



PMI®

From Good to Great

"Tangential thinking
is when you add
the question of "why"
to lateral thinking.

When you have
the courage to question
linear and lateral thought -
you arrive at possibilities
that the world takes time
to comprehend...."



Hari Kumar
Partner and Managing Director - Deloitte U.S. India

Prakalp - PMI Mumbai Chapter Journal

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MUMBAI CHAPTER

Vision

“To be recognized as the organization of choice by evangelizing Project Management”.

Mission

- ⇒ Evangelize project Management across industry, academia, community and government.
- ⇒ Provide a forum for project management professionals to promote the principles and ethical standards of PMI.
- ⇒ Promote networking among professionals, sharing project experiences and best practices, imparting training and enabling PMI certifications and ultimately enhancing quality of life.
- ⇒ Provide infrastructural facilities like library, portal & knowledge repositories

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from the desk of the **President**

Dear Prakalp Follower,

It has been a fantastic year for the Mumbai Chapter. There have been a number of achievements worthy of mention and it is my pleasure to present the highlights of the past year. The work on the chapter owned office cum training premises was completed & the premises should go into operation very soon. The chapter had the highest Membership count increase in the Region, approaching a figure of 900. In fact it was one of the only 2 chapters that showed a growth in Membership indicating high satisfaction of Members. The satisfaction survey conducted by the chapter in September 2009 also showed similar indications of high membership satisfaction in almost all aspects. The chapter has created a Membership portfolio that will further enhance membership value.

The chapter representatives received the PMI's Component of the Year Award - Category II 2009 at a grand ceremony in Orlando, FL, USA. The chapter was the first in the region to submit the mandatory Strategic Alignment Scorecard (SAS) to PMI. The chapter was represented at 3 Global PMI Leadership Institute Meetings by 2 Board members each.

The chapter upgraded its PMP Preparatory Course to the PMBOK 4th edition and continued to conduct the monthly course. 6 Corporate trainings were conducted and 2 trainings for NGOs were conducted. The library boasts of over 130 titles on project management and related subjects. The chapter continued to update its membership through monthly e-newsletter updates and weekly website updates. New member orientations were conducted every month. Online presence on LinkedIn was established and online webinars were introduced for the first time. The branches at Ahmedabad and NMIMS's MPSTME Student continued the regular programs throughout the year and Local Interest Group of ISSIG was initiated.

PMP Club monthly Professional Development activity was held with impeccable regularity at Matunga, Thane & Navi Mumbai locations. Also, regular programs were held by the programs portfolio covering PM Tools to Soft skills. The Annual IPM Day event was once again a thumping success.

The chapter management is in the thought process of enhancing its organization structure to cater to the increasing volume of activities, volunteerism and membership. It seeks to maximize value addition to membership, collaborate with other chapters, & establish corporate support through "Corporate Council". It plans to develop and deliver additional PM courses and conduct Project of the Year competition locally. The chapter will be the host chapter for the PMI India National Conference 2010.

We hope that you will continue to support the chapter activities in the new year and encourage the PMI Mumbai Chapter Team to continue to deliver the Best. Wish you a roaring 2010!

Tejas Sura, President. - PMI Mumbai Chapter, India | president@pmimumbaichapter.org

Message from the **Chief Editor**

Dear PMI Champions,

I am sure all of us started the New Year with some resolutions! For one your friendly Editor has started a project management centric blog on Business Leadership Excellence. Look forward to your comments on the blog, to share, to learn and grow together! Below is a Letter to the Editor from an esteemed reader that pretty well sums up 2009 and sets the goal for 2010.

Kummar, I am a PMI fan. I am a recent member and read the magazine editions. It is great to have a professional magazine like this to read, others are mostly vague, this one is precise and crisp.

Regards, Shweta Seshadri.

May I encourage all members to write Letters to Editor, send article (cannot commit when it will be published) and most importantly send us 'humor snippets' and all content to be original work, copyright/IP free for use. As per our understanding, you may claim 15 PDUs per article (author) and 10 PDUs per article (co-author) with a max of 15 PDUs ONLY in one 3 year reporting cycle under Category 2B. Author or co-author of an article pertaining to project and/or program management published in a non-refereed journal. Prakalp articles are not evaluated by a panel of experts before acceptance for publication & hence is a non-refereed journal. Please individually cross verify PDU eligibility for 2B with customer@pmi.org.

Sincerely,

Kummar Vaalsalam, PMP | Chief Editor (Prakalp) and Vice President (Publications) | www.kummarvaalsalam.blogspot.com



From good to great

By Hari Kumar,
Partner and Managing Director, Deloitte U.S. India

Greatness is a state of mind. It is different for different people. It is not absolute. From world leaders to mothers, fathers, and spouses - all are great in their own way. Ask a mother and she will tell you that her child is the greatest.

How does one move from good to great in their own minds? For me, it is defined by the "standard of life."

While "standard of living" is defined in terms of money or wealth, standard of life is defined in terms of personal happiness and individual satisfaction. Money or wealth is not the solution to everything in life. The "standard of life" is the index of life. Ask yourself, "Are you happy and satisfied? Am I doing the things that I want to do?"

Defining the standard of life is dependent on your attitude to life. If you are a consummate optimist as opposed to a consummate pessimist, you will always see the glass half full. Life is all about choices. The question that you want to ask yourself is, "Do you want to follow the world and be good or do you want to be different and let the world follow you and be great?"

Being different is also about taking risks.

When you are in a forest and have the choice of two paths, the normal person would take the path that is visible, clear, and smooth. It takes a great person to choose the off-beaten path. Great leaders are different. They do not follow the pack; they set the direction for others to follow. One must always remember, being a leader and being great means you are on the top and all

others are a rung below you - and, it is always lonely at on the top. So if you want to be great, you not only have to be different, you also have to get used to being lonely - in creating a vision, oozing confidence when the whole world is nervous around you, being there for your people when it matters most, and delivering with unwavering attention on the vision. A leader is like a swan - calm and collected visibly above the surface, while paddling frantically below the water.

In my view, the top 10 rules that I believe will move the needle from good to great are as follows:

Rule #1: Have a vision, commit to a goal

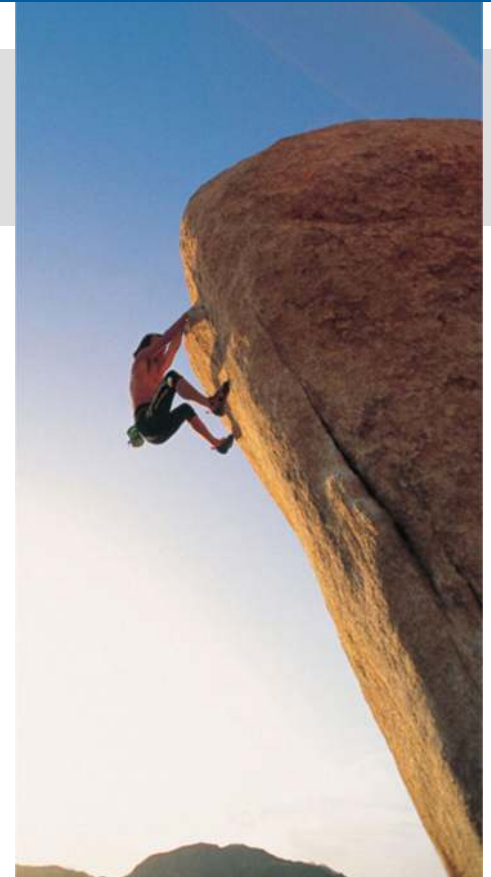


"I have a dream"
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

Yes, Dr. King had a big dream. He had a vision and most importantly, he was committed to achieving it.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru summed up the Indian freedom struggle as "Long ago, we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially."

Nothing has been achieved in this world without having a goal. Having a goal and



driving toward it makes you good. What makes you great is commitment to it. When Winston Churchill was asked during the war what his aim was, he said, "One word, Victory."

Life is full of deviations and forks in the road. If the journey is to become great, one has to be committed. Goals are personal. There are no perfect goals; they are yours. Start with a giant vision of where you want to be. If you can see the path to get there, then the vision is not big enough. Then understand the first 2 milestones to move toward the vision - and plan goals for them.

If you believe in a goal, you commit to it and then you work toward it with the passion and rigor that would be missing otherwise. If during the course of action toward a goal, you learn something new, feel free to change or modify it. The sign of greatness is not in following your goal blindly, but in adapting and adopting change at every step.

Rule #2: Believe in yourself



"The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds"

J. U.S. PRESIDENT, JOHN F. KENNEDY, on his vision to land men on the moon

"I am the best. If you don't believe it, that should be your issue, not mine" - this is attitude that defines belief in oneself. Reminding yourself everyday that you are the best and can do anything that you set your mind on is critical to achieving your goal. Constant reminder and actions that follow it will get you to a state of maturity when it becomes a part of your grain; a part of who you are. You then start living it.

One of the biggest traits that great people and leaders exhibit is belief in themselves, irrespective of the odds. As I have mentioned before, great people are on the top of whatever they are doing - and it is lonely on the top. The path ahead to be traversed is uncharted and hence the apprehension of uncertainty is high. But great leaders never waver - they believe in themselves and their ability to adapt in an ever-changing world. Most importantly, great leaders are never scared to admit that they were wrong and get corrective actions in place immediately.

When you are faced with something new that you have not done before, do not hesitate; inform the people that this is new to you and that you will work hard to learn & deliver on it. That is what great leaders have always done. The best way to handle the situation is by believing in yourself.

When believing in yourself becomes you - you have the courage to be different. No one can achieve greatness doing the same thing that someone else has done before. Great people dare to be different.

Rule #3: Hard work



"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves"

SIR EDMUND HILLARY
after being the first to conquer Mt. Everest.

There is absolutely no substitute for hard work. No human has become great in this world without working hard. What is hard work? 50 hrs/wk? 100 hrs/wk? 130 hrs/wk? Greatness is not based on the quantity of the work, it is about the quality. It is about working smart.

Working smart is about knowing what to work on. The key word that differentiates the great from the good is 'prioriti-zation'. People that succeed know how to prioritize; know what matters most and what to invest their time & energy in.

A quick rule of thumb when you are caught between two things that are equally important is to ask yourself, "What will I remember most two years from now?" - that is what I do.

