

Successful Project Managers Roadmap

41 Brilliant How To Guarantee Your Project Success

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Successful Project Managers Roadmap

To my wife and my son

To my father and my mother

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Project Initiation

The Project Initiation Phase is the 1st phase in the Project Management Life Cycle, as it involves starting up a new project. You can start a new project by defining its objectives, scope, purpose and deliverables to be produced. You'll also hire your project team, setup the Project Office and review the project, to gain approval to begin the next phase.

Only with a clearly defined scope and a suitably skilled team, can you ensure success.

1- How to start your project properly

It is very important to initiate your project properly so you can continue smoothly and finish strongly, there are some actions which will protect you and help you to resolve your issues throughout the project:-

- 1- **Get the business knowledge:** it is your project, it is your baby who you have to know everything about its business and related worldwide field. Go and do your researches, studies and collect all information available there because it will help you during the project activities and managing change requests. Finally try to be the expert of the project business field if you can.
- 2- **Set the vision:** do not look at the project as it is only a product but set a vision which will surely motivate you and share that vision among your team and stakeholders.
- 3- **Create and Communicate Project Charter:** at this stage, project charter is the only available document which defines very high level project scope along with the budget and constraints like time and quality. Make sure that you share this project charter with your team so they can think with you from day one and alert for any issues or risks you might did not notice.
- 4- **Get Formal Sign off:** It is very critical step to have all documents signed off, because when things go wrong that is the only proof which will protect you.
- 5- **Create a Project Notebook:** Project notebook will contain all signed documents and change requests which will make it easy for anyone at any time to know everything about the project and stages it went through.

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- 6- Build Relationships:** without relationships with your stakeholder it will be very difficult to drive the project smoothly, because you will face a lot of situations which only good relationships will resolve it. So go and build your relationships with your client and stakeholders but make sure you can balance between professionalism and flattered.

Notes(Place Your Notes Here)

2- How to use / evaluate SWOT analysis for understanding the project better

What is SWOT analysis? (Alternatively SWOT Matrix) is a structured planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. A SWOT analysis can be carried out for a product, place, industry or person. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving that objective.

Strengths: characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others.

Weaknesses: are characteristics that place the team at a disadvantage relative to others.

Opportunities: elements that the project could exploit to its advantage.

Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project

Identification of SWOTs is important because they can inform later steps in planning to achieve the objective.

How to use SWOT Analysis?

- 1- Create a four box matrix, with one box representing one of each of the categories of the SWOT analysis--strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- 2- Hold a brainstorming meeting with other strategic planners and spend 10 to 15 minutes coming up with ideas to put in each category.

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- 3- Observe the results of the brainstorming and write two or three things that represent the most important ideas from each category. For example, a good brand name, strong customer relationships, intellectual property rights, and supply chain access are great strengths. If the company is lacking in any of these areas, they could be large weaknesses. Opportunities often include things like new customer niches that can be tapped into, new products and technology, or new beneficial legislation. Threats could be unfavorable technology, such as a close substitute to your product or service, unfavorable regulations or bad publicity.
- 4- Next brainstorm ways to best take advantage or improve each of these important areas. For each strengths, think "How can we make this strength even stronger?" For weaknesses, try to come up with ways to reduce shortcomings, or turn weaknesses into strengths. For opportunities, think of ways that opportunities can be harnessed and turned into strength. Finally, think of ways to eliminate threats, or turn them into opportunities. It is best to tap into people from many different departments, such as legal, finance, human resources and marketing so that the broadest range of considerations is made when brainstorming. Experts from each area will also know how to best implement plans to take advantage of the SWOT results.
- 5- Use the results of the SWOT session to guide strategic decisions in the business. Over time SWOT results will change as the business environment changes, so it can be useful to hold new brainstorming sessions on a regular basis.

How to use SWOT Analysis results?

- 1- Form your planning team. The team should include key members of your operating staff and represent a diverse section of your company.
- 2- Consider conducting a smaller SWOT analysis on a specific aspect of the business to prime your team for the SWOT evaluation that is company-wide.
- 3- Set meeting times. Make sure you schedule plenty of time for the team to look over the SWOT analysis. Planning these meetings for the same time each week will help ensure everyone gets into the routine. Although you could also plan a weekend retreat, spreading the meetings out may help your staff generate new ideas and not get stuck in a rut.
- 4- Make sure everyone is on the same page. Your staff should have trust in each other that their ideas will be respected. Each member should also have the desire to make changes to the company.
- 5- Define goals for the evaluation at the first meeting. Once everyone has a chance to look over the SWOT analysis, definitive goals should be set. For example, "create three new procedures to ensure customer satisfaction" is a more tangible goal than "plan to increase customer satisfaction."
- 6- Look over the analysis. See if any line items can fit into multiple categories. For example, a threat of a competitor opening up shop across the street could be an opportunity to solidify your standing in the community by providing exemplary service.
- 7- Collect data. Although a strength of your business may be your ability to effectively sell to a minority group, that strength will become a weakness if statistics demonstrate a negative growth of the minority group in your community.

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- 8- Decide what you need to improve on. Make a list of all of these goals, and then create a SMART objective for each one.

