Project Management Series: Part 3 – Managing the Project

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to The Project Management Series, Part Three, Managing the Project. I'm Richard Skibski, a consultant with Greenbrier & Russel, Inc.

The first course in this series, "Defining and Planning the Project," discussed the determination of the project scope and life cycle approach. The second course, "Scheduling and Managing Resources," covered the building of the project team and the project plan.

In this course, we'll focus on the intangibles: the people skills needed to manage the project. Along the way, we'll cover tips for running the project - based on past experience.

SYLLABUS

This course will cover six areas.

The first area is gathering requirements. We'll discuss the methods of gathering requirements - all of which occur in the analysis phase of a project.

In contrast, the remainder of the topics will be relevant to all phases of the project.

The second area will be working with users; we'll cover general tips to apply to keep them happy.

Next, we'll address the project management tools that can help you manage the project.

After that, we'll discuss working with Information Technology (IT) management: giving them what they need to feel the project design track, as well as what they can do for you to keep the project on track.

Then we'll move on to working with the project team. Included here will be tips for helping them to maximize their potential.

Finally, we'll examine ways to facilitate successful communication within the team.

GATHERING REQUIREMENTS

This section covers gathering requirements. I cannot stress enough the importance of gathering requirements. The earlier the error in a project, the bigger the cost. You must do a thorough job of gathering requirements.

Announcer: One of the most widely read authors and best known speakers in the world of information systems, James Martin has written more than 100 books on computer technology in business.

He was named by Computer World magazine as one of the 25 most influential people shaping today's information environment.

James Martin: I think one of the things that most often goes wrong is that we don't really understand what the end users want.

We don't really understand what's most important to a business. It's extremely important, right at the beginning, to have a very thorough dialog with the business people - the top-level business people, as well as the end users who will have to live with the system.

This dialog is best done with prototypes of build-GUI interfaces. Have workshops - some really good JRP, Joint Requirements Planning workshops, then really good JAD workshops - then really good follow through.

That's so the business people know what is being built, and the whole life cycle design, as it converges to the moment of cut over. So, at cut over there are no surprises on the part of the business people, and they know what they're going to get, and they know that it's going to be what they need.

Methods of Gathering Requirements

Richard Skibski: The first thing we'll do is go through the methods of gathering requirements.

Then we'll examine ways of dealing with unrealistic requirements given time and cost constraints.

The four major methods of gathering requirements are: interviewing, joint application design or JAD, joint requirements planning or JRP, and prototyping.

Interviewing

First, we'll review the critical success factors for interviewing.

When setting meetings with users, plan for the meeting to be about an hour. If you find that there is more time needed at the end of the meeting, schedule another meeting. This will prevent run-on meetings, and keep all the participants focused.

You want to come prepared with questions - and listen. The majority of your time as a project manager should be spent listening and taking notes at interviews.

At the end, you'll want to repeat back all the critical points from the meeting.

One user I worked with would refine her points each time I repeated them back. For some reason, hearing her own points from me, triggered her to consider them more carefully. I came away with solid requirements that I would not have gotten otherwise. Another user I worked with made so many points in interviews that I needed to repeat them back to try to find the most important ones.

In both cases, the repetition of the points at the end of the meeting made the meeting more productive. Most people intuitively repeat back directions when they don't know how to get somewhere. This process helps them to be sure that they haven't missed a turn or something. In interviewing, the same concept applies. You don't want to set the wheels in motion when you have potentially misunderstood what the user has said.

Another critical success factor to interviewing is to write a follow-up summary memo immediately after each interview.

This memo should include any issues that were raised at the meeting along with the action plans for those issues and who is responsible for them. The memo should also list any issues that were resolved at the meeting.

Now you want to write this immediately, so as not to forget. Especially if you have more interviews coming up, you don't want any confusion over who made what point.

JAD: Joint Application Design

After interviewing, the next most popular method of gathering requirements is through Joint Application Design, JAD.

JAD sessions consist of one or more half-day to full-day meetings. These meetings can stretch out over weeks, or months, and they involve representatives from each area affected by the project.

JAD sessions are run by a trained, impartial facilitator, who is key to the success of the JAD.

Typically, this person is from outside of the organization - or from an area within the organization that's not affected by the project. In other words, it's someone who is impartial.

The sessions follow a set structure and formal procedures, some of which are designed to minimize distractions. For example, in most cases, pagers need to be checked at the door.

JAD sessions will result in detailed requirements for the project. They help build consensus, because all the key players are there. Complex issues can be resolved quickly.

However, on the negative side, they are difficult to run and expensive. They're difficult in that you have to sync up the schedules of all the participants, and they're expensive given the time and the number of people involved.

JRP: Joint Requirements Planning

Joint Requirements Planning, or JRP sessions, are similar to JAD except that they last only one day or less. They involve fewer but higher level participants, and they result in basic requirements only.

Aside from the main objective of establishing requirements, they're also done to secure commitment from the top decision-makers in the organization.

JRP sessions are usually followed by interviewing, JAD sessions or prototyping - to help flesh out the requirements.

Prototyping

The last way of gathering requirements that we will discuss is prototyping. Prototyping involves creating a simplistic version of the user interface. It gives the users an opportunity to see what the system will look and act like before it's built, and it's often used with GUI applications.

James Martin: Today I don't think you should build any application without prototyping. Prototyping should happen right at the beginning, and it's main purpose is to find out: Do you really understand what the business people need?

Right at the beginning build a GUI-build, a set of GUIs, get them in a notebook computer, give them to business people, examine them in a workshop, and ask the question: "Have we really understood the needs?"

When you do that, two things are almost always going to happen. One is that the business people are going to say, "No, you haven't understood it. There are all sorts of subtleties here. Now change this, change this, change this." Second, they're going to say, "Hey, this is great. We didn't know this was possible. If you can do this, why don't you do this? Why don't you do this? Why don't you do this?" And so on.

Then you've got another problem, and that is refining the set of requests to a valuable set which can be implemented within the time frame in question.
Richard Skibski: There are different varieties of prototype, which are equally valid.

Prototyping can be manual or tool-based. It can be evolutionary - meaning it will ultimately become the final product - or throwaway.

Then there is the functional prototype, or the one that shows only the user interface.

Regardless of the variety, prototyping will clarify the project's objectives and requirements, and is used in conjunction with other techniques.

Dealing with Unrealistic Requirements

Now that we've gathered requirements, what if they don't make sense? The first step in dealing with unrealistic requirements is to try to get them changed. Discuss your reservations with IT management. Suggest more realistic requirements. If they agree with you, then you'll need to obtain user buy-in.

However, if your efforts have failed to change the requirements, you'll want to summarize your position in a memo to IT management. Possibly, given the time to reflect on your thoughts, they may champion your ideas - or not. If they don't, you'll need to recognize that you're in a no-win situation. Protect yourself, but stay professional throughout the project.

WORKING WITH USERS

Now that we've established the requirements, we're going to talk about running the project to make sure that everything goes smoothly.

The first order of business is to achieve a good working relationship with the users. Ideally, this is started during the requirements gathering.

The main concerns you face in working with users are: managing their expectations, avoiding scope creep, and getting and keeping their commitment.

Managing User Expectations

Successfully managing users' expectations is critical to helping maintain their support for the project.

It also helps to avoid surprises. Surprises are a project manager's worst nightmare, because of the loss of trust and confidence.

For example, suppose you've told users that a piece of the system would be implemented on Monday, and then Monday comes and the system isn't there. If you haven't told them it won't be there, they're not just going to be surprised, they're going to be angry.

To manage user expectations, and avoid those kind of surprises, you simply need to keep them up-to-date as to the project's status, and let them know what's coming up next.