Working smart is also about saying "no." Saying no to things that are not relevant and don't matter in the long run. Most importantly, it is about saying no to people - telling that you cannot get something done when you don't know how to do it or don't have the time or resources to do it. In the corporate world, we use terms such as "pushing back" for this. When you master the art of prioritization, and then choosing when to say "No," you take a big step in moving from good to great.

This brings me to the most important part of working smart - it is about setting expectations. Greatness is when you exceed expectations and create the "wow moment." So what is a "wow moment"? When expectations are set, people expect a certain level of service, product, or delivery. Now if you exceed that by a long stretch, the audience is "positively shocked." The only reaction they have is "wow." That's when you know you have done a great job setting expectations.

Great people are masters at setting expectations and exceeding them. This does not mean that they are constantly setting it low. They set realistic expectations and work hard and smart at exceeding it. In a professional environment, you have to do this with your clients, peers, and bosses and, most importantly, with people that work for you. I don't believe that anyone works for me - I believe all my employees work with me, not for me - I am saying that for clarification of thought.

This is also true about your personal front. Greatness is about a total person - professional and personal. Setting expectations with your friends, spouse, and children is equally important. On your personal front, you will find a lot more leeway to do that. When you are amongst friends, think of the remark - "He is great. I really like him." Are you the person they are talking about? If so, what makes you that person? A quick introspection will tell you that you have been doing a great job with setting expectations.

Rule #4: Be passionate



"I am convinced that the only thing that keeps me going is that I love what I do. You've got to find what you love

STEVE JOBS

Passion is a strong feeling or emotion; the trait of being intensely emotional.

When I hear the word passion, one of the individuals that come to mind is Steve Jobs. When he walks onto the stage in his trademark mock neck and jeans and starts explaining the latest innovation, you can see the sheer passion for what he loves most - innovation. This passion has propelled him through all the tough times (personally and professionally).

So what is passion? Passion is the

commitment, the love for what you do. Once you commit, right or wrong, stick with it. Don't waver. Change and adapt if you have to, but never doubt yourself.

There are two kinds of leaders in this world. The first kind never wants to be wrong. They will never make a decision for the fear of going wrong. They will navigate the corporate world and always have others make the decisions for them. They believe this helps them to be right always since they cannot be wrong. Master this technique and you can become a good leader. Yet it will never make you a great leader.

The second kind is the one who never hesitates to make a decision. They weigh all possible data and information that they have at any given time and make the best possible decision. Then they constantly monitor the situation and adjust as needed. They never shy away from accountability - for the good or the bad. That's what makes them great. The biggest attribute of a great leader in this context is that they stand up for the people around them and who work with them.

If you are not passionate, you will not succeed. If you are not doing something that you are completely passionate about, don't do it. Life is short and if you plan to be great, do things that you are passionate about.

There are times when I am asked, "I am not sure what I am truly passionate about. What do I do?" My response is simple: Try everything that you can, and you will find your passion. In my career, I have never said "no" to any job - however big or small. I always believe that you can learn something. Even if I have to get coffee for a room full of people, I look at it as an opportunity by

which I can get to know the people in the room. Each time there has been an opening, I have walked up to my boss and said, "I will do it till you find someone else to do the job." The best part is once you start doing well, there will never be that someone else. You will become that someone else.

If you accept an opportunity that presents itself, do it with passion. Enjoy every moment of it - live it. When you do that, you don't do things well, you do them exceptionally well. That's when you move from good to great.

Rule #5: Stand tall and DARE to be different



"It's the answer that led those who've been told for so long by so many to be cynical and fearful and doubtful about what we can achieve, to put their hand on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day"

BARACK OBAMA, President - United States of America.

There are two ways to move up in your career. The first one involves doing everything that the others do; but you have to do more of it. So, if others work 12 hrs, you have to work 15 hrs. If others do 5 things, you have to do 6. This is what we refer to as the "rat race." The other option involves doing something different and proving to the world that it

is the right way. The choice that you make will make the difference between whether you are good or you are great.

Personally, I believe in this saying "Unless you try & do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow" (Anonymous).

Everyday, we are pounded with suggestions on what we must & must not do. Each one of us can relate to the statement, "This is your role. Don't ask. Just do it." Greatness comes from not disobeying or ignoring the rules, but by challenging them by your thoughts & actions.

The word that comes to mind to describe this is a "maverick." I believe that as long as you can do everything ethically, morally, and legally without the intention of hurting anyone - you should do it. Every great leader has paved the path, never followed it.

It is extremely difficult to be different. Imagine: Everyone has taken the path to the left. You think differently, so based on that, you take the path to the right. Over the next few days or months, you work hard on proving that the path that you took (to the right) is the correct one. When the world realizes that you are on the right track, there is a frantic process to catch up, but you are so far ahead that you already have an edge.

A big part of this is the confidence that you exhibit that you are on the right track. In a situation where everyone is uncertain, your confidence will let you speak up and determine the best course of action, given the parameters that exist at that time. Most great leaders are firm decision makers. Even more important than that, they ooze confidence and never let the world know that they are nervous (though they might be feeling that internally).

Rule #6: Dress smart

*"Nothing succeeds like success.
So dress for success!
I am not talking about the clothes on
your body. Nor am I talking about
your degrees & credentials.
I am talking about the personality
your mind wears. In fact your
personality is your real attire"*

Anonymous

You have to dress not for the job you are in. You have to dress for what you want to be; what job/position you want to hold. As much as one can say that beauty is skin deep and that we must not judge a person by his or her appearance, every human being does exactly that.

For example, if you were to consult the world's best cardiac surgeon in rags, will you trust him with your heart? Now translate that to the work environment. Take the example of a meeting that I have to attend wherein I have not had prior acquaintance with most of the folks and I have quite a bit of information that I want to share.

Scenario 1 calls for me dressed in a casual or ill-fitting outfit. Even if I am very knowledgeable, it will take quite a bit of time for people to accept me and my ideas. This translates to a very limited time that you have. You have lost precious minutes to help get your ideas across.

In a contrasting scenario, if I were dressed smartly to begin with, the time that I have to spend convincing people to accept me is reduced, I can spend most of the time on my ideas. People relate to people that are similar.

Let's take another example. Look around you in the office. Some folks are well groomed when they come to office

every day. Others seem like they just got up from bed with wrinkled clothes and unkempt hair. Which one would you relate to better?

Dressing smart is not just about the clothes you wear or the external appearance. It is also about "dressing your personality."

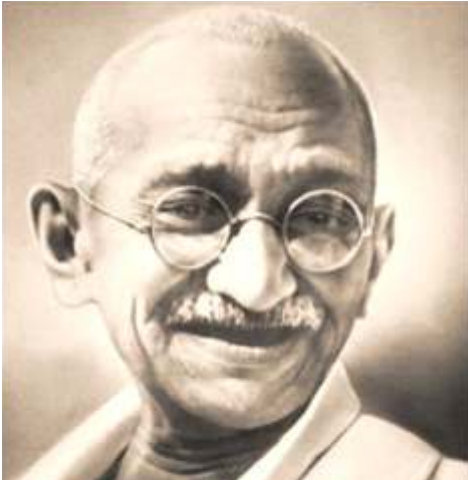
The concept of "Steak and Sizzle" - This is an American concept that I use to explain what differentiates great from the good. Steak, the bulk, the meat - this represents the content; the subject matter expertise that you have; the depth of knowledge you have. The sizzle is the magnetic power that radiates from you by which people relate to you, are attracted to your ideas, and want to listen to you. This is your personality. This is combination of how you "appear" - externally and, most importantly, how you "dress" your conversation. How you speak, how you formulate your thought, and how you express your ideas are critical in defining your personality.

Great people have great personalities. Not all great people are good looking externally. Great people have the "steak," but they also have the sizzle.

Consider one of the greatest human beings that walked this earth - Mother Teresa. What made her great? She had one of the biggest magnets in her heart. Her personality was such that people flocked to hear her.

She transcended the best of the best - people did not just want to listen to her, they wanted to sacrifice their lives to the cause that she worked all her life for. That is the true sign of greatness. She had one of the biggest "sizzles" that mankind has ever seen.

Rule #7: Network effectively



"We must get rid of this feeling. Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism. I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice. We must, therefore, purge ourselves of hatred"

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

Networking is about knowing who you are dealing with. No one has succeeded in this world by themselves. You need to have a very strong network to move from being good in what you do to being great.

"Networking is not about how many people you know, it is about how many people know you." You can meet and "know" several people. But, if they don't know who you are; most importantly, don't relate to you, you don't benefit. Again, remember, people relate to people who are similar. Similarities can be on the work front, common personal interests, or shared vision. If this is true, knowing a person before you talk becomes invaluable. Each person who has been a great leader takes the time to know the person before they meet them or spend the first several minutes trying to understand the person before having a full conversation.

I normally adopt the 30-minute rule if I don't have the time to find out about the

person beforehand.

What is the 30-minute rule?

If I have 30 minutes to meet a person that I want to develop a relationship with, I spend at least the first 20 minutes getting to know the person and trying to understand what he or she is interested in and what motivates him or her. This is what I refer to as "reading the environment." Look around, ask open-ended questions, and try to understand where he or she is coming from. I spend hardly 10 minutes trying to explain my ideas, which was the actual reason to meet. Now think about the situation when you know the person. You can always explain your ideas in terms of what he or she can relate to and that makes your ideas so much more powerful and more easily acceptable.

The other technique that I employ is to practice my 3 minutes elevator speech.

What is the 3-minute elevator speech?

If I had 3 minutes in a closed elevator with someone that I really want to get to know professionally, what would I say such that when the elevator door opens, he or she tells me, "I'd like to hear more. Why don't we meet?" Think, "How can I summarize the value of who I am and what I want to say in 3 minutes to a total stranger?"

The recipe for greatness lies in a small secret that is incongruently unambiguous, yet almost always forgotten - every person wants to talk and hear about themselves. If one were to remember this simple fact of life - every networking opportunity will turn itself into recipe for success.

One of the most important aspects of a successful networking can be achieved with this simple technique.

Try to say absolutely everything that you have to say in terms of what it means to the other person. Any idea, any thought if spoken in terms of what it means to the other person become easily palatable to the other person. The way I do this is by asking the "so what" to every "what." What do I mean by that? For anything that I want to say, (the "what") - I always ask myself, "So, what does this mean to the other person?" before I say it. Suddenly, the entire structure of what I was going to say shifts to what it means to the person I am talking to.

