

PM skills for future employment

PMP certification

- opens doors, shows you are serious, demonstrates a standard level of understanding, shouldn't be a requirement

Ability to be a Business Partner

- need to know how the business works, business analysis skills
- PMs bring the project management skill which the business wants
- Have to know how to develop working relationships
- Need general business skills – read business articles; business degree, MBA
- Need to be able to speak the business language

Generalist vs. technical expertise

- Technical expertise more important in a large organization; smaller organizations would need PMs who can manage many different types of projects
- For contract PMs, the client is usually looking for the expertise; expect the vendor to get up to speed quickly
- Diversity of experience – ability to flex to another kind of knowledge, willingness to learn something new,

May be hard to communicate to a hiring manager the skills that a PM does automatically

- Be prepared with specific examples

Team building

- People management experience helpful

Leadership

- Give examples – can be from your personal life
- Use feedback that you have received

Stakeholder mgmt

- Influencing skills, political savviness, collaboration
- Part of leadership

Have sample documents to show the hiring manager

Topic - Team Building (on a limited budget)

Why is team building important for our project teams?

- Increases the probability of a project's success.
- Contributes to an employee's development which will benefit other projects.
- Motivates the employee via the Project Manager taking an active interest in the employee's career.
- Builds strong relationships across the project team.

Can anyone share inexpensive team build events that have worked well for you in the past?

- Weekly team lunches where no one is permitted to talk about work.
- Monday virtual team meetings where everyone shares what they did over the weekend.
- Monthly birthday cake meeting. Recognize all project team members who had a birthday the prior month. Enables in casual conversation across the project team.
- Any team training event where the project team member learns something new about themselves. They also learn how to apply what they learned to improve collaboration / communications with other individuals (inside and outside the project team).
- Book circles where the topic is team focused. The "5 Dysfunctions of a Team" and "Our Iceberg is Melting" where two good examples.
- Each project team member share 3-5 positive comments about each of the other project team members during a project status meeting.
- After work activities such as cocktails, dinner, etc. Keep these infrequent to reduce conflicts in the project team's personal schedules.
- Any activity that strengthens trust within the project team.
- Any activity that focuses on a common interest within the project team.

How do you best integrate a new team member into the project team after the project has been up and running for a period of time?

- Assign an existing project team member as a "buddy" to the new team member.
- Just include the new team member in all project related activities.
- Look for opportunities to recognize the new team member and let them know they are appreciated.

Practical use of PMI methods when managing Small Projects

Definitions of a Small Project

- Project duration 2-3 months
- Project < 250 hours
- Project cost 50K or less
- Project teams can consist from 2 to infinite number of team members

Challenges

- How to scale down Project Management Methodologies to fit a small project
- How to bring Project Management theory to small projects
- Running a project with team members who are not familiar with project management of being on a project team (i.e.: small company that is new to project management or working with a Marketing department)
- Often it is difficult to get team members to give priority to a small projects
- Running maintenance or support units as small projects
- Project Closure – ensuring at the end of the project you met expectations (If a vendor, get paid!)

Discussions/Recommendations

- Scope/Deliverables
 - Defining a clear scope, with specific deliverables, is critical to successfully managing small projects.
 - It is to your advantage to make the deliverables as clear and concise as expected so you do not incur scope creep or come to the end of the project and not delivering the stakeholders expectations
 - Format can be in a Project Charter, Statement of Work, or any scoping document that can be shared and agreed upon with your stakeholder
- Schedule
 - Schedule is as important on small projects as is on larger projects as you have less overall time
 - Often resources may not be dedicated to the team on small projects so it is vital to have a WBS with specific tasks
 - Tool is not important, MS Project or Excel will work
 - Checkpoints – can be a good practice to have more frequent check points, break tasks down to small chunks to make certain you remain on schedule
- Communications Plan
 - Vital to the success of a small project
 - You need to define how, when, who will be communicating (reporting) to stakeholders, team members, etc
 - Nothing elaborate, this should not take a great deal of time to create (few hours or less)
 - Helps to define communications expectation of everyone and will become even more valuable to address change control
- Change Control

- Make certain you do not overlook change control, in a project of short duration change can kill the success of your project
- Education
 - At the start, assess the skill level of your team in working on a project or within a team, conduct education and/or define guidelines
 - Education need not be formal, it may just be the PM explaining how/what/why PM practices are followed
- Risk
 - You must do risk analysis even on a small project
 - Very important to do this early
 - Ongoing review will often be less formal and adhoc but if risks do materialize you will have a mitigation strategy in place
- Resource Allocation
 - Define clear expectations with resource manager and the project team resource
 - Define the priority
- Project Closure
 - Following the above practices should decrease the surprises at project closure of not delivering expected results

