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2. Managing Issues

Issue Management is the process used by the project to identify and resolve issues in the project that require immediate attention. Issues can occur on a regular basis affecting the ability to meet the goals of the project.

Once an issue is raised, the Project Manager should ensure that it is proactively pursued and dealt with to the satisfaction of all concerned parties. An Issue

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PM CONNECT

A quarterly newsletter that brings information on modern project management methods, practices and tools to the international development community

1. The Project Kickoff meeting

A good practice in project management is to hold a formal kickoff meeting to ensure all team members and key stakeholders have a good understanding of the purpose and objectives of the project.

The kick off meeting ensure that team members and stakeholders have the same levels of understanding about the purpose and status of the project. Just as a project should have a formal end-of-project meeting to signify that it is complete, it also makes sense to hold a formal kickoff meeting to start a project.

The purpose of the kickoff meeting is to formally notify all stakeholders that the project has begun and make sure everyone has a common understanding of the project and his or her role.

The kickoff meeting is a time to get all the team members, and stakeholders together and formally set the stage for the start of the project. Like all formal meetings, there should be an agenda.

A kick-off meeting has four basic functions:

1. Officially state the start of the project,
2. Outline the project goals as well as

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Free eCourse

We have a free ecourse that you can take online at any time. The course presents the fundamental concepts of project management that development organizations can use to increase the quality and reduce the risk of their projects. The link to the ecourse is <http://www.pm4dev.com/english/elearn/fpm/course> All you need is a web browser (internet explorer, or Firefox)

... *Project Kickoff, from page 1*

- the individual roles and responsibilities of team members; and stakeholders
- 3. Clarify the expectations of all parties
- 4. Build a commitment by all those who influence the project's outcome.

There are a number of specific things to cover at this meeting:

- Recap the information in the Project Charter, including:
 - The purpose of the project
 - Scope
 - Major deliverables
 - Risks
 - Assumptions
 - Estimated effort and budget
 - Deadline
- Discuss the important roles and responsibilities of the project team and stakeholders.
- Go over the general approach and timeline of the project. This gives people a sense for how the project will unfold. In particular to ensure that people understand what they need to be doing in the short-term to support the project.
- Discuss and answer any outstanding questions. The purpose of the discussion is to allow people to voice specific questions or concerns they have as the project begins

The meeting can run anywhere from 2 hours to a full day depending on the size of the project and how much group time you want to spend on several project kickoff discussions and related deliverables.

At the end of the kickoff meeting the project team is ready to work with a common understanding of goals and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

... *Managing Issues, from page 1*

Log helps the project record each issue and identify the actions needed to resolve it. A part of this process is an approval to ensure that the right actions are taken, at the right time, by the right people. An important tool in issue management is the issue log that summarizes all the project issues, their current status, who is currently responsible for them, and the date the issue was closed. Is a good practice to use the project meetings to review the issue log, add any new issues that have surfaced, and report on the resolution of outstanding issues.



Typical steps for issue management include:

- ✦ Document an issue, including any pertinent details such as the date and who reported it.
- ✦ Determine a priority for the issue. Label it as high, medium, or low.
- ✦ Assign the issue to a project team member. The issue can be scheduled for resolution to better manage the team member's time and effort.
- ✦ Track the status of the resolution. Label it as open, in progress, or closed.
- ✦ Document the process by which the issue was resolved. This will help the team note any lessons that can be learned from the problem's solution.

4. After Action Reviews

An after action review (AAR) is a discussion of a project or an activity. The After Action Review (AAR) is a simple process used by a project that enables the team to learn for themselves what happened, why it happened, what went well, what needs improvement and what lessons can be learned from the experience. The spirit of an AAR is one of openness and learning - it is not about problem fixing or allocating blame. The goal of an AAR is to improving future performance. It is an opportunity for a team to reflect on a project, cycle, activity, event or task so that they can do better the next time.



AAR is a form of group reflection; participants review what was intended, what actually happened, why it happened and what was learned. One member of the group facilitates, capturing results on a flip chart or in a document. One key element for a successful AAR is that they should be carried out with an open spirit and no intent to blame. The best time to conduct an AAR is right after the end of a project cycle or major milestone to reveal what has been learned, reassess direction, and review both successes and challenges.

Tips for conducting an AAR:

- AAR's should be carried out immediately to en-

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5. The Problem with PM in Development Organizations

The problem with project management in development organizations is that all too often is seen as an afterthought on a project. It is often perceived as "project control" or an administrative function that tracks budget expenditures and schedule dates based on best guesses.

Organizations are hurried to get funds and sign contracts and leap into implementation without adequate planning. With this approach, project management can only provide little or no value, and resorts only to a reactive mode. With the lack of planning all projects will tend to exceed the approved schedule and budget parameters and begin to run into problems.

To be effective, an organization needs to invest in project management at the very beginning of the project life cycle. It is a lower cost effort to spend time upfront to develop the project plans, which is better than spend a lot of time and effort doing rework during implementation.

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*With the objective of serving the needs of the global development community, **PM4DEV**® was created to provide with expert project management consulting and training services based on a **customized** methodology that offers the tools and processes to plan, implement, and monitor projects in a more **consistent, reliable and predictable** manner. **PM4DEV**'s methodology is based on a project management cycle that incorporates all the processes, tools and practices to **effectively** manage projects of all sizes. Organizations should have the ability to complete a project successfully by combining systems, techniques, and knowledge and controlling and balancing the constraints of time, cost, and scope in order to produce quality*

**DOING THE RIGHT PROJECTS...
... DOING THE PROJECTS RIGHT™**

...Project Problem , from page 4

In today's highly complex world, project management is becoming one of the most valued skills in development and humanitarian assistance organizations. In order to make a significant impact, it is essential that development organizations are capable of not only delivering their projects on time and within budget but are capable to address the demands of the many stakeholders that will be affected by the project and are able to manage the challenges and constraints imposed by an ever increasing diffi-



cult working environment.

To achieve impact in their interventions development organizations need to rely more and more on the expertise of skilled project managers who not only need to be competent in the relevant technical areas but have advanced managerial skills to plan, organize, direct and control a project successfully.

The future of many development organizations depends on their ability to employ the potential of modern project management methods to face new challenges, to help reduce risks and increase the chances of success. These organizations need to invest in the education of their project managers, develop basic managerial competencies use new tools and apply the best practices of a modern project management methodology.

....AAR , from page 4

sure that all of the participants are still available, and their memories are fresh.

- What was supposed to happen? The team describes the initial objectives of the project or activity
- What actually happened? The team must understand and agree on facts about what happened.
- Learning begins as the team compares the plan to what actually happened in reality and determines the causes for the differences identifies and discuss successes and shortfalls.
- Recording the key elements of an AAR facilitates sharing of learning experiences within the team and provides the basis for a broader learning in the organization.

What makes after action reviews so powerful is that they can be applied across a wide spectrum of activities, from two individuals conducting a five minute AAR at the end of a short meeting to a day-long AAR held by a project team at the end of a large project.

These points of view provides a summary of themes, that in PM4DEV's experience, have proved critical in the successful implementation of project management methodologies. It draws on the expertise of Project management professionals and provides a guide to deliver a methodology that increases the chances of project success.

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