Exploiting simple human behaviors of wanting to talk or listen about oneself and by using the 'you' attitude, good can be converted to great when networking.

Rule #8: Be selfless - be selfish - sell yourself



"People often remark that I am pretty lucky. Luck is only important insofar as getting the chance to sell yourself at the right moment and luck is simply when opportunity meets preparation"

FRANK SINATRA

The story of any great leader is the story of the "complete individual." Being selfless in everything they do. Great leaders protect their people - work for them and with them. They command respect with their actions and never demand it. They work with honesty and integrity in everything they do. They spend a good portion of their resources

(time & money) serving the community. They do this in an innovative manner to maximize the amount of time & resources that they spend. Giving back to the society is integral to being a great leader.

If a tree falls in a forest, does it make a sound? Traditionally one is taught, "Work will speak for itself." That will get you to being good.

I have written about great being selfless. I would say becoming great is also about being selfish. One must always remember that there is nothing in the world more important than you. Who better to think about you than you? So as the world talks about being selfless all the time, one has to be selfish about oneself. You don't have to be selfish at the expense of others. But, if you don't do things that matter to you & if you don't do things that help you, one loses motivation. I had referred to Mother Teresa as one of the most selfless women in the world. If you look deeply, she was selfish to the extent that she did what made her happy-she helped others. That is what I mean when I say great leaders are selfish - selfish in a selfless way. To be great, we can use the same thought practice in our professional life as well.

Great leaders are also great salesmen. In the United States of America, one uses the word "car salesman" to denote a person who will stoop to any level to sell his product. When I talk about selling yourself, I don't mean a car salesman. I mean explaining what you do to other people, with class, which will make them understand and appreciate better who you are and, in turn, what you do and how you do it.

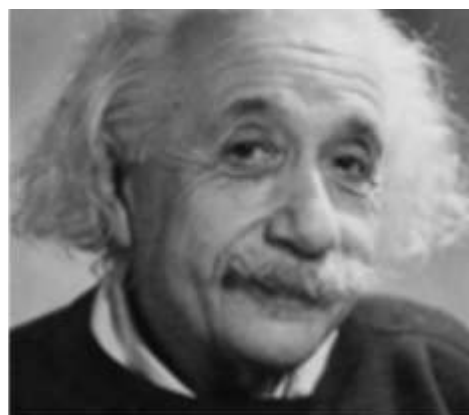
"What you do is important; how you sell what you do is equally important."

I am always reminded of Mark Twain's

Tom Sawyer, the fun-loving maverick and how he gets his friends to paint his garage. While it is written in jest, it teaches us a fundamental lesson - one that explains the fact that we can make anything we do fun to the rest of the world with our attitude. Great leaders never wear their feeling of dissatisfaction on their sleeves. They don't do this for two reasons - firstly, they don't do things that they don't like &, secondly, they never show their feelings externally. Would you rather be with a person that is always positive or always negative? Positive attitude is contagious. Negativity is always lonely. One of the daily lessons that we can take from this is - ask yourself, "What am I gaining by expressing all my negativity to other people?" Nothing!

I am not suggesting that great people always have a "false front." Great people work hard to make sure that "being positive" becomes a part of their grain, part of who they are. Great people see an opportunity in every difficulty and they talk about it, they explain or communicate it as something positive.

Rule #9: Listen, listen, and listen



"If A equals success, then the formula is A equals X plus Y and Z, with X being work, Y being play & Z keeping your mouth shut"

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Effective communication is the key to success and an absolute necessity to

greatness. Effective communication is 90% listening & 10% talking. Knowing when to say something is important. But, more important is patiently listening. Listening is a virtue that a few possess and it is these few that become great.

There are many kinds of listening techniques. Aggressive listening - when you are listening with the idea of getting your ideas across. Passive listening is when you are just listening with little or no interest. When I say, listening, as it pertains to greatness, I mean active listening - patiently listening to people, trying to understand & respond at the appropriate time.

When one learns to appreciate the other person, the conversation becomes much more meaningful. The advantage of active listening is also the fact that you can express your ideas better since you know where the other person is coming from. Imagine: You are trying to sell products worth Rs. 2000 when your customer only has Rs. 1000 to spend. If you actively listen, you can understand that and sell products worth Rs. 1000. If you don't, you insist on selling Rs. 2000 & it results in you selling nothing. While this is a simple example, this is directly relevant to everything that we communicate every day. Very few people have mastered the art of active listening.

Rule #10: Be confident; borderline arrogant



"Don't back down just to keep the peace. Standing up for your beliefs builds self-confidence and self-esteem"

OPRAH WINFREY

"I am the best." To move from good to great, this is possibly the most important trait. All great leaders share the trait of self-confidence. Confidence in yourself is critical to your success.

Every great leader goes into anything they do with the belief that they are the best and they will achieve it. If you don't walk into something with confidence, you will be behind the 8 ball and will be playing catch-up throughout. When you believe in yourself and you are sure of yourself, you will become good. When your belief in yourself is so much that nothing frazzles you or unnerves you - that's when you become great. The confidence in yourself becomes so much that you flirt with being arrogant.

Great leaders are extremely competent in walking the fine line between complete self-confidence and being overconfident.

Confidence translates into attitude and attitude almost always dictates success. Great leaders know how good they are. They deeply understand their limitations as well. They always have executive presence. I define executive presence as "owning the room" There are different ways to own a room-physical presence, being loud & obnoxious, or by shuffling against the wall. None of these will make you great or help you achieve what you want. Being great is about owning a room because of your attitude, intellect, active listening & tangential thinking.

Tell yourself every day, "I am the best. If you don't believe it - that is your problem, not mine." All great leaders started having this attitude sometime in their lives, when they started moving from being good at what they do to being great.

Conclusion

Becoming great is all about attitude and behavior - exhibiting traits that define

what others follow rather than following what others want you to do. One of the principles that I follow strictly in everything that I do is to make sure that my actions are always ethical and legal. I talk to people, explain what I am trying to do, and always welcome them to join me. They can choose to join me and ride the wave. They can choose to stay away and watch it from the outside. If they happen to come in my way and get hurt, I term that "collateral damage." In my view, as long as I am doing everything ethically, legally, and without any intention of hurting anyone in my path, I will surge ahead irrespective of the roadblocks that are thrown at me.

Great people go through a tremendous amount of introspection almost on a daily basis. They analyze almost every action they do. They are so secure about themselves that they never hesitate to admit they are wrong. They even think through all the various plans and options that they worked out for a problem. Their minds are almost always in a constant state of "motion" or "churn."

I have written about great people being different. Great people not only think or do things differently, they move fast. Once they have thought through options, they commit to what they want to do, think forward-at least 4-5 steps ahead & move. What is thinking forward?

There are 2 kinds of thought processes that one can have - linear thinking & lateral thinking. Linear thinking is going by the stated rules always. Thinking inside the box. This is essential for everyone in their daily personal and professional lives. Most of what we do fits in this category.

However, what makes an idea good is lateral thinking. Lateral thinking is about reasoning that is not obvious & solutions

that defy linear logic. Leaders are lateral thinkers. I would argue that this makes them good, not great. What makes them great? It is what I define as "Tangential thinking." Tangential thinking is when you add the question of "why" to lateral thinking. When you have the courage to question linear and lateral thought - you arrive at possibilities that the world takes time to comprehend. But once the world understands, humanity is never the same again.

Lateral thinking helps to arrive at innovative solutions that will save time, money, effort, etc But tangential thinking creates ideas that revolutionize the world. That is what has defined great leaders throughout the civilization of mankind.

Remember, being great is all about your attitude toward one problem at a time. Being a consummate realist (optimistic, yet understanding the implications) unwavering, determined, actively listening, tangentially thinking & most importantly, oozing self-confidence by realizing that you are the best, is what defines greatness.

If you want to determine your "standard of life," you have to make a choice. Do you want to be good or do you want to be great?"

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Measuring the Intangible Value of Human Resources in Indian TELCO's (Tele communication Companies) using economic value added (EVA)



By Balaji Krishnan Cherukumudi, PMP

Introduction

The world economy is in the process of coming out of recession. The recession has not impacted the telecommunication technology industry in India, as much as it has affected other industries. The telecom companies in India are aiming at reaching 700 million subscribers in the next year from the current 500 million. Subsequently, these companies have become more competitive in the last few years as the Indian markets have been opened up to global players and it has grown from a few players to a dozen. This extremely competitive environment has forced the companies to explore various areas to increase their productivity and optimise their human resources.

The TELCO's success in India are directly attributable to the large CAPEX intensive investments resulting in key projects and effective project management that drive the results. Implementation of Portfolio management directly linked to the business strategies pave the way for success. The business proposition and the business continuity model of TELCO's, terms down to two major factors: former being the cost of acquisition of customers and the latter, their retention, which is much more than the pricing strategy.

The Telecom Industry uses various metrics: the subscriber (customer) base, minutes of usage, average revenue per user (ARPU). Performance of each employee has implications on business results as being propagated by many authors, business consultants and strategy practitioners (Norton & Kaplan), 1994. With the economic downturn & the increasing competition, the ratio of revenue per employee and the ARPU per employee has been drastically affected.

There are various TELCO's in the Indian market fighting for their share in the emerging market with innovative ideas, still the human capital drives the success. The success factor may be easily measured by determining how these organisations value their greatest assets:

THE EMPLOYEES. The Human resources factor directly attribute to the performance and the value the employees bring in to the organisation.

In today's aggressive telecommunication market, the employees can provide an edge over the competitors. An employment system that creates a distinct, sustainable competitive advantage is an "intangible asset" because it is not carried on the balance sheet, as other traditional assets.

Intangible assets for these companies are now worth on an average three times more than the firm's hard assets, according to the Harvard Business School's Harvard Management Update Newsletter (Wagner, 2001).

Human capital is basically the ability of employees to generate economic output through the application of their education, knowledge and skills; it refers to employees' knowhow, capabilities, skills and expertise. "The best known indicator of human intellectual capital value is market to book value" (Dzinkowski, 2000: 93).

Current theoretical approaches in business strategy have given a boost to the concept of human resources generating a consistent competitive advantage, the new method of measuring competition. (Becker and Gerhart, 1996). This is in tandem with the resource based view (RBV) of the firm, that businesses can develop prolonged competitive advantage only by creating value that is rare and that cannot be easily imitated by the competition (de Charbert, 1998).