How to get employees to take ownership? / Empowering employees

Questions Used for the discussion:

- Do you have example of some clear strategies that proved to work for you?
- Have you ever empowered an employee and then micro managed the work? What did you experience?
- Do you have any examples or stories of when you successfully empowered an employee, or project resource?
 - What methods did you use to make this work?
 - If not – do you have an example when it didn't work and what would have done differently?
- What do you think the key strategies are for empowering employees?
- Do you feel like you are empowered by your company or management?
- Do you know your boundaries for making decisions?
- What are your motivators for feeling empowered? How can you use these same strategies for people that work in your projects?
- How can you empower project resources but still have a feeling of control for the project?
- Do you have any tactful ways to change a decision or direction set by a group of empowered resources without un-empowering them?
- Can you give the group an example of trying to empower an employee that didn't want to be empowered? What actions did you take and what did you learn?

The discussion opened with a key strategy to think about:

- When empowering employees, boundaries should be set in order to communicate where employees are safe to make decisions without repercussions or fear of being reversed.

Comments and Lessons Learned:

- Build a relationship with the employee; find a synergy with them in order to ascertain their motivation.
- When empowering and delegating to resources you must be willing to accept their decisions and output. If you reverse their decisions or approach you will immediately un-empower them.
- Even though their style may not match yours, focus on the results to ensure they are acceptable.
- When the results are given to you need to try and let some things go and accept the output.
- The approach may no be the way you would have done it but it may still be acceptable.
- Ensure you set clear expectations and create clear communication opportunities to ensure the empowerment doesn't veer too far off track from what your expectations are.

Lessons Learned from being empowered by your own boss:

- Do you feel empowered by your direct boss? Share some tips on how this situation allows you to feel this way.
- Example where you have your own goals and are self empowered

- Gain clear and ongoing communications with your boss to ensure they are informed of your action. Providing evidence to your decision making allow for your boss to build confidence in your ability to make decisions and be empowered.
- Continued expansion of responsibilities where your judgment and decisions are understood and communicated will also build confidence.
- Get clear expectations from your boss to know how far to take your empowerment opportunities.
- Put your empowerment in the context with your company's culture to ensure there is alignment.

Lessons Learned for situations where you try to empower employees and that resource doesn't want to be empowered. They don't want to take on the leadership role.

- Ask the question, is this the right person in the right role?
- Have a direct conversation with the resource of your expectations for the role they are filling for your project.
- Discuss your expectations with the employee's direct manager to ensure this is understood and that your project's resource needs are clear.
- Follow up where needed on any action items set up for providing progress touch points.

Overall strategies:

- Set Boundaries for decisions
- Try not to overturn decisions
- Build trust with the resources to ensure you will back them up on decisions made.
- Feel confident with the employee making the decisions.
- Ensure that the responsibilities match the job, that the person is doing the job in the job description. If you dole out more responsibility than their positions should require and cause employees to feel overworked or underpaid for the work expected, you need to make adjustments. People want empowerment, but they don't want you to take advantage of them, nor do they want to feel as if the organization is taking advantage of them.

Quote

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

Mentoring new PMPs

Hold a Project Management class

- Good for large group
- Good to level set entire team – shared experiences

Give new PMs smaller project to ‘train’ on

- Provide an experienced PM as a methodology coach

May need to emphasize soft skills as opposed to technical skills

- Technical skills can be learned from a book
- Assume the science is known, so focus on the ‘art’ of PM

Formalize the process of mentoring

- Guidelines, start/finish dates
- End date vs. end state (goals)
- Create a contract

Focus on the fundamentals

- Solid foundation leads to success

Risk Management

What is risk management as it applies to project management?

- Planning for potential events, positive or negative, that could impact a project

Why is it done?

- To increase probability of project success, increase awareness, facilitates efficient and effective project execution so surprises are anticipated and planned for

How is it done?

- Project team identifies threats or opportunities, classifies them, ranks them in terms of probability of occurring and impact, develops prevention/mitigation action plans for risks and promoting/capitalizing action plans for opportunities, and determines triggers that will set actions plans in motion. The development of these action plans should be listed as tasks in the Project Schedule.

Common Issues?

