management administrative staff.

The argument regarding the optimal type of organization suggests that there is a transition period in which organizations move from less-than-optimal structures, such as the functional structure, to those that are better able to support and sustain a project focus. Wheelwright and Clark (1992) refer to this movement as the drive toward “heavyweight” project organizations, in which power and decision-making authority are no longer shared between project and function, but rest solely in the hands of project managers. Research has clearly demonstrated the benefits to project success from crafting an organization form that supports these activities (Gobeli and Larson, 1987). Experience in interacting with senior managers indicates that more and more organizations are moving in the “projectized” direction (Lundin and Soderholm, 1995; Lundin and Midler, 1998).

Key Comments from Practitioners

“More and more I see project organizations aligned towards managing multiple projects as opposed to the single, large stand-alone project. This is especially true in internal corporate IT organizations, product development, and internal organizational support functions. It is also more prevalent in organizations that do projects for profit for external customers. Unfortunately, the concept of the project or program office in support of this is just now starting to catch on but suffers from a lack of documented experience, research, literature, and project management software tools that focus on multiple project management.”

Conclusions

We have spent the better part of the past two decades researching, teaching, and consulting in project management and project organizations. Over that time, we have had the opportunity to witness the advent of a number of important innovations in the project management field in a variety of areas: scheduling, project monitoring and control, structural changes, and so forth. While all of these ideas have doubtlessly had a positive affect on the way projects are being run today, we find ourselves, in some sense, coming full circle as we note that the “true” determinants of successful project management are in many ways as clear today as they were two decades ago. Successful projects are those in which the “people side” has been well managed. All the technology in the world cannot overcome poor leadership, motivation, communications skills, team building, and so forth. On the other hand, project managers who take the time to perfect their skills in these critical areas continue to demonstrate that successful project management depends first and foremost on our ability to effectively manage the human resources for which we have been made responsible.

This chapter has offered a brief overview of some of the important themes in managing projects and the behavioral challenges that this process involves. As the chapter makes clear, the challenges are diverse; they broadly cover the gamut of individual and interpersonal relationships all the way to larger, organization theory issues of organization structure and cultural processes. As a result, it should be apparent that the types of skills needed to master the discipline of project management, whether from a practitioner or academic research perspective, requires both a depth of understanding and a breadth of knowledge that makes project management a truly unique undertaking. Successful project managers must learn first an appreciation of the myriad behavioral challenges they are going to face, as well as develop a commitment to pursuing knowledge in these diverse areas.

Acknowledgment

The authors are indebted to Walter Bowman, Gerald Mulenburg, and a number of other anonymous, practicing project managers for substantial insights and helpful comments in the preparation of this chapter.

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