You want to be conservative, though, when estimating when something will be done.

Above all, tell them the truth. If something is delayed, it's better that they know the real story now, rather than be surprised later.

Avoiding Scope Creep

One thing to watch out for when dealing with users is scope creep. Scope creep is defined as the adding of new requirements once the scope has been set. This is a natural result of enthusiasm and commitment to the project.

Scope creep can originate in the information technology department, as well as from users. This will wreak havoc on your project plan.

To that end, be especially aware of scope creep if users value increased functionality more than they do the delivery date.

How do you avoid scope creep? Well, the best way is to do a thorough job of analysis. Gather the requirements from all the appropriate, affected people, reach a consensus as to what is included and excluded, document the scope, and obtain sign-offs from everyone involved.

Another technique you can use to avoid scope creep is to require and publish a formal scope change procedure. The key to this procedure is having IT management and the project sponsor approve any changes to scope.

"Attempted" Scope Creep and Approved Changes

Even if you have a procedure, it's of no use to you if you can't identify "attempted" scope creep.

What you need is a clear understanding of the purpose, goals and scope of your project. Reread them every Monday morning, if necessary - whatever it takes for you to keep them fresh in your mind.

Doing this will allow you to ask the question, "Does this request or idea fit within this project?" - when you hear something from a user, or from someone else in the team. If it does not, be sure to acknowledge the importance of the request. Indicate subtly, if possible, that the request is out of the scope of this project, and recommend it as a future enhancement.

If the requestor persists, however, you'll want to make sure that the effects of scope increases are understood by them.

Number one: The project will need to be rescheduled.

Number two: Additional resources - read cost and/or time - will be required. Rework may also be required.

If this is all understood, then you'll just have to follow the steps in your scope change procedure.

Move Scope Changes into a Subsequent Edition

James Martin: Scope creep. You're always going to get intelligent people wanting to improve the scope of the system.

Therefore, you've got to have tight project management. When the end users come along and say, "Why don't you do this?", tight project management is going to say, "No, because we couldn't implement it on time."

For many systems it makes sense to design the system so that you have more than one edition of it - as you would have more than one edition of a textbook. Your first edition does the basic things that are very valuable for the business. But you know that three months or six months later, you're going to have a second edition where the scope creep - in other words, the change in scope the business people are asking for - is going to be implemented.

Designing so that it's a step-by-step ramp to higher scope is sensible for many types of projects.

Maintaining User Commitment

Richard Skibski: Now, one good sign from attempted scope creep by users is that it usually indicates that they are committed to the project.

In order to maintain their commitment - or get it if you don't have it already - the best thing you can do is show your commitment. Why should they care about the project if you don't? Why would they answer your calls, if you don't seem to care about their needs?

Another key is to speak their language - that is the business language, not a technical language. This keeps the focus of the project on their needs.

You'll also want to include them in every phase of the project, and require them to sign-off on all deliverables. Not only does this keep everyone on the same page, it keeps the users accountable - along with the project manager, who is always accountable.

Another way to keep user commitment is to make concessions. This is the "give-and-take" discussed in the first course. You give a little now, and maybe you'll need to take a little later, at the end of the project.

Foremost in your mind, whenever talking with a user, is that you need to build a good working relationship. It's easier and much more pleasant to work with a friend then a business associate.

Finally, present all bad news in person.

For example, let's say the project is going to be delayed by two weeks. Saying this to the users' faces diminishes the resentment they would undoubtedly feel from an impersonal e-mail or memo.

It shows your concern for their needs, and it enhances your credibility. You're a straight shooter.

And to balance things out, present all good news in person, too. You don't want the users to run away whenever they see you.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Before we talk about the other groups of people involved, IT management and the project team, let's talk briefly about project management tools.

There are two major categories of project management tools: methodology tools and project scheduling and tracking tools.

In this section of the course, we'll focus on the functions of these tools, some examples of them, some tips for using the project scheduling and tracking tools, and some sample reports from the project scheduling and tracking tools.

Methodology Tools

The main function of methodology tools is to organize your entire project. They typically come with template work breakdown structures. They help you establish the schedule for the project. They recommend deliverables, and usually include sample deliverables, and have a built-in estimating capability. Examples of methodologies include LBMS Process Engineer and James Martin Architect.

James Martin: With all of the powerful tools for automating the software development process, there are many different types of tools. We have so much experience now which says that these tools don't work unless there's a methodology that tells people what to do, and you train people in the methodology.

Now, the methodologies that have worked best are those that are tightly coupled in project management tools. The project management tool may draw PERT charts, where the tasks of the methodology are in the PERT chart.

Clear methodology, and tight coupling of the methodology of the project management tools, I think, is mandatory for success in the implementation of software.

Project Scheduling and Tracking Tools

Richard Skibski: Working in conjunction with methodology tools are project scheduling and tracking tools. They are designed to enter tasks, resources and dependencies into the work plan. They help you track time against tasks. They help you monitor costs in the project and generate reports for project control. Examples of project scheduling and tracking tools are Microsoft Project, ABT Project Workbench and Primavera Project Planner.

Here are some tips for effectively using project scheduling and tracking tools. You'll want to enter hours against the project plan weekly. If you enter them more often, that's micro-managing the project - less often and you could lose control of the project.

Ensure that the team understands their tasks on the Gantt chart that you can produce from the plan - and what their estimated dates are for each task.

Adding to that, you'll want to make updated Gantt charts available for the team every week as you update the plan. You'll want to tie your status discussions with them to the Gantt charts.

The tools also can generate exception reports that will help you control the product. These reports will show tasks that are ahead of or behind schedule, that are under or over budget, and this keeps you up-to-date as to your resource and cost utilization.

A final tip with regard to using project scheduling and tracking tools is to generate critical path monitoring reports. These reports will identify tasks and people that are on the critical path, and will help you verify the overall project time line.

James Martin: When we have a complex project, there are certain things on the critical path. Those are things most likely to cause the end date to slip. The reason why it makes sense to have the project management tools that create a PERT chart is that they identify for you the critical path, and you can focus management attention onto that critical path to try to avoid slippage with those particular tasks.

Project Management: Sample Reports

Richard Skibski: Now let's talk about some sample reports generated from Microsoft Project that can be beneficial to a project manager.

One of those reports is the Weekly To-Do List. This report shows the task ID, task name, duration of the task, the start and finish dates, the predecessor task IDs and the resource names assigned to each task.

This gives you an overall road map for the project on a week-by-week basis.

Another report from Microsoft Project Tool that is helpful is the Should-Have-Started Tasks Report.

This report shows you the task ID, task name, the start and finish dates, and any successor tasks that are affected by tasks that should have been started according to the original plan. So, this report will show you what's behind - and what that affects.

Another report that will help you is the Resource Usage Report. This will give you resource names, task names and the times that are scheduled each week on those tasks. This highlights places where slack time may exist, and can help you reassign tasks if that becomes necessary.

The Task List Report contains task ID, task name, duration of the task, start and finish dates, the predecessors and the resources assigned to the tasks. It is a good record of just what all is in your project. It helps you make sure that your work plan is complete by listing everything sequentially through the end of the project.

Other reports that you may be interested - that IT management may also be interested in - include the Project Summary Report. This includes the overall project dates, duration, time worked, costs, and the status of the project. This is a nice one-page summary that basically shows you where your project is at.

Another report that's good is the Top-Level Tasks Report. This gives you the task ID, task name, start and finish dates, percentage completed and the cost of these tasks. This gives you an idea of how the project is going by phase - since phases are typically your top-level tasks.

The Budget Report shows you the task ID, task name and all the costs that are associated with it. This is a good report to use to compare actuals to budget.