Much of the research conducted on the link between company performance and human resources has looked at individual approaches in this relationship – best practices (Becker and Gerhart, 1996). For example a company may compare recruitment, selection processes, compensation and welfare packages, training, industrial relations or performance Management processes as well as an acceptable methodology for measuring the value.

Economic Value Added (EVA): EVA is the financial performance measure that comes closer than any other measure to capture the true economic profit of an enterprise, EVA also is the performance measure most directly linked to

the creation of shareholder wealth over time (Stern Stewart & Co, 2002). The concept of EVA is in a sense nothing more than the traditional, commonsense idea of "profit," however, the utility of having a separate and more precisely defined term such as EVA or Residual Cash Flow is that it makes a clear distinction from dubious accounting adjustments that have enabled businesses such as Enron to report profits while in fact being in the final approach to becoming insolvent.

The advantage of EVA is, it precisely defines value in terms specific to an enterprise. The disadvantage in using EVA is, it is complex to calculate and not widely used.

Intangible Economic Value :

Calculating EVA: The basic formula is:

$$EVA = (r-c).K = NOPAT - c.K,$$

where $r = NOPAT \div K$, called the Return on Invested Capital (ROIC) is the company's return on capital, NOPAT is the Net Operating Profit After Tax, c is the Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC) and K is capital employed.

Shareholders of the company will receive a positive value added when the return from the capital employed in the business operations is greater than the cost of that capital. see Working capital management. Any value obtained by employees of the company or by product users is not included in the calculations.

Relationship to Market Value Added The company's market value added, or MVA, is the discounted sum of all future expected economic value added:

$$MVA = V - K_0 = \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \frac{EVA_t}{(1+c)^t}$$

Note that MVA = NPV of company.

Conclusion:

Human resources function, systems and processes across a TELCO are the components of its intangible value proposition that drive the business model .

This document emphasizes and determines the real need and the purpose for investing in human resource management processes and practices : Talent Acquisition- Recruitment, Talent Management- Performance Mgt, Compensation, Training , Talent retention as a strategy to develop competitive methods that produce value for a TELCO organisation.

Huge CAPEX interventions are ideally driven through portfolio management- programs and projects. The Project Human resource Management becomes the key in achieving business success.

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Transition from Project Manager to a CXO

By Raman Atmakuri

One of the biggest challenges faced by the science of Project Management is the lack of understanding of its value by the CXO community. While the CXOs typically are focused on long term business and strategy, project management professionals are focused on short term realization of what is popularly known as triple constraints (scope, cost and time). Even the analyst community seems to be focused on data around these factors rather than measuring or articulating the value of successful projects. Question remains on how to bridge this gap.

Awareness and adoption of project management as a profession has been growing incrementally over the last decade, bringing with it the increasing number of project managers. Today's managers are tomorrow's CXOs. While the current generation CXOs needs to realize the value of project management, the onus of bringing the value of project management to the CXO's table is the duty of current generation project managers. A first step in this direction for project managers is to learn how to articulate the value of project management. This will help the next generation CXOs understand the value of project management.

You may have had a successful stint as a project manager for several years in your career. Before you hit a wall soon, you should think of advancing your skill sets and taking them to the next level – moving from tactical to strategic level. Managing and executing projects successfully or having a short term view of project execution based on experience is just a good beginning for transition and not an end. For Project Managers to become effective as Leaders, they must transcend the tactical charge and become strategically prudent.

Tending to complete successfully an activity or a project in isolation is certainly the measure of success for Project Manager. But will that get you to next step in your career? Let's consider an example.

A motorist observed something strange happening on the pavement. One person was digging a pit and the other person was filling it. He stopped, wondering what was happening there. Meanwhile, he saw these two people move 100 meters ahead and do the same thing. Curious, he went up to them and asked what their end goal was. They explained that they were on a tree plantation drive, and that the third person in the team who was supposed to plant trees was absent on that day. But they continued with their activity as planned. The purpose of their combined activities was to turn the city green but they missed the big picture. If we look at it from the percentage of work finished, since two out of three activities are completed at any point of time, 67% of work is considered completed. In terms of time, digging takes more time followed by filling and planting a tree. Interestingly, the two most time consuming activities (say 95% of time) are completed with most critical activity missing completely.

Moral of the story: it is not enough if I completed my activity or project on time - what matters is the end result or the business impact it has created.

Project Managers focus on completing the project within the scope, time, cost, and quality. What is the next step? Project success has to be evaluated for its impact or value to business. There can be many positive ways that a successful project can add value to business viz., speed to market or the technology innovation or better customer service or improved productivity and lower costs or something else that mattered to bring more revenues. Thinking in these lines is an important mindset change needed for a project manager to emerge as a CXO. To articulate value of the project's success to executive management, you must think like an executive.

Project Managers know that they add value to the organization. They know that their projects improve the bottom line. They often don't know how to articulate this value, how to measure it correctly. and how to speak in the language that a CXO understands.

Here are some tips to do this:

- The CXO speaks the language of money - constantly evaluating the value to their business. Project success should demonstrate that value. For eg. delivering a project ahead of schedule may result in starting production earlier or reaching the market earlier than competition, or resulting in increase of market share, etc. Just declaring that the project was delivered ahead of time & celebrating success, is just not enough.
- While managing the project, think what is right for the organization

besides thinking what is right for the project success. This way you can demonstrate value at every stage of the project.

- The CXO receives tons of data from various sources but is eluded from information needed to make decisions on the fly. Provide a dashboard summarizing the information needed to make business decisions. Convey the information precisely and elucidate how the information connects to the bottom line. For example, the decision could be that the project should be discontinued given the situation, since it will not be able to deliver as per its initial charter or that market conditions have changed since initial charter was defined.

Make a beginning today. Start thinking and speaking the language of money and business value. Placed below are some key words commonly used by Project Managers and their equivalent words as understood by CXOs.

Project Manager	CXO
Objectives/goals	Be specific, for example : Cash Flow, gross margins
Critical Path	Priority tasks
Gantt Chart	Timeline
Resource	Be specific – people, money or material
Work Breakdown structure	List of tasks, Scheduling
Delays	Reveal the problem in conjunction with the solution
Project risk	Potential issue
Dependency	Task Sequence and action needed
Earned Value Calculation	Project status in terms of cost and schedule
Cost Performance index	On or off budget? By how much? Give data to facilitate decision making
Release Plan	Where, how and when the project will be delivered

Also, several soft skills are needed to become a CXO and Project Managers get exposed to these skills while managing projects. Let us take a look at the skills gained by experienced project managers – financials (budgets & costs), change management, risk analysis, stakeholder communication and expectation management, conflict resolution, negotiation, problem solving, quality consciousness, et al, in addition to the project management processes. However, the exposure to some of these skills is limited and based on the demands of the project. These skills need to be improved in a focused way. CXOs are good at influencing the bigger organization. Public speaking, mass communication, people management, and leadership are key

soft skills in a CXO that help influence a larger audience. Project Managers should strive to pickup opportunities to improve these skills. As a caveat, let me mention that there is a whole gamut of business and leadership skills required to become CXO, which are not covered in this article.

Project Managers who demonstrate Return on Investment (ROI) for their projects raise the value of their own team vis-à-vis enhance the significance of the profession. It will be a pity if flawless execution goes unnoticed. Measuring the project success in concrete business terms can bring visibility to that flawless execution and will catch the attention of the CXO.

The choice of growth in career is yours. As one philosopher said “Luck is where preparedness meets opportunity”. Prepare yourself for the move to the corner office.

About the Author



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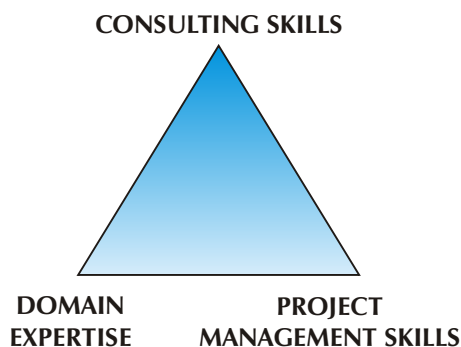
CONSULTING SKILLS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

By - Aneeta Madhok

It took a project manager along with architects, craftsmen, and supply chains of vendors and sources of raw materials to build the Taj Mahal. Of course, Shah Jahan paid all the bills and provided the vision borne out of love, but he was the client in the system. And all that was before Frederick Taylor set up the rules of scientific management & much later, Gantt laid the foundations of modern project management methods.

This is the new millennium and the rules of the game have changed. We have several thousands of project managers in the world who are qualified and certified. However, not all project managers are effective and successful. The difference between a successful project manager and an unsuccessful project manager lies not in the domain expertise of the work being done, and not just in project management and teambuilding skills, but also in the process by which knowledge and skills are deployed in the process of work accomplishment and achievement of objectives. For the first time in history we are at a juncture where many consultants themselves are realising the need for learning the art and science of what makes consultants successful. The three competency groups for successful project management are:

COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROJECT MANAGEMENT



The initial explanation of consulting skills is very simply put as those that are required in scoping an assignment, making a proposal, managing client relationships & expectations, building credibility with line managers, managing the intervention, assessing impact & value added and providing effective closure to the assignment, maintaining a practice & marketing of consulting services, etc. There is no rocket science in the learning & training in the skills that make an effective consultant. The body of knowledge & learning content, & also qualification, certifications and accreditations, in the area of consulting skills is newly evolving and headed in the direction of other benchmarked professions like accounting and law.

The subject of consulting skills is now finding place in B-school curricula and on the training agenda of some organizations sparsely scattered across the globe. The emergence of bodies of professional interest in the realm of management consulting is local, in the form of Institute of Management Consultants of India as well as global

over 47 countries as the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes.

There is, however, an art of consulting that lies in the realms beyond skill sets. This is because project managers, like consultants, actually land up moving beyond simple implementation of projects into actually ensuring successful value addition to the client. The bigger picture comes from understanding that the project being undertaken is not an activity in isolation but a part of a larger whole. The context in which the project is done is an important part of the success story and differentiates the mere project manager from the much-sought-after consultant. It is the temples we build and not the walls that count eventually.

So, the proposition of this writer and article is that today's project manager has to be a great performer and, given excellent domain expertise, project management & teambuilding skills, there is a missing piece called 'consulting skills' which completes the skill set required for success. And the good news is that while nobody is born with these skills, they are definitely learnable.

