



Critical Responsibilities of the Project Manager

Responsibility is an agreement between two or more people for the intention of achieving a desired result. An organization appoints a person as the project manager with responsibility to undertake the project; but even as the organization has transferred the responsibility for the project, the organization still retains full responsibility for the final result. The project manager must be sure that the assigned responsibility is clearly stated and the expected results are mutually understood and accepted by all stakeholders.

Accountability comes as a result of the assigned responsibility. When an organization assigns responsibility to a person to manage a project, the organization must hold that person accountable for achieving the desired result or provide consequences for poor performance, such as a negative employee performance rating, reassignment, probation, or termination. The accountability must be consistent with the responsibility assigned.

Projects vary in duration, scope, and complexity. On a large or complex project, the Project Manager may elect to appoint one or more Assistant Project Managers. The Project Manager may delegate single or multiple responsibilities, including budget responsibility to an Assistant Project Manager. The Project Manager may direct the Assistant Project Manager to control different processes of the project; this may include controlling budgets, and monitoring progress.

When a project manager is given the power to complete the assigned, she has the authority over the project. It includes the appropriate access to resources to complete the job, such as access to personnel or signature authority for the expenditure of funds. Authority must be commensurate with the responsibility assigned and appropriate to the accountability.

The project manager is the ultimate person accountable for the project she is the one whose job it is to make sure the project gets done, and would be the principal contact person for the donor, beneficiaries and the key stakeholders.

Successful organizations have written policies and procedures that define how responsibility, accountability, and authority work in the project management environment. It is important to define in writing the specific responsibilities and authority the project manager will have in terms of personnel, equipment, materials, and funds. The organization must determine and explicitly define the level of authority the project manager has to

hire and terminate team members, including the level of purchase authority over equipment and materials necessary to the project or the level of signature authority over other project expenditures.

The project manager is responsible for three areas of the project, responsibility to the donor to provide timely and accurate information; responsibility to the beneficiaries for delivering the project outcomes; and responsibility to the organization for managing the project and follow policies and uphold its values.

In general terms the project manager responsibilities in the project are: planning, organizing, directing and controlling the project. These responsibilities cannot be delegated as they are part of the project manager's main role as project integrator.

Planning

Planning responsibility involves defining what the project will accomplish, when it will be completed, how it will be implemented and monitored and who will do it. The project manager is responsible for creating the project plans and defining the goals, objectives, activities and resources needed. The project plans are the tactical blueprints under which the entire project will be implemented and will serve as a map to guide the project team, beneficiaries, donors and management.

The project manager is also responsible for updating the plans as new changes or modifications are approved, she is responsible for communicating all stakeholders on the changes and ensures that the changes are being incorporated in the activities and tasks of the project team.

Organizing

The responsibility of the project manager is to establish a structure that will maximize the efficiency (doing the things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things) of the project. The project manager, once the plans have been approved and distributed, has the responsibility to build and staff the project organization that will be capable to carry out the plans. Here the focus is on coordination, and control of activities and the flow of information within the project. In this responsibility the project manager distributes and delegates authority to project staff.

The project manager must have the ability to determine the type of project organization that will fit the needs, constraints and environment of the project. An important element of organization is to staff the project with qualified staff who can take the responsibility for specific elements of the project.

Directing

Once the plans are made and the organization has been determined and the project staffed, the responsibility of the project manager is to direct, lead and motivate the members of the project to perform in a unified, consistent and manner. The project team may have people with different skill sets and project experience; development projects bring together different expertise from social sciences to engineering, the team members may have not worked together in the past and they may come in and out of the project at different times. By directing, the project manager assumes the responsibility that the project team will follow her vision of the project and all instructions, mandates and work orders.

Controlling

Controlling is a responsibility to ensure the actions of the project team contribute toward the project goals; the project manager must establish standards for performance, measure performance and compare it with the established standards; detect variations from the standards and make the necessary corrections. This responsibility ensures that the project is on track.

These series of articles focuses on concepts and practices related to development projects. It is our hope that the ideas and methodologies presented here prove useful to anyone who is engaged in managing projects in the broader development community, and helps bring sustainable benefits to the communities and beneficiaries who need it the most.

The Millennium Development Goals aim by 2015 to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people.

PM4DEV is committed to provide resources and develop knowledge and expertise to support development organizations in their efforts to achieve this ambitious goal.



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www.pm4dev.com
info@pm4dev.com