The final report we'll discuss is a Critical Tasks Report. This shows you the task ID, the task name, the start and finish dates and any successor tasks on the critical path. It highlights your critical path. You want this report to be short, because the fewer the tasks on the critical path, the better it is for the project - and the easier it is for you to manage.

WORKING WITH IT MANAGEMENT

Aside from the project manager, the next biggest user of control reports generated from project scheduling and tracking tools is IT management.

So, turning our focus to IT management, we will discuss cost and scheduling control - where those control reports play a big part - rescheduling the project, and some political survival tips.

Cost Control

The first concern of IT management is cost control. This involves monitoring the cost performance of the project to detect any variances from the work plan. In essence, we're comparing the actuals to the budget.

What we're attempting to do is prevent inappropriate expenditures, such as the unplanned purchase of additional software.

IT management is very concerned with adherence to budget, thus, you as the project manager should be too.

Scheduling Control

Another major concern of IT management is scheduling control. Now you can supply them with exception reports and critical path reports from the project scheduling and tracking tool. But while you're interested in the detail, they'll usually want it at the summary level.

Given their concerns, you should also give them a verbal status nearly daily to keep them up-to-date as to what's going on in the schedule of the project. This keeps them in the loop.

This might be, for example, ''We're on target.'' Or ,''This area is two days behind.''

James Martin: Every project manager must have a Gantt chart - or possibly better than that, a PERT chart - which shows the tasks that are going to be done and the relationships among those tasks.

Some of the tasks are going to slip, and when they slip, it's fairly important to learn that quickly, to be able to take action. The project manager must be able to communicate that to his manager, so that you're not getting a whole cumulative buildup of things going wrong - which, again, would be devastating later on.

Rescheduling a Project

Richard Skibski: Should a project begin falling way behind, rescheduling it may be necessary. Now, this tends to happen pretty often, and it involves changing the project's tasks, dependencies and target dates.

Rescheduling occurs when a dramatic event has happened. There's been an approved increase in scope. There's been turnover of a team member or team members, or the target dates are being missed by a wide margin.

This could have been due to underestimated tasks earlier on in the project, or a variety of other reasons. Whatever the reason, discuss the alternatives to rescheduling the project with IT management.

You could reassign the tasks to other resources, or possibly reduce the scope in other areas.

If you can agree with IT management on one of these options, you'll need to make sure you get user buy-in.

When it becomes apparent that rescheduling is imminent, and you cannot reassign any resources, you should take this opportunity to review the estimates for the remainder of the project.

With the additional knowledge that you've gained since the estimates were originally made, you may discover that some are high and some are low, and this is the best time to change them.

Finally, with regard to rescheduling, you're going to want to limit IT-initiated rescheduling to one change per project. It's unlikely that users' patience will extend any further than that.

In one project I worked on, we were allowed to reschedule after several key team members had left the company. However, the users made it clear that they would not approve another rescheduling for any reason.

In another project I worked on, the team rescheduled the project so many times because of missed deadlines that the users lost all confidence in the team. This made it harder for them to work with us, because they didn't want to be associated with the project.

Managing Management: Political Survival

Now IT management's patience will wear thin if you do not follow these two political survival tips.

Number one: Allow management to remove obstacles to your project. This is their job. You want to escalate any unresolvable issues up to them. For example, you may be faced with a difficult user who won't sign off. You've tried a number of tactics but all to no avail.

What you need to do is get IT management involved, pronto. They can escalate it with the user's manager and possibly get a quicker resolution.

Survival tip number two: Choose the appropriate time and place to disagree with management.

Usually this is going to mean a one-on-one meeting with them. Regardless of the outcome of the meeting, you always publicly back management's decision. Public political infighting will always hurt the overall morale of the project.

WORKING WITH THE PROJECT TEAM

Just as with IT management, you want to avoid public disagreements with the project team. This brings us to our discussion of working with the project team.