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Initial Mobilisation and Infrastructure Development - Key to Timely Completion of a Project

By Pawan Agarwal

Today there are several examples of time and cost overrun. The live example is Bandra Worli Sea Link Project. The original cost and time frame of same was 432 crs which now costed the Government to the tune of 1600 crs .It was scheduled to be operative by 2003 which finally was inaugurated in Jul 2009. Time overrun of 6 years and cost overrun by nearly 1200 crs.

IS OUR COUNTRY IN POSITION TO ACCOMMODATE SUCH LAPSES?

Impact of Time and Cost Over run

India estimates about 423 projects in industries such as coal, petroleum, railways and ports will cost Rs38,660 crore more because of delays in completion. Of the 925 infrastructure projects costing Rs20 crore or more being monitored by the government, about 423 are running behind schedule, Sriprakash Jaiswal, minister of statistics and programme implementation, said in a statement in Parliament. The cost overrun in these delayed projects amounts to a 15% increase in the last approved cost of Rs2.5 trillion, he said. (Posted on Live Mint dated 8 Jul09)

According to AEP Study "Delayed Projects and lost job opportunities," the 18 strangled projects of India Inc to the tune of INR 244,815.5 crore remained on papers, in the form of MoUs and agreements over the past 3 to 4 years, however the smooth implementation could have created job opportunities for at least 164,000 people directly and 270,000 people indirectly.

Current Scenario

One of the prime reasons of delay is improper initial mobilization & setup by the contractor. The contractor normally

starts the work in its own pace & finally the work is delayed. Initial mobilization & setup is prime thing to initiate rhythm to work & start achieving progress. Even clients do not pressurize the contractor for initial mobilization like equipments, infrastructure, manpower etc. But these things hold key to successful & timely completion of the project. Another thing usually observed in a infrastructure projects is that the contractor commits resources with abnormally high productivity & hence reduces the quantum of critical resources in his commitments.

Issues

In this article would like to highlight issues and way forward.

The key issues with respect to Initial mobilization are

- 1 Contractors resources already engaged in other projects
- 2 Clarity on scope, as well as techno commercial issues
- 3 Easy go attitude of the contractor
- 4 No monitoring system of mobilisation by the Clients
- 5 Delays by client to provide layout and setting out data
- 6 Delay in vital inputs of drawings, free issue material and encumbrance free land

- 7 Mobilisation advance given against Bank Gaurantee rather than actual mobilization

Way Forward

To have proper mobilization following step's should be taken by both Client & contractor. This will help in resolving major issue of time and cost overrun. Point wise way forward to issues mentioned above are listed below:

- 1 During the tender stage itself, the equipment deployment schedule should be made part of commitment from contractor. This is normally done, however usually the contractor shows high productivity and accordingly reduces the resource requirements. To avoid this Clients should estimate resource requirement on their own and this should form part of contractual document with commitment from contractor before signing of the agreement.
- 2 Client should do proper homework prior to floating of tenders. Brainstorming sessions of all the techno commercial issues to be discussed as well as of scope should be available with them.
- 3 Contractors should be made committed towards mobilization &

setup in the first place. Intimation / notice should be given to the contractor in case of shortfalls

- 4 Client should have a detailed monitoring sheet for monitoring and controlling of initial mobilization. This should be religiously followed with the contractor.
- 5 Ensure Layouts & setting out drawings to be available prior to award of works.
- 6 Land for development of infrastructure as well as for project site should be available by the time work is awarded to contractor along with vital inputs of
- 7 The provision of mobilization advance to be modified in a manner such that the contractor to be paid only the amount for which mobil-

ization is done. A typical example is listed below

If contractor have promised to bring 100 equipments , 500 labour and 50 staff. Then 50 % of mobilization amount can be given after receipt of the above mentioned commitment (if part resources received then weighted payment can also be done), balance 50 % on development of infrastructure like labour colony, installation of batching Plant , Crusher plant etc.

Conclusion

With insistence and a proper monitoring system by both client and contractor the initial mobilization and setup will be as per the requirement. This will not cost any thing extra to any one but definitely help all the stakeholders to achieve the project objectives.

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EXPERIENCE OF HANDLING A GREENFIELD PROJECT

By Jacob Zachariah

State Bank of India, the premier Indian Bank, has a large complement of foreign branches, spread across all the continents of the globe (save Antarctica!). The need was felt that the Banking processes in these foreign offices (back-office clerical work-load like opening of accounts and customers, Maintenance of accounts, Letter of Credit opening, Treasury related work, Cheque issuance and all such back office processes) should be out-sourced to a B.P.O. type model in India. The idea was that this would help in freeing the staff in the branches from mundane work to more productive activities like marketing and customer service.

When the idea was first mooted about a year and half back, no body had any clue how to go about it. Will it be an in-house model or will it be out-sourced? Which are the business processes that can be outsourced? Do we go with geographical ramp-up or processes-wise ramp-up? Who will own the project? How do we co-ordinate the various departments within the Bank for this venture? What about the regulatory requirements in the foreign countries? What are the implications of engaging a consultant to work on the framework? How do we work on a budget without any idea of what kind of budget should we set? An excellent recipe for any Greenfield project, isn't it?

A Project Manager and a Project Assistant were identified for the project. Once it was decided that SBI will outsource it to a third-party, and not have it in-house, at least the ball was set rolling.

Expression of Interest (EOI) was floated and following which the Request for Proposal (RFP) was released. One decision that was taken was to go for geography-wise implementation, and, within the geography, process-wise.

A Mumbai-based service provider won the bid to partner SBI in this journey, and the Letter of Intent (LOI) was handed towards September last year. Now the fun and games started in right earnest. The agents will sit in their office in Malad, Mumbai, and the Core Banking software of SBI is in Belapur. Access issue was the first hurdle. We decided to give limited access to the agents sitting in Malad on the Core Banking solution to be accessed from the server in Belapur. Security & Regulatory issues came up and it took a good two months to sort it out.

Here, I must let you into a secret. SBI is a huge organisation as you all know. 200 thousand employees and almost as many departments! Getting appropriate approvals is equivalent to going to the moon and coming back - safely. O.K., I am exaggerating, but I guess you get the picture. I will not go into the details of the structure within the organisation, but there are a lot of lateral movements of papers and approvals – popularly called in SBI parlance as 'notes'.

It took us more than 2 months to work on the Service Level Agreement (SLA), and the Scope of Work (SOW). It went through nearly a dozen iterations. I must say that drafting the SLA was a very taxing phase. RFP is always the cornerstone for drafting any SLA. The work-flow would be supplied by a Delhi based company, who is a pioneer in such software. The System Requirement Study (SRS) and Functional Specification Details (FSD) was worked upon, reworked and gone over with a toothcomb. It required much iteration, before all three parties (Service Provider, SBI and Workflow Provider) decided to sign-off. Everyone patted themselves on the back on a wonderful job done. But alas, what we were playing out was a modern version of 'Blind Men of Hindoostan'! The software house with the coders (programmers) was in Delhi. The System designer was here in Mumbai. What SBI said, and what the Service Provider understood and what the System designer of the Workflow Provider visualized, and what was told by him to his programmers in Delhi was a mélange at total variance for all parties concerned in the beginning. One said that it is a rope, another thought it could be pillar, yet another thought it is a pipe, when actually the blind men were feeling an elephant! A joint meeting with all the actors in Delhi cleared the air and once again things started getting on track. The glitches were set right and there was clarity of purpose.

The pieces in the jig-saw puzzle were now slowly falling in place. As the witching hour closed in, the frenzy started building up. It could well have been an atmosphere straight out of a typical Indian wedding-eve scenario. Everyone very hyped up, skirting up and down, getting things in order, solving one problem, when another one pops up... you get the drift, right? Phew! Everything is in place now. The Project went live in the 2nd week of October. It was a tumultuous period of smiles and tears, ups and downs, hope and despair, quick decisions and

slow dithering, hard negotiations and enduring bonds. It was worth it all. We learned many things along the way.

When you are very close to the event you don't have a 20/20 vision to see precisely, all that were good (and bad) in the event that have unfolded recently before you. The wisdom in hindsight always comes later on. And, are we not all blessed with wisdom in hindsight?! If I were to pinpoint one critical success factor in this project, it is the ability to carry everyone along. By everyone, I mean the stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, in Project Management parlance, SBI is not a 'projectized' organisation. It is a functional organisation with a lot of departments and inter-dependency between these departments. A Project Manager handling a project must handle these internal contradictions. I think, identifying the stakeholders - active, passive and even negative was an important and critical success factor. It mattered for getting

sanctions, for 'notes' to get approved, and for deploying necessary hardware and software which were mission-critical for the project.

Conclusion

The challenge in this project was akin to a challenge of an un-chartered voyage. Satisfaction, like Projects is a temporary endeavor. When one says that he is completely satisfied, it should cause alarm bells to ring. Can I be satisfied with this project? Has it met all its objectives? Given a second chance, would I have done things differently? The answers are, No, Yes and Maybe. It had a pretty long gestation time. Close to 18 months. Should it have taken that much time? No. However, there is a quiet happiness at the way things turned out in the end.

About the Author

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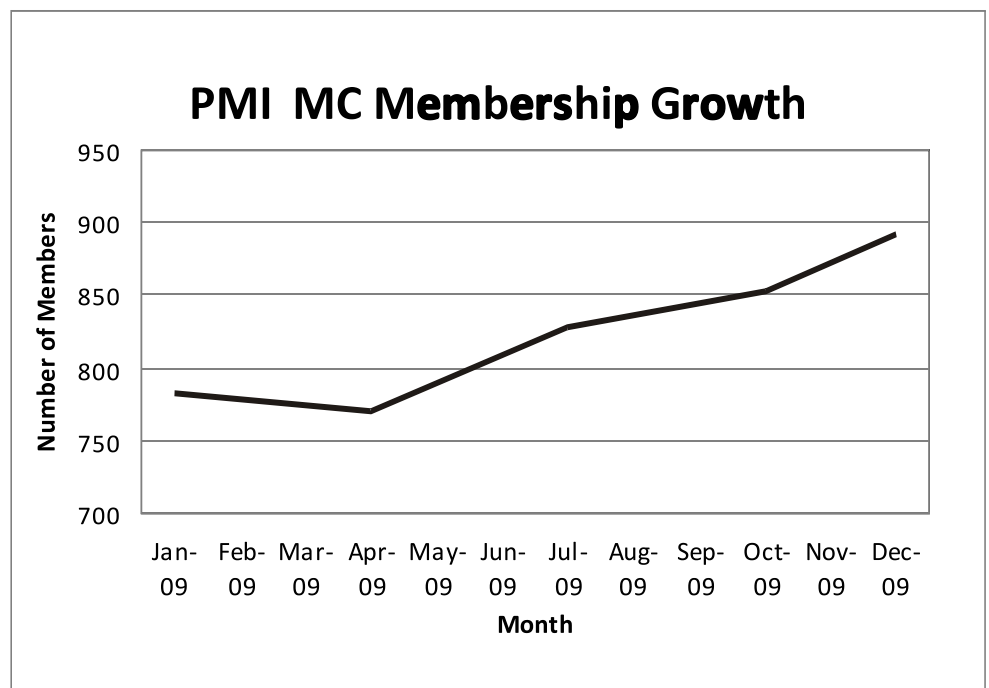
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Jul. 2009	829
Oct. 2009	853
Dec. 2009	891



MANAGING PROJECT, THE PMI WAY

By Hemant Patil, PMP

This is my experience on how a course that was taken up as a pastime activity actually helped me in understanding the various attributes of project management and how they can be effectively used in handling projects in an organized manner. Why only project, the PMP framework can be applied to any task by picking up the relevant blocks from it.

