



The most important knowledge area within Project Management Process Groups

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One of the most important notes to remember when dealing with a project is to understand its definition. A project is an exertion undertaken to create a certain product or service and/or achieve a certain goal. It involves careful planning, execution, managing, and measuring. Considering projects' temporary nature, it is highly important to understand that scope, time, and other resources (including budget) have to meet certain limitations. When managing a project, we have to understand that a set of inputs should be transformed into outputs by achieving a particular goal. Therefore, considering that Operations Management is an area concerned with managing and controlling processes, I find Project Management and Operations Management highly related to each other.

The first important step which needs to be defined when managing a project is the scope of the project. Project scope requires us to determine what is the specific goal of a project and what is the work that must be done to deliver that specific goal. Defining the scope enables us to allocate the necessary resources and plan the timeline of the project. Moreover, definition of the scope allows us to assign tasks, create a schedule for each task, and develop a budget for each task.

When planning a project, the first task that we are required to do is to define the scope of the project, which has to meet the senior management's expectations. When defining our scope, we have to pay careful attention to the competitive situation and management's market objectives.



The second important task to do when planning a project is to develop a project schedule. As the project scope is defined, we are able to assign the tasks and set the length of each task duration. By doing so, we are able to understand how long will a task take to be finished and how long the project will take to achieve the specific goal. On the other hand, when involved in the project planning process, the second step to be taken is to define the project schedule. It is mandatory to define the expected completion time throughout the project and compare it to the management target and our target for completing the project.

An important note to always pay attention to when scheduling a project is to understand how project schedule is highly related to project resources, especially when setting the length of a task duration. When setting a task duration, we also have to consider the amount of work that people perform on a task. After setting a task duration, we have to also calculate how many people should perform on that specific task in order for the task to be finished on the set time. At this phase, we have to understand if the number of people we assigned will be able to finish the task on time.

Another important note to remember is that when mentioning resources, it also means the budget of the project. When assigning task durations, which highly depends on the number of people required to finish the task, it is of a crucial importance to also know if we have sufficient budget to cover the expenses that come from employing a certain number of people. Therefore, we have to take into consideration if the expenses for assigning a number of people for each task will meet the budget of the project.

There were two elements which we have to take into consideration when employing people to do the project: employees' skills level and outsourcing. As higher the skills of the employees, the more expensive it is to employ them and as much as we outsource, the cheaper the labor becomes. These are some of the combinations we must think of in order to always remain under the budget or along the budget. However,



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one of the main problems to be faced with these specific combinations is that you can always remain behind schedule.

There were two main reasons why the project can remain behind schedule when employing the above mentioned combinations: few number of people employed per task and extensive outsourcing. The main problem with outsourcing is that employees get highly frustrated regarding what tasks have already been finished. Considering that the success of our project is rated also on the team process (stress & morale), we have to make sure that we keep our team in good spirits by not outsourcing as much and continually have one-on-one coaching and status reviews.

Therefore, considering all these issues that we can deal with when involved in a project, the main question is “what makes a project a successful project?” Finishing the project on time or finishing the project on the budget?

According to IBM survey in the success/failure rates of “change” projects, 60% of projects do not meet schedule, budget, and quality goals. Therefore, in order for a project to be considered a successful project, it should be finished on time and on budget. But how?

The main problem why projects do not finish on time, is because of their unclear scope. The most important task of a project manager is to define a clear scope for the project. Every other pillar of a project is highly dependent on the project’s scope. As we define the project scope, we do not only define the final result which we expect to achieve, but also every necessary step that we are required to take in order for us to finish the project on time and on budget. Therefore, it is highly required that most of our time when involved in the planning process goes to the scope of the project.