Make SMART Objectives: Know that SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

- 9- Define specific objectives. You will need to have objectives with tangible results. One goal may have several objectives---for example, improving your customer service may include performing an annual survey, conducting monthly staff meetings on improving service and hiring more friendly candidates.
- 10- Decide what you will use to measure your objective. Without standards, there will be no way of demonstrating success or failure of each objective.
- 11- Brainstorm whether the objective is achievable and how it will be achieved. If your objective is to conduct monthly staff meetings on customer service, then it would be achievable if an appropriate trainer were identified and if time and wages could be allocated to the project.
- 12- Put some realism into it. Your team will need to really look at each objective to determine if it is realistic. Monthly staff meetings may not seem like a big deal in the meeting room, but coming up with a time that everyone can meet may be.
- 13- Come up with a timeline. Objectives should be time-bound with start and end dates.
- 14- Rewrite each objective to take into consideration all of the SMART components. For example, the goal of improving customer service will be transformed into the SMART objective of "Hire a consultant to conduct a staff-wide training on customer service on the first Sunday of each month from January to November of 2010."

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Notes(Place Your Notes Here)

3- How to setup your project initiation

Project initiation is a very important and articulated phase of the project because it will affect radically the rest of project phases and processes, therefore below are 5 steps to setup your project initiation correctly and safely:-

- 1- **Review project charter and statement of work:** make sure you have put all stakeholder and your team members on the same page from day one by sharing project charter and statement of work and start getting and recording ideas, risks, recommended approaches and even suggestions to how we should deliver the project? Either one phase or multiple phases to keep client on touch and avoid business requirements changes while we are still developing.
- 2- **Secure Budget:** no project with no risk, so go spend time identifying risks and build contingency plan and fallback plan if available and accordingly ask for 20-25% extra on the baseline budget if you can get it through higher management and you sponsor.
- 3- **Get dedicated highly interested sponsor:** go and get that person or authority, you need a dedicated interested person who will support you through the project because he needs the project to succeed just like you or even more, this person will help you while facing challenges, resolving issues and mitigating risks. Make sure that you are strengthening your relationship with that person every day and on.
- 4- **Setup a steering committee:** having steering committee will eliminate personal agenda from any stakeholders and increase the buy in from different project stakeholders.

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- 5- **Hold the kick-off meeting:** with that step you are putting everybody on the same page and announcing the start of the project will give the team members green light to start their activities and submitting their timesheets which is very important practice to have from day one in your project.

Notes(Place Your Notes Here)

4- How to create an effective project charter

One of the most critical document in the Project Life Cycle is the Project Charter. Without this, your project is same as a ship without a rudder. You have nothing to guide you in the precise direction.

The Project Charter identifies the project vision, targets, range, organization and execution plan. It helps you to fix the direction for the project and get buy in from your stakeholders as to how the project will be prepared and accomplished. It will also assist you to control the scope of your project, by determining precisely what it is that you have to attain. Below are the necessary elements for effective project charter:-

- 1- **Know the Project Vision:** The first measure taken when determining a Project Charter is to identify the project vision. The vision encapsulates the purpose of the project and is the fixed end goal for the project team.
 - Identify your objectives. Then supported on the vision, list three to 5 targets to be reached by the project. Every aim should be Proper, Great, Attainable, Real and Time-bound (SMART).
 - Determine the Scope. With a good prospect of the Vision and Targets of the project, it's time to determine the project scope. The scope specifies the prescribed edges of the project by identifying how the business will be changed or altered by the project delivery.

- 2- **Describe the Project System:** The succeeding step is to identify how the project will be structured by listing the clients, stakeholders, functions, responsibilities and reporting lines.
 - **Customers:** First, determine the project customers. A client is a person or individual that is obligated for receiving the deliverables when the project is accomplished.

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- **Stakeholders:** Then determine the project stakeholders. A stakeholder is a person or entity within or outside of the project with a specific key involvement or stake in the project. For example, a Financial Controller will be involved in the price of the project, and a CEO will be concerned in whether the project aids to attain the company vision.
 - **Roles:** Now list the main roles needed in delivering the project. Examples of roles specifies the Project Sponsor, Project Board and Project Manager. Then sum up each of the serious obligations of each role known.
 - **Structure:** Once you get a good survey of the functions essential to undertake the project, you can describe the reporting lines between those purposes within a Project Organization Chart.
- 3- **Arrange the Approach to Implementation:** You now have a solid definition of what the project requires to accomplish and how it will be arranged to accomplish it. The succeeding step is to distinguish the implementation approach as follows.
- **Implementation Plan:** To give the Client and Stakeholders with confidence that the project execution has been well thought through, create an Implementation Plan naming the phases, activities and timeframes required in undertaking the project.
 - **Milestones:** In addition, list several necessary milestones and describe why they are vital to the project. A milestone is typically an important project event, such as the achievement of a key deliverable.
 - **Dependencies:** Name some key dependencies and their criticality to the project. A dependency is defined as an action that is probably to impact on the project during its life cycle.
 - **Resource Plan:** Develop a plan which sums up the funds included in undertaking the project by listing the labor, equipment and materials involved. Then budget the financial resources needed.

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