I took up PMP as a pastime activity. I was wanting to do some kind of management course though. Being an engineering techie for almost 20 yrs., the obvious thought that came to me was to take up a part time MBA. But it would have been a change in stream of sought. I was looking to do something that would enhance my managerial skills, provide me with some kind of knowledge that can be applied and is universally acceptable and at the same time improve my market value as I move towards second phase of my career.

While I was in this dilemma, a 40hr. PMP preparation course was announced in our organization. I had very little idea of PMP then & decided to attend it, more so because I had time due to lower work load and I was not required to spend a penny as it was sponsored by the company! (I later realized it was worth attending even by putting in personal money as it would have proved to be an investment rather than expense). I completed the course in Jan2009 & was told that the PMBOK Edition - 3 was valid till June 2009. Our instructor encouraged the batch to take up the exam before that. I put an additional months effort & cleared the PMP certification in March 2009.

As I went through the certification process it generated a lot of interest & made me realize that its principles / framework can be applied to any stream of business. It can help tackle any activity in an organized manner keeping in view all aspects thereby reducing the chances of error. My work then was not related to projects but I started making efforts trying to apply whatever possible from the PMP course to my existing job profile. I later switched job & joined a projectized organization.

Here I could practically see a PMI framework in action. All that I had learned – scope, time, resource, budget, risk management. A few months later I got the lead role in delivering a project.

I tried and applied as many things as possible from my PMP learning. I learnt more as the project progressed as practical difficulties during the execution phase forced me to look back at my assumptions and brought to my notice certain things that I had overseen during planning phase.

Missing out on Stakeholder:

One of the customer side STAKEHOLDER who surfaced later caused some disruptions & misunderstandings during the initial stage of execution. I had to quickly include him in my COMMUNICATION list and convey him my systematic approach towards the project to get a buy-in.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Ensuring that right Resources are at work

One of the on-field RESOURCE who claimed to have understood the SCOPE OF WORK was actually not delivering as per SCHEDULE. Identifying this bottle neck and escalating it to the functional manager was critical. With the help of the functional manager the resource was put on non critical path activities and additional resource was deployed on the CRITICAL PATH to catch up on the schedule. I guess, a properly refined WBS would have avoided this situation.

Reporting Performance

Since the project was to be completed within a short time performance reporting on a weekly basis was not enough as many activities used to elapse within a week. I therefore decided to have a more frequent review and reporting. This helped as the team was able to track, identify and manage changes on time.

Procurement Management

Though the material requirement for the project was budgeted during planning and the process set to make it available on time, certain process had to be pre-empted and alternate means adapted to ensure deliveries on time. Additional cost had to be incurred, but the contingencies considered during procurement planning came in handy.

The project is still under way and I am sure I will not have major surprises having adopted the PMI guidelines.

About the Author

I am a graduate in Electronics & Telecommunication Engg. from Pune University and a certified PMP since March 2009. I have been working in the field of telecom for the past 20+ years. I have been instrumental in broadband wireless access network design, planning and roll out. Currently working with GTL Limited as General Manager “Engineering, WiMAX & 3G. Formerly worked for Reliance Communications and Syntel Telecom



How Project Management is more important in the troubled Economy.

By Sandep Raut, PMP

In Today's troubled economy all the organizations are struggling to survive & sustain their businesses.

It has become extremely important to focus on the 3 KPIs for organizations to move ahead in these troubled times.

- Reduce costs
- Improve Customer services
- Increase Revenue

The first KPI of Costs reduction invariably starts with reduction of headcounts, which is looked at as an easy way out. But People are asset of the organization. When they go, they take away all the knowledge, skills along with them which in turn may harm the organization in long run. Even in these situations Project Managers can help Senior Management to identify the people which they can let go instead of good ones.

In any organization there are only two things happening - either Projects or Operations.

Hence managing these Projects / Operations successfully has become extremely important for sustenance and profitability of the business.

There are several key aspects to executing projects successfully. Let us discuss some of the aspects one by one.

One of the criteria for successful project is effective resource management. Projects cannot succeed without right people to work on them. Project Managers are the controlling & motivating factor in resource management. Happy people are more creative, productive & they deliver ahead of time.

Resource sharing has become important to avoid unnecessary headcounts & who else can manage the resource sharing across projects than the project managers. (S)he knows when & which resource is required at specific time to avoid idle time & achieve optimal utilization of available workforce.

Second criteria is attention to detail of tracking scope, time & costs. Project Managers can help team members understand the value of recording the right data for timesheets on various phases. This helps in understanding & predicting the costs with increased accuracy.

Third & most important aspect is communicating the risks & value of Projects to Senior Management. Raising timely red flags for key issues & risks is very important activity along with normal status of the project. This helps in addressing all the potential issues & risks as soon as they arise or even before they

surface in the project, rather than finding them when it's too late.

Project Managers are the practitioners of the daily project activities hence they are aware of poor performing projects which can lead to waste of time & money. These when highlighted to senior management can very well be killed or stopped to avoid further damage.

Organizations can look back at the history data collected on projects to predict project success, have quick turnaround time by reusing the material from previous projects. All this wealth of information depends on Project Manager's ability to collate & archive for future use.

To summarize the value of Project Management:

- Improved schedules-timelines & hence Improved project profitability by meeting costs, schedule & quality goals
- Ability to collect data for further enhancements in project management
- Usage of collected data for betterment of future projects
- Better predictions of project success
- Save money on poorly performing projects causing waste of time, money & resources

Every project is approved to deliver some benefit to the organization. Project Management helps in reducing the risk of failure to achieve this objective & improve the potential benefit

About the Author

Sandep has spent over 19 years in the software services industry out of which over 11 years in the Business Intelligence stream. Conceptualized & contributed to the formation of the BI center of excellence. Developed & managed Customer relations with Global players across USA, UK & Asia Pacific. Participated in overall business planning, bringing current knowledge & future trends in technology to the advantage of the organization's competitive position. Currently working with SAS Institute India Pvt Ltd as Senior Project Manager. Responsible for International Business & Supply Chain Intelligence implementations with additional responsibility of organization-wide integration of consistent project management methodologies and terminology



Operation Successful, Patient Died!

By Poorav Sheth, PMP

Let me tell you a story of an emerging company in the US that had an IT department which was in charge of developing tools & applications for its internal business users (Customers). This IT department had outsourced its software development operations to an Offshore Provider in India. Although the Offshore Provider delivered most of the projects on-time, on-budget & as per spec (beating the global averages, Standish Chaos Report 2009), they were always being blamed for technical incompetency & not delivering a “good” product. These were serious allegations that could impact future business from the Client and that's where I was brought in by the Provider to “save” the account.

My first task was to talk to the offshore team and understand the process, projects & problems. For any project, the typical process involved the Client's IT Manager shipping the spec to the offshore team which would then start with the architecture and design followed by development & testing. Upon closer inspection of the project artifacts, I found the documents in order and an iterative development approach being followed. No problems there.

Next, I flew down to visit the Client and understand the problems from their perspective. My first meeting was with the Client's IT Manager who was in charge of getting the tools/applications developed by the offshore team. Although, he agreed that most of the projects were delivered on-budget, on-time and as per spec, he told me that the

offshore team was technically incapable and the final product they delivered was not “up-to-the-mark”. Not a valid justification, I thought. That's when I decided to talk to the internal business users. What they told me shocked me. They told me that whenever a new project was approved by the business team, the IT Manager would contact them for requirements and would come back after a few months for demo-ing the finished tool! Obviously, the finished product would be very different from what they had expected and some of the features no longer satisfied the dynamic business requirements. What ended up happening was that many of these tools that got developed were not found usable by the business users and never saw the light of the day.

This was a classic case of “operation successful, patient died”. Even though, the project was delivered on-time, on-budget and as per spec, the developed tool was not accepted by the business users and never used. Although, the Client's IT Manager contacted the business users for initial requirements, he never kept them involved throughout the project. Some of the details of the features were provided by him, without consulting the users, based on what he thought would be the right technical approach instead of what the business users would think as the most practical approach. There was a total misalignment between the IT department and the business users it served that not only resulted in wasting away thousands of

dollars on software development of tools that were never used but also on lost productivity that the business users encountered because they could not get the right kind of tools on time.

What made this situation worse was that the Client's IT Manager was seeing this as a failure of the offshore team instead of seeing it as ineffective leadership and improper project management practices on his part. Obviously, I put forth my observations & recommendations to the Client's management team which was mature enough to accept its mistakes and take necessary corrective action to prevent this in the future.

How the patient was revived?

The following recommendations were put forth:

1. Involve the Offshore Team -

Just shipping the spec to the Offshore Team in India and expecting them to deliver a great product was myopic. Since the Offshore Provider was a long-term partner who would be involved in multiple projects in the future, it made sense to involve them directly when chalking out the project roadmap and providing them with a vision of what the end goal is.

Benefits – This will not only get them better engaged but will also get them thinking in the right direction for better ideas & solutions to some of the business problems that need to be solved.

