

Ron Rosenhead

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



Deliver That Project

So, the boss has just given your first significant project. You have been in the organisation about a year so want to make a good impression. Here are some pointers to help you deliver on time and to budget.

Define your project – when asked ‘what are you doing?’ many project managers and team members really struggle. If you have a brief you’re your manager then take it away and spend some time ensuring you fully understand what is wanted. Discuss with your manager what is expected and turn these into realistic objectives. Discuss with key players what they want and discuss this with your project team. Write it down and get agreement from your senior manager and the key players that they agree to the objectives to be delivered.

Clarify project roles and have a clear project management structure.

Who fulfils the project manager role? What role will the senior manager play in the project? We have found that having clearly prescribed Project Management roles really helps in delivering what is required. Develop a simple matrix to show who does what. If it likely to help write down what functions each of the roles carry out and regularly review whether this is happening

Identify and reduce risks

Many projects are derailed because something “unexpected” happens. Do a risk assessment exercise to identify the most likely events that could affect the project. You need to ensure these unexpected things (risks) are identified early in the life of the project and managed effectively. Identify the likelihood and the impact of something happening and if the risk level is high make sure someone is appointed to manage that risk and regularly reviews it. The objective here is to reduce the possible impact the risk will have on the project, and the business.

Make sure you review your risks on a regular basis. Something that is not a risk now may become so in say a month’s time.

Don’t forget the people

Many people involved in projects get very heavily involved in project process. These processes are very important, but, you need to build in the people element as well. Don’t

forget to identify and manage key stakeholders – people who have an interest or will be affected by the project. Project Agency research shows that those projects where stakeholders are identified and well managed deliver better project results than those which take little or no account of this important group.

If you are involved in a change management project then do consider how you are going to take the stakeholders along with you and what roles they will have at the end of the project. Develop plans to ensure these things happen

Build the Project Team

Many projects need more than you, the project manager to deliver success. Carefully select those who will be part of the project team. How? Start by identifying the skills you need to ensure successful delivery of the project. Then, identify those people in the organisation who have the required skills. If you need to bring in outside resources you must have a clear specification of what they need to do.

Once selected, you need to build the team. Use the project objectives to clarify what you are doing and hold team development sessions to ensure you are working together.

Develop a robust project plan

Ensure your project plan is credible. Identify all of the activities you need to carry out putting cost and time estimates against them. Use post it notes to show the order in which the tasks will be done and produce a Gantt chart.

How good are your estimates – cost and time? Research shows we suffer from optimistic planning bias i.e. thinking we can deliver an activity in a project in 5 days when it will actually take 7 days. But if we suffer from optimistic planning bias then how do we get more accurate estimates? Use percentages to help you e.g. ask yourself how confident you are of achieving the activity in the time given or against the identified budget. If you are less than 80% confident then recalculate until you get to the 80% figure. This process can be used at an individual task level, a stage level or for the whole project.

Deliver what you say you will deliver

Your project plan should point to what you will deliver, when you will deliver it and even who is responsible for delivering it. The trick of course is to monitor that you are actually delivering what you said you would. Develop a monitoring and control system early in the life of the project. Be clear what role your senior manager plays and ensure you do not get too bogged down with completing project reports. Use simple highlight reports to show progress. Hold *brief* project meetings (which should be on your project plan) and challenge and support each other to ensure you are going to deliver when you should.

Dealing with project changes

Have a system in place for dealing with project changes. Ensure you are clear who can agree to any *major* changes e.g. in budget or objectives. Any system you put in will need to take account of your stakeholders and the project team

Lessons learned

Identify as you work your way through the project what you have gained, what others can learn from you. Keep a learning log and use this at the project closure meeting.

Stop “project dribble” – project closure

“The trouble is we never seem to finish projects here. They keep dribbling on and on ...”

This was a quote from a course delegate on our Perfect Project course. Put a project closure meeting on your Gantt chart and review project success (or otherwise). Use a facilitator to ensure all of the learning is shared among project team members and those in the organisation. Identify elements which need to be finished and who will deliver them and close the project.

So, the boss has just given you a significant project and I hope some of the points here will help you. It does not matter whether the project is building a new hotel, putting in a new booking system, building onto an existing complex, improving customer care, reducing costs, increasing these quick tips will help you by giving you the rigour and structure needed. Of course in such a brief article we can only skim over a much deeper topic. Therefore, you may want to receive a free e-course on project management including a Project Management Tips Booklet. If you do then do go to www.projectagency.co.uk and complete the 2 boxes on the front page.

Good luck with all your projects.

Ron Rosenhead is an expert in project management. He is a professional speaker, consultant, trainer, author and coach. He own and runs Project Agency dedicated to helping companies and individuals deliver projects on time and to budget.

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