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Helping you deliver on time, on budget and with the right results!



## Tips for delivering your projects.

After many hours in planning and thousands of pounds spent, the hotel was built and the staff appointed. The problem was that no one had spotted the covenant stopping people from crossing a path leading into the only entrance, which was about to ensure that this particular project was delivered very late and very over budget.

Most people think of projects as large, expensive ventures but the reality is that most of us manage small significant projects all the time. This article focuses on giving you some practical ideas for delivering on time, every time!

You may want to download our free project management templates [click here](#)

### Identify the business case

This is the **WHY** of project management - WHY are you doing it? Some key questions need to be asked in order to develop a business case (a written document) which explains why you are doing the project. This document needs formal agreement by senior managers before you commit too much time and resources to it. You need to consider:

- How this piece of work fits with your organisations (or department's) strategy? If it doesn't, should you still be considering working on it?
- What are the benefit in delivering this project? Project managers and team members often find it difficult to articulate the real benefits, but without them how are you going to motivate others to work on the project and how are key stakeholders going to react to the project?
- What are the costs for the project? What re the benefits? Is the time and effort really worth the time? For small projects some very simple cost benefit analysis needs to be done at an early stage. For more complex pieces of work the accountants need to be involved.

### Develop the project definition

This is the **WHAT** of project management - WHAT are you doing? This stage involves a number of key themes:

- Clarifying roles. This means identifying who will be the project manager, who will be the sponsor and who will be on the project team (if one is needed). The sponsor is the person who takes ultimate responsibility for the project. Sounds silly to add this in an article but we do find that people are 'involved' in projects but do not know what role they fulfil!
- Develop clear and measurable objectives for the project, including identifying success criteria, the project's scope (what is included and excluded)
- Identify and manage stakeholders. This particular activity needs to start early in the project and continue throughout its life. Our own researches show that poor stakeholder management often leads to serious delays.

- If you need a project team, analyse who has what skills and select accordingly. Produce a development plan for those who do not quite hit the mark.

### **Develop your plan**

This is the **HOW** of project management - HOW are you going to deliver the objectives. Your plan needs to be robust and deliverable.

- Break the project down into its component parts – this involves detail, detail, detail. Use any process you think is appropriate; 'Post It' notes, mind mapping, brain storming sessions, anything that helps you identify as many activities as possible to deliver the project.
- Research points to something called "optimistic planning bias." In plain English that means we are over optimistic as to what we think we can achieve in an hour, a day or a week. How can you be more accurate with your estimates? Ask yourself how confident you are in your ability to deliver an activity in the time stated. Anything less than 80% and it's time to re-calculate.
- Develop simple project charts to help you track progress and to communicate with stakeholders.
- Risk management. Many projects fail to identify potential risks that may impact on the project. Use a risk log to identify the likelihood of each particular risk and the impact that any risk may have on the project. Grade the risks on a scoring system and articulate the actions you intend take to manage them should they occur.

### **Developing a monitoring and control process**

- Identify the type of control needed in the project. Do you need tight control or loose control. Or do you need a mix of controls as you go through the project? The answer to this links in with the level of risk associated with the project.
- Identify a simple but powerful project reporting structure. Who reports to whom, on what and at what level of frequency? Any project reports should be one page maximum and they should deal with agreed items like the budget, items off schedule etc.
- A clear process is needed for agreeing changes in the project. It could be something like this: the project manager agrees all minor changes provided they do not change the budget the delivery time or the objectives. If the change impacts on any of these three, then the sponsor would need to agree them.
- Actual v planned. You need to know where you are in the project. Are you hitting deadlines and budgets? Use a simple actual v planned chart to help you identify just how you are doing.

### **Closing the project**

- Plan a date for a formal project closure meeting. Ensure you are clear who will attend – stakeholders, project team, project manager and sponsor.
- Use a facilitator. You may need someone to facilitate a workshop to ensure that all the key points are covered.
- Remember the objective. It's to learn what went well and what could have been done better. How accurate were your estimates? Did you hit the budget? We suggest you write a formal report on the lessons learned. The report should be placed in one central area such as your Intranet or a central place for people to refer to. Before anyone starts a new project they should look at the reports that people have written on similar projects before them.

Good luck with delivering your projects!