2. Identify Project Owner

Once a project has been identified and approved by the Steering Committee, a

Project Owner should be identified from the group of business users that are the target audience for the tool. This delegate would be the one point-of-contact for the IT Manager/Offshore Provider to discuss requirements, deliverables, scheduling, user acceptance & signoffs. The Project Owner in turn would be responsible for keeping his group of business users informed about the project & discuss any questions that may have come up with the project execution team. It is expected that the Project Owner will have to spend about 15% of his time in supporting this project but it will be worth it considering the better deliverables that come out as a result of his involvement.

Benefits – Encourages stakeholder involvement. Single point-of-contact enables faster decision-making.

3. Weekly stakeholder meeting –

Weekly meetings would be conducted by the IT Manager where the participants would include the Project Owner, Business Manager (Project Sponsor) and one or more members from the Offshore Team. The agenda for these meetings would be to provide status updates, discuss any risks/issues, changes, feedback etc.

Benefits – Keeps all stakeholders in the loop regarding project status. Encourages collective responsibility.

4. Monthly feedback

As far as the IT department of this company was concerned, it was really a Service Provider to the business group. The foremost thing that any Provider needs to consider is customer satisfaction. In order to improve the user experience, there needs to be a structured way to collect user feedback on a regular basis. I designed a feedback

form that was to be sent to all involved Project Owners and Business Managers on a monthly basis. Besides the overall rating, respondents were asked to rate the project execution team on the following parameters - Response time, Understanding of business requirements, Process, Quality of Deliverables, Proactiveness, Flexibility, Innovation & Timeliness of deliverables. The results are to be analyzed and necessary corrective/preventive actions to be undertaken by the IT Manager as deemed fit. The consolidated results are to be presented to the Client's management team at the end of the year when they evaluate the performance of the IT group over multiple projects.

Benefits – Valuable user feedback encourages continuous improvement and adjustments. Improved customer service fosters camaraderie between IT department & business users.

These recommendations were accepted by the Client's management team and I was responsible for implementing them while I was there. It has been more than a year now and I must say that it has worked out really well as it has kept all the stakeholders involved and interested thereby producing tools that are aligned to the expectations and needs of the business users. It significantly improved the success rates of subsequent projects. Even the consolidated feedback ratings showed a significant improvement in customer satisfaction.

In fact, in the Client management team's annual review of the IT department's performance, they were "happy to see a significant improvement in the way IT [department] has delivered and kept its customers satisfied".

Moral of the story

It is imperative to have stakeholder involvement and sponsor buy-in well throughout the project, from before project inception to well after project closure.

This story also raises an important question – What are the criteria by which one would determine if a project is a success or not?

At a high-level, some of the obvious ways to determine whether a project is a success or a failure-

1. Has the project satisfied the business requirements of the primary stakeholders?
2. Do the business owners believe the project was successful?
3. Were the deliverables produced on time and within the budget?
4. Has the project delivered the business value promised?

About the Author

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is the Founder and Principal Consultant at Stratellect Consulting. He has



15 years of experience in the IT industry out of which more than 6 years have been in the US. He has an extensive project management background in IT and has led business units with global teams to deliver numerous successful projects. His company specializes in Offshore Project Management, Offshore Sourcing & Project Rescue services.

For details, visit www.stratellect.com

Greater Than Yourself

The Ultimate Lesson of True Leadership by Steve Farber

- Book Review

Greater Than Yourself is a call to action for every aspiring leader. The challenge is not to become the best leader you can be. No, that will come as the consequence of giving the most of yourself to someone who you feel compelled to lift up, support, encourage, teach, coach and mentor.

This book is told as an inspiring “business parable”. Farber is a highly effective story teller and he does a fantastic job of keeping the reader glued to every chapter. He wraps challenging ideas into actionable principles of genuine leadership. Steve Farber himself is the main character in this book. Steve wraps himself and his love of guitars into the story from the beginning in combination with a cast of fictional characters that add flavor to the story. He draws you in to his adventure of finding the original owner of his new guitar, and through the adventure teaches you the power that comes from helping another person to become greater than yourself.

The story is so compelling it keeps you reading and the combination of real and fictional characters helps you learn how to apply the principles to your own life.

The story gives character and life to a principle of truth that has existed for centuries: the more you lift others the higher you will go. This concept comes to life through the greater than yourself (GTY) framework and is elaborated through several examples of GTY projects. The following three solid principles create the GTY framework:

1. Expand yourself:

“You expand yourself in order to give yourself to others.” Create a deep understanding of who you are and what you stand for in order to pass along those strong qualities to others.

2. Give yourself:

“Act instead of just watching others act or hearing about it in the news.” Give yourself the gift of philanthropy. You will become better for it and make a meaningful impact in the lives of many. By giving regularly, you will be amazed at how much more you receive in countless ways.

3. Replicate yourself:

“Pay it forward, and demand that those you teach pay it forward, as well.” As you practice the art of paying it forward, you also will become more confident in demanding that others give of themselves also. As you challenge others to give of themselves, you are in effect giving them a gift they won’t recognize until later down the road, but then they’ll be eternally grateful for your prodding.

The author is the first to admit that the process of GTY can feel awkward at first, even counter-intuitive. Most of us are taught early on to compete hard and to work hard to maintain a competitive advantage over anyone who might someday threaten our position. Farber maintains that while giving of yourself may feel strange because of how we tend to be conditioned, giving is actually a human need and the perceived risks of giving are myths. Helping our fellow man, coaching our subordinates, sharing our best practices with our peers – all of these actions make us better, stronger – not weaker. Strong leaders are giving leaders. Leaders who have a loyal following are those who instinctually work alongside their team members, holding their hands and show them the way to success. If you want to rise as a leader, read Greater Than Yourself, apply its principles personally and make someone else greater than yourself.

By the way the book has received excellent reviews from leading personalities like Tom Peters, Ken Blanchard, Marci Shimoff and Jim Kouzes. You can follow Steve Farber’s own GTY project at greaterthanyouself.com, and if you’re brave enough you can add your own story to the site.

Note: This book is available in the chapter library



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Knowledge Transfer - A Project Management View

By Nandini Mahajan, PMP

Abstract

Organizations outsource IT applications for various reasons. The application knowledge, the domain knowledge and the operational wisdom change hands with the transition. Knowledge transfer phase plays a pivotal role. More than providing inputs for further planning of the operation, it is the beginning of the alignment between the outsourcing enterprise and the service provider. Specific project management considerations apply to the knowledge transfer phase, despite the application configuration.

The application outsourcing market has seen a steady growth over the last decade. The composition of services outsourced has moved from the traditional application management types to the advanced service provider models. The enterprises that outsource both core and non-core systems have moved away from the basic drivers of saving the operating costs to creating a knowledgeable partner in handing over the applications.

Irrespective of the model and composition of the outsourced block of work, knowledge transfer remains to be a key phase in this journey. The success of this stage lays the foundations of a long lasting and mutually beneficial engagement for the outsourced application.

Depending on how the processes are packaged by the service provider, knowledge transfer is either treated as the first phase or an independent project itself. Knowledge transfer phase is typically governed by separate set of

processes. Transition of the application portfolio to the service provider's premises spans from the due diligence activities to having the infrastructure, teams and processes up and running independently.

This article discusses the specific project management considerations for the knowledge transfer activities during the application transition.

Knowledge Transfer – A Process Overview

Application outsourcing engagements pass through following stages before the service provider starts independent operation on the scope.

- Information and Data collection
- Information and Data Analysis
- Estimation and Planning
- Knowledge Transfer sessions
- Job Shadowing
- Job Demonstration
- Acceptance of knowledge transfer
- Reconfiguration
- Service Provider's ownership

Based on the packaging of service offering, organizations have bundled these stages in various ways. Engagements may vary in terms of when the first exposure to data and information is available. The first three stages of data collection, analysis, estimation and planning are likely to be covered fully or partially during the pre-project stage. It could be at the multivendor competitive bidding stage through RFI or RFP. It could possibly be part of a special feasibility study phase. Service providers are also likely to have the exposure to the data and part of the know-how due to other related projects.

Irrespective of the exposure to the scope of outsourced application, a due diligence phase before the knowledge transfer plays an important role. This is an opportunity to re-validate the information, estimation, assumptions known before. Checklists and questionnaires for such due diligence are part of the organizational assets

which are used at this stage. However, the project management team needs to think beyond the available checklists since every new engagement is likely to have a new dimension or challenge to deal with.

Planning Considerations

The stakeholders for the knowledge transfer phase from client's business side are the process owners, end users and customers of the application. If the driver for outsourcing is consolidation of systems due to a joint venture, then similar stakeholders from JV partners also come in picture. From the client's IT team, the service team and its managers, SMEs, system architects would have an active role in the knowledge transfer. Third party vendors, maintainers, contractors are also among the stakeholders. Business analysts and architects of next generation systems for the client need to be on the list of stakeholders too.

The time constraints of handing over team makes knowledge transfer a time bound activity. Some packaged processes of service providers promise fixed number of days for knowledge transfer phase. This makes the planning processes more critical and detailed than ever. Requirement collection that nears the completion after the due diligence needs a review and a sign-off from the stakeholders. Scope definition based on the exhaustive requirements is benefitted with SME involvement from the service provider's side. This is the time when the operational scenario of the outsourced applications is visualised & developed for the first time. Consolidation of systems under consideration, suggestions to close some previous systems/ functionalities in part or full,

suggestions to create new systems to achieve efficiency, configuration of operations team across geographies gets initiated. Inputs to initiate delay-prone activities are available, e.g. infrastructure, procurements, installations, trainings etc. The WBS for knowledge transfer phase should contain a branch that deals with planning for the steady state operation. The activities resulting from this branch would produce deliverables such as:

1. The offshoring plan
2. The operations plan
3. The infrastructure plan

Knowledge from the handing over team is available in both explicit and implicit form. The activities for knowledge transfer include a requisite mix of one-to-one sessions, presentations, brainstorming sessions. Job-shadowing or observing the handing over team closely in the day to day work is an important activity.

It is possible or rather advisable in many cases to have the knowledge transfer from one person to more than one person. This needs to strike a balance with the cost baseline, however there are some distinct advantages such as,

- Flexibility in the steady state operations stage
- Back up teams during team reconfiguration & movement to offshore
- Bring out as much tacit knowledge to explicit form as early as possible

Steady state operation does provide an opportunity to right-size the team eventually. Availability of handing over team members, their geographies and their current work load add to the challenges of activity duration estimate and scheduling.