There are two areas within this section that we'll cover: quality control and managing the team.

Quality Control

With quality control, what we're trying to do is monitor the results of the team to determine if they comply with our stated quality plan. We can use testing tools to verify this if we need to.

We want to make sure that we create a Q/A work plan. This will ensure that the team gets not only peer-to-peer walk-throughs - which are generally for technique - but now will have Q/A walk-throughs for adherence to standards.

As a project manager, you need to promote a quality environment with your team. Remember that the quickest path is not always the best. Allow for mistakes by your team. Don't punish or blame any team member for a simple mistake. You simply want to work towards a solution.

Now, you'll also want to review all documentation leaving the IT department for content and format. This will make sure that users are not getting mixed signals, or to put it another way, surprises. And no team member wants to send something inaccurate to users, anyway.

Managing the Project Team

As for actually managing the team: there are many books and papers written on managing teams, but the following eight tips are from my personal experience. They help you either build relationships or avoid problems. Most of them are common sense.

The first is to give the team the respect and credit they deserve. Publicly credit the good work of a team member. This does worlds of good for morale.

Whenever there is something going wrong with the project, just say publicly that we, not they, made a mistake - because finger pointing never served any useful purpose in project management.

The second is to begin the reviews of an individual's work with a positive comment. This promotes cooperation. Negative comments, also known as "constructive criticism," will follow, but the first comment is key to the team member's morale.

A project manager I worked with started the design review with a team member on a negative note. This put the team member on the defensive and prevented the meeting from being productive. When the project manager mentioned this to me, I suggested beginning future meetings on a positive note. He then asked, "Well, what do you do if there was nothing positive to say?" And I said, "Well, it doesn't matter. You can always find something positive to say." The project manager took the advice and benefited from it in subsequent review meetings.

The third tip in managing your project team is to clarify each team member's role as early as possible.

Role uncertainty is a major stress factor for people. "Ambiguous" ranks right up there with "surprise" as words a project manager hates to have associated with his or her project team.

The fourth tip is to adjust to the individual styles of your team members. Determine what is important to them and distribute your assignments accordingly. You may need to reassign work.

For example, I managed a project with a team member who didn't seem to care about the aesthetics of any of the screens he was developing. His only concern was that they technically work.

Well, regardless of how I or IT management approached him - I had escalated the issue to IT management - he was not going to change his ways. So, I reassigned the cosmetic aspects of the screens to another team member. The team stayed productive and the system's quality was not sacrificed.

More Tips for Managing the Team

Another tip is communication, and communication is really the key to working as a team. You must make sure that the team is aware of the project's goals, and is working towards them. Good communication can be difficult if you have uncooperative team members. The worst thing you can do in that situation is ignore them. That will only make them less cooperative, and will hinder your project.

A good project manager is a realistic optimist. By that I mean he or she is a realist who says, "I see the problem," whereas, an idealist would say, "What problem?" They're also optimists, who think, "We'll fix it and move on," whereas a

pessimist would say, "We're doomed." So, don't deny reality, but don't let it squelch your enthusiasm either.

The seventh tip is to understand the people consequences of rework. Rework can be a real morale killer.

I managed a project that was the first GUI application for an organization. As such, we were the first to develop our system with the look and feel of GUI standards. Part of the way into development, the standards committee changed some of those standards.

Now passing along these changes to the team was not a lot of fun. They didn't appreciate the rework. It cost them time and it had a negative effect on their attitudes. The rework was necessary but it had people costs associated with it.

The final tip for managing a team is to give feedback appropriately. You should use the following steps: One, describe the behavior. Two, state the impact of the behavior. And, three, make suggestions or requests.

Example: "When you don't read your e-mail, you hold up the project. Could you check it daily?"

The behavior in this situation is: not checking the e-mail. The impact is that it holds up the project. The suggestion is that you check it daily. This is a good, non-threatening way to criticize.