- Risk assessment is not done because historically team has been able to react well to unknown threats/opportunities in the past [why waste the time].
- Risk assessments done at the start of a project are not re-visited throughout the project to make revisions as warranted by new information.
- Stakeholders often do not realize the value of risk assessment and need to be informed of its value.

Working with difficult people / Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution

Certain conditions can make a bad situation worse, including...

- Dealing with conflict when all interaction is virtual (who is multi-tasking, who is engaged, is there really a “tone” there?)
- A common corporate goal exists, but the department goals that roll up to it actually conflict, or there is no visibility regarding how depts contribute to the corporate goal.
- Management teams are too busy to respond to issues escalated to them.

In situations like this, persistence is critical – gradually developing allies, perhaps making inroads through continual sharing. Meanwhile, having co-workers to rely on when needed for venting or brainstorming helps maintain the drive for results. So does focusing on the ultimate goal – even if you can’t get the whole team to do that – and keeping one’s one perspective helps.

Conflicts with clients can offer unique challenges. If you’re hired by the client company’s senior management to improve front-line processes, it’s not unusual for front line management to balk. Best case, you can make the case to the front line that you’re there to help, to improve their day to day work lives, with positive support from senior management. Worst case, you put away the carrot and get out the stick – negative pressure from senior management. Do that only if deliverables are at risk.

Another “client conflict” situation exists when we enter a silo’ed environment & have to do team building among departments before we can begin solutioning. Recognizing the situation and addressing this first prevents conflict down the road. Such conflict often arises out of a lack of understanding of how one group uses the work product of another. Shadowing, cross-training and the like can be helpful.

Always remember to take 10 steps back from a conflict so you can recognize what’s going on and take the appropriate action – remove personalities and emotion from the equation, and you’ll often see the path forward more clearly.

Resolving scheduling conflicts is another common problem. If resources are assigned to projects on top of full time jobs with no relief from their normal tasks, getting buy-in and commitment to achieving delivery dates is difficult. “Trading” several part time people for one full-time person, and having the others cover the dedicated person’s regular job may be an option. And considering project responsibilities as part of performance criteria is always helpful – as long as expectations and scheduling are realistic.

Conflicts between sponsors are dangerous, and can result in course changes late in the project. If not resolvable, at least document that they exist and may cause harm.

Program office may experience conflicts with projects they have only weak matrix authority over. Involve project team members in decisions up front (ex: status report format), and be prepared to be creative if initial attempts don’t work out.

Finally, build team relationships early and reinforce often – you may avoid a lot of conflict if a foundation of trust and mutual understanding is in place.

Difficult people or behaviors

Those who escalate prematurely, without consulting with the person they have issues with. Might be a matter of ignorance, might be impatience or might be a power play. Remedies require knowledge of root cause.

Those who shut down or withdraw when challenged. It's time-consuming to get them re-engaged, and the behavior amounts to another sort of power play.

Those who just fail to respond. After setting a good example, exerting peer pressure where possible, consider accelerating the nag & whine – “decide how much of me you want to be seeing...”

Conference call bullies – those who badger others, talk over the conversation and obstruct the flow of virtual meetings. Particularly challenging when they're in positions of authority.

Those who say “it's not my job.” Watch that we don't set precedents by taking over work inappropriately – while it can be done in the spirit of team work, in the long run it can become exploitative and can be an inappropriate use of skills.

Those who behave as if we're still in grade school (forming cliques, gossiping, back-stabbing). Quashing these conversations in team settings, ensuring that we don't participate in or reward such behavior with attention, and, at the extreme, physically separating these folks can help prevent morale issues in the team.

Those who hoard information, who see knowledge as more powerful when not disseminated. Getting those folks to see their role differently, to see information sharing as success, can be useful. Have them mentor those who need their info – let them become the “go to” person in their subject area. And set a good example by showing that you value information sharing.

Invaluable technical resources who take advantage of their position to follow their own priorities, disregard team needs, fail to document their work, etc. One participant shared an experience in which the ultimate resolution was termination of the person in question after all else failed.

PDU Categories (in-depth breakdown of what and qualifications for each)

New PDU Category Structure and Policies:

http://www.pmi.org/GLOBALS/~media/Files/PDF/Certification/PDU%20CategStructure_Final.ashx

CCR PDU Category Update FAQs:

<http://www.pmi.org/GLOBALS/~media/Files/PDF/Certification/PMI-000%20CCRS%20Customer%20CareFAQ.ashx>