Unlike a standard project, the schedule

for knowledge transfer phase contains more parallel networks emerging after the due diligence and terminating in acceptance kind of activities towards the end of the schedule.

Cost estimates for the knowledge transfer are dominated by geographic movements of teams & communication costs. Third party services are significant. The current TCO for the client, expected reductions, set up and operations cost of service provider for the first and the subsequent years of operation form the complete cost perspective.

Due to the nature of the schedule, both the frequency and information content of communication is higher than the steady state operation stage of the application.

Loss of skill and tacit knowledge, insufficient definitions of acceptance criteria and inadequate documentation are predominant risks in knowledge transfer from the service provider's point of view. For the client data privacy and security, security of intellectual property, loss of business knowledge, turnover or dispersal of experienced personnel are the primary concerns.

Execution and Control Challenges

The time available from the handing over team at premium, multiple parallel and distributed activities are primary points that make the execution challenging. Withdrawal mindset of the handing over team is a challenge in getting the tacit knowledge converted to explicit knowledge. Hence project management bandwidth needs to be increased in quantum and in geography. A fast track escalation and resolution mechanism and a fast track change

management mechanism should be available throughout the life cycle of knowledge transfer. The effectiveness of these two addresses the challenges of limited duration to a large extent.

Project team should be sensitive to handing over team's morale and mindset. One-to-one interactions should be carried out tactfully. The team should have a good mix of SMEs, technical and architectural experts and operations specialists. The focus of job shadowing stage should be on imbibing the best practises of the existing team. If the scope of application outsourcing is for product development, enhancement, migration, architectural modifications or modernisation, then the job shadowing phase should fetch important inputs from the client's technical vision team, technical architects etc. The subsequent job demonstration stage should focus on understanding of both the current and the would-be system.

Process adherence is at the core of knowledge transfer activities. Documents or any other form in which the explicit knowledge is available would be the most important artefacts on the quality radar. Completeness and level of details of the artefacts available is a quality measure. Performance of the taking over team during the job demonstration stage is another quality measure.

Reviewers including the client's SMEs and the service provider's SMEs form the acceptance team. Acceptance phase marks the end of knowledge transfer phase. Observing the service delivery and testing important service delivery processes are part of acceptance stage. Security of the data and information is

typically the topmost concern for the client. Data security measures and practises need to be demonstrated as part of the acceptance.

With growing maturity in outsourced application, client organizations also expect innovation and ongoing SME involvement in application modernization kind of engagements. Knowledge transfer projects, therefore, have not remained hand-over and withdraw kind of activities. These are rather a beginning of a more effective business co-operation model.

About the Author



Nandini Mahajan has 17 years of experience in technical and managerial roles in the IT industry. She has lead transition teams responsible for taking over completely outsourced applications & transferring the operations to India. She has worked as a Senior Manager with Accenture and as a Group Head with Tech Mahindra. Nandini is B.E. (Computer Engg) and a certified Project Management Professional. Currently she is the Principal Consultant and trainer in project management with Magnimus Solutions.

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Recruiting the right candidate

By Sainath Sherigar, PMP

Summary

Every team member either contributes to or erodes the team's success. No matter how experienced you are, the art of selecting the right person is more art than science.

Identify clearly what you really need

It is imperative that you list down the tasks that the candidate will be required to perform. If you do not have a clear cut list of job responsibilities in place, it only indicates that you are not clear of what you really need. On the flip side, this also sends wrong signals to good candidates – a non-existent JD is one indicator that roles are not clearly defined in the organization. A good job role is one of the key incentives for attracting the right candidate.

Write out a detailed job description

Perform this exercise by asking yourself "What work will the person actually do?" An example is given below:

Candidate profile (development)

Job responsibilities

- Gather requirements from business users
- Create business requirement specifications
- Create system and database design documents
- Write system use cases
- Estimate requirements
- Design and code system modules
- Write stored procedures
- Create reports

Technical skills

- C#
- ASP.Net
- SQL Server 2000/2005

- SQL Reporting services
- Web services
- Enterprise Application blocks
- Enterprise architecture
- Design patterns

Personality traits

- Ability to handle tight deadlines
- Ability to multitask
- High degree of endurance/stamina
- Good verbal and written communication skills
- Responsible and is able to work independently
- Positive attitude
- Honest, sincere & a true professional

Make expectations clear to recruitment consultants

Share the job description created above with recruitment consultants. Ensure that the profile of the person you are looking for is clearly understood by the consultant. Often it is observed that consultants either do not fully understand or are left groping in the dark about client requirements.

Remember, your aim is to funnel out the best talent suitable for the job from the available resumes floating in the market. Much of the initial filtration work is tedious and time consuming and is best left to full time consultants. Your job begins only after the initial rounds of testing and verification have been completed and the number of potential candidates has been rationalized.

Do a detailed study of the short listed resumes

Scan the résumés of the short listed candidates carefully. Analyze the

projects which the candidate has worked on. List down scenario specific questions based on the work already done by the candidate. At times the projects in which the candidate has worked may be good but the candidate himself may have had a limited role in the project.

For example: Let's say a candidate has worked in a core banking project and his role was to create reports. The résumé should ideally indicate "project details" and "role" under separate headers. If this is not happening, provide feedback to the consultant and have it rectified. The following scenario specific questions can be asked:

- How many reports did you create?
- Did you use SQL reporting services?
- Could you provide details of the most difficult report you worked on? Why do you consider it the most difficult?
- What kind of stored procedures did you need to create for the reporting requirement?
- What was the maximum row count of the tables you were querying? What measures did you take to ensure that the queries were optimized and would not fail as the tables became populated with more data?
- What kind of indexing strategy did you use? Did you need to create covering indexes?
- What are the stored procedure creation standards which you follow in your project?

The responses to above questions will tell you a lot about the skill levels of the candidate. It is difficult to bluff on this

type of questions. Remember, if a candidate has already done the kind of work which you need to implement in your project he will be productive from day 1. This is precisely what you are trying to determine. You will find a lot of candidates who “know” a lot about a specific technology i.e. theoretical knowledge but you need to give preference to the candidates who have already “done” some work in an area. Give preference to on the job skill over bookish knowledge, this will reap rich dividends during execution of the project.

Equating the candidate's responses against the JD created earlier will help you to come towards a more informed decision.

Prepare a ready reckoner of scenario based questions based on the scenarios faced in your current project

Following the questions identified in the previous section, you now need to throw scenarios at the candidate from your current project and see what solutions he can suggest for the same. The important thing here is not how many precise solutions he comes up with but to get a feel on how much the candidate is capable of thinking. Software development is a 24X 7 thinking job and this is a vital skill.

For example, continuing with the previous section's core banking solution the question could be as below:

Consider this scenario – We have the following entities in a bank branch – the customer, the cashier, the teller, the personal banker, the branch manager. Suggest an object model to capture this scenario.

The candidate's answer would automatically tell you how much of

object oriented analysis and development he is actually using or is capable of figuring out.

For a production support role, the scenario could be – Consider the event wherein 2 highest priority support calls are raised within 2 minutes of each other and you are the only team member supporting the application in the night shift. How would you handle this situation?

The candidate's answer will tell you how he would actually handle the situation in real life and whether he is suited to the role. Trouble shooting and providing permanent or workaround solutions under pressure is a key quality required in production support.

Asking scenario based questions is mandatory if you wish to select the right candidates – asking questions which only test the subject knowledge of candidates is not enough.

Assess the technical competency of the candidate

Finally, also have a ready reckoner of technical questions ready to assess the technical knowledge of the candidate. Almost everyone does this – in fact most interviews commence and end with technical subject knowledge questions.

The disadvantage of this approach is that almost every candidate is prepared for such questions. For example, questions like:

- What is the difference between overloading and overriding?
- What is multiple inheritance? Is it possible in C#?
- Explain the event model in .Net? What is a delegate?

evoke standard responses and only tell you that the candidate has some degree

of technical knowledge. It does not tell you how effective he will be on the job. Nevertheless, it is important that this analysis is also done as part of your recruitment process.

Do not always recruit the best candidate

By now you have finalized some candidates who are suitable for the job. Before making the final offer consider the following:

Every employee goes through 3 stages in any organization

- 1) Initial stage – the employee is new and is on the learning curve.
- 2) Middle stage – the employee has become an integral part of the team and is contributing in his role
- 3) Late Stage – in this stage the employee has mastered his job responsibilities and is looking for new challenges. If he is not presented with new challenges or a role revision there is a very high chance that the employee may move on in search of greater responsibilities.

This is the normal cycle for all employees who are career oriented and are looking to progress in their careers.

Put yourself into the candidate's shoes and answer the following questions:

- Does the new job provide me with growth opportunities?
- Is it a logical next step in my career path?

If the answer to any of the above questions is in the negative, then it might be difficult to retain the candidate in the long run. Of course, if the candidate is comfort driven than all he may be looking for is a better remuneration. But most of the better candidates do not think in this fashion.

One of the ways of identifying a good candidate is that he will usually ask many probing questions – to the point of being offensive. He will do his homework properly when trying to assess a potential employer. Such candidates usually turn out to be very good in their jobs.

The best candidate is the one for whom the offer you are making places him in the 1st stage in the employee life cycle as mentioned previously. This obviously means that the candidate will be required to stretch and grow in his new role. This also turns out to be one of the best retention strategies for the right employees.

Find people who are better than you

This is a tricky piece of advice. The average, insecure person always recruits people whom he considers to be weaker than him in ability or skill to ensure that they never rise to challenge him. But the true leader is usually strong and secure – he intentionally recruits people who are better than him in at least 1 area. He knows that his job as a leader is to integrate diverse abilities of people for the common good and achieve synergy. An insecure leader can never achieve big results.

Post recruitment activities

- Make sure you have an induction plan in place for the new employee
- If the employee is coming onboard midway through the project then ensure that a proper knowledge transition plan is in place to integrate him with the team within the shortest possible time.
- Capitalize on the initial excitement of a newcomer – ensure that some productive work gets done.
- Ensure that the 1st assignment given will provide an opportunity for 'controlled stretch'. And watch the response of the candidate closely.

Final thoughts

- Never be hasty in your recruitment decisions – better to leave a position open

rather than recruit a wrong person and repent later.

- Despite your best efforts quite a few of your recruitment efforts will inevitably go wrong. If you achieve 50% success rate in your recruitment efforts – consider yourself doing a good job.

About the Author



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