In summary, when you're managing your project team, you want to make sure that you're respectful of them, that you're patient with them, that you give them the credit they deserve, and that you're not hard on them when they make a mistake.

All of this will help the project go much more smoothly.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

In the previous section, we talked about feedback, and good feedback is one key to successful communication.

In this final section of the course, we'll see how successful communication, as a whole, can be accomplished through two techniques: Management by Walking Around and regularly scheduled meetings.

We'll also discuss the advantages of using both.

"Management by Walking Around"

Management by Walking Around involves spending a majority of your day simply walking around talking to users, IT management and team members, and getting

caught up on any issues that are coming up - current status. I've used this technique with success on several projects.

The main rule of Management by Walking Around is that you're not saving issues or milestones achieved for the regularly scheduled meetings. You're getting them immediately when they need attention. You have impromptu meetings to resolve anything that's important.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

As for the regularly scheduled meetings, also known as the weekly status meeting, you should try to keep them brief, one hour or less.

A lot of people don't want to spend a lot of time in status meetings, but you do have to include a lot of people. You need to include the project team, IT management and users.

Match Technique to Communication Goal

To use both techniques to your advantage, you need to know which types of communication belong with each.

With Management by Walking Around, you can resolve time-critical issues simply because you're getting the issues right when they're happening.

You can report performance to users or management, either through the reports that you've generated from the project scheduling and tracking tools, or just verbally. You can boost morale by motivating the team through your own enthusiasm for the project.

You can also direct the effort of the team, and obtain approvals from users and management to go forward with the next phase in the project. And, you can gather information to help control the project or improve the final product.

In regularly scheduled meetings, on the other hand, you simply want to resolve project-wide issues that you need the whole team present for. You'll do some performance reporting, too, but mostly at a high level. Most of the people in the meeting should be aware of the status of the project, because you've employed Management by Walking Around. They already know; they talked to you.

Finally, at the meeting, you'll want to boost morale by allowing the team to goof around a little bit, and probably announcing the team's successes.

COURSE SUMMARY

In this course, we have examined the intangibles that will help you manage a project.

We have explored the four major methods of gathering requirements: joint application design (JAD), joint requirements planning (JRP), prototyping and interviewing, and we've showed a step-by-step approach to dealing with unrealistic requirements.

That first step is that you try to get them changed. If that fails, then your next step is to write a memo summarizing your position. Finally, recognize when you're in a no-win situation, and do the best with it.

We went into areas relevant to the entire project. We discussed working with users and managing their expectations. We made it clear that users need to be kept up-to-date as to the status of the project. They need to know what's coming up next, and they should never be surprised by anything they hear.

Then we talked about project management tools and how they can help you manage the project.

While methodology tools will help you organize the entire project, you'll often use project scheduling and tracking tools to help you do just that: schedule and track the entire project.

From there we moved into working with IT management. We discussed their interest in controlling the cost and schedule of the project.

We also looked at rescheduling the project, and important tips for your political survival, namely: escalate any unresolvable issues up to management, immediately. If you disagree with them, disagree with them privately, but back IT management publicly.

Next, we moved on to managing the project team. We looked at quality control and effectively managing the interpersonal aspects of dealing with the team.

Of the eight tips that were presented, the key one involves communication. Communication is critical.

The team must understand the goals of the project and be working towards them.

In the last section of this course, we reviewed two techniques for effective communication: Management by Walking Around and regularly scheduled meetings. A majority of your day as a project manager should be spent walking around resolving issues and building relationships.

SERIES SUMMARY

To summarize all three courses in the Project Management Series, we can say that there are three critical success factors to a project.

The first is to make sure that the goals are clearly defined, achievable and in sync with the organization's goals. The second critical success factor to a project is to build a workable, reasonable work plan. And the last is to respect the people. After all, they are your most important resource.

In this series, we have discussed project management in detail, and revealed it to be critical to the success of a project. As a project manager, I find the challenge exciting.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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