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In this issue:

New Book!! Mastering Project Management

Mastering Project Management for Development Organizations

A modern methodology to manage development projects for international assistance and humanitarian relief organizations

www.pm4dev.com

We just published a new book, Mastering Project Management. Organizations that have adopted project management as a key competency have benefited from improved project outcomes to significant competitive advantage. This book present the ideas and concepts behind the use of modern project management methods, presents in detail the nine project management processes with examples, graphs and charts to increase the understanding and application of the techniques and methods to improve the success of development projects . Visit our website for more information.

1. The Role of the Project Coordinator

By definition, project managers must efficiently and effectively execute projects. Firstly, they must balance both internal and external stakeholder interests and keep both sides in sync over time. Second, they must understand beneficiaries' requirements, address their changing needs and manage the dynamics of those changes. However, they must also manage those changes throughout the organization, communities, local governments, vendors, suppliers and partners.

The role and responsibilities of a Project Coordinator are usually a subset of that of a Project Manager. The primary responsibility of a project coordinator is to keep the project and all related processes running smoothly. Project teams often require coordination of activities, resources, equipment, and information.

To satisfy this need the project coordinator functions in their primary role. Any coordination issues which cannot be resolved are elevated to the project manager. As such the project coordinator becomes the one point of contact and thus reducing the number of commu-

2. Critical Thinking

The work of a project manager is fast paced and varied. Not only they have direct reports to manage, but to achieve results they must work effectively with different stakeholders; and must carry out their work in accordance with the project plan, implementation schedule and budget. Anticipating needs, overcoming resistance, and building common understanding are essential to the project's success. Critical thinking is an essential skill for successfully implementing a project from initiation to closure, and it is one that needs to be continuously developed and strengthened. A project manager, will use critical thinking to:
- Understand and use new information
- Identify, evaluate and solve problems
- Make sound decisions

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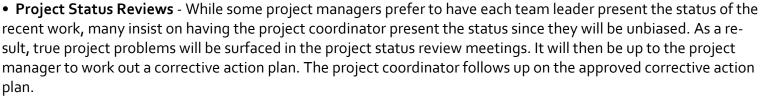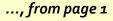*… , from page 1*

nication channels for the Project Manager.
Typical areas of responsibilities of the project coordinator:

• **Project Coordination -** Project teams often require coordination of activities, resources, equipment, and information. To satisfy this need the project coordinator functions in their primary role. Any coordination issues which cannot be resolved are elevated to the project manager.

• **Project Schedule Management** - It is the project coordinator who is to be the expert on the project schedule software. If project managers attempt to fulfill this role they will discover that it is so time consuming that if diverts their focus from the overall management of the project. A project coordinator assumes the role of working with project team members to develop the initial project schedule, making certain that all project schedule conflicts are resolved, and then updating it routinely.

• **Project Status Reviews** - While some project managers prefer to have each team leader present the status of the recent work, many insist on having the project coordinator present the status since they will be unbiased. As a result, true project problems will be surfaced in the project status review meetings. It will then be up to the project manager to work out a corrective action plan. The project coordinator follows up on the approved corrective action plan.

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Critical thinking is the process of identifying and evaluating evidence in order to make an appropriate decision. This evidence can be gathered by observation, experience, research, reasoning, or conversation with others. The critical thinker uses a logical analysis of evidence to make decisions and to communicate his or her decisions clearly. Critical thinking is a process of thinking that examines a situation in an objective manner. Critical thinking is the application of excellent problem-solving skills. It requires that the project manager thinks open mindedly and recognizes and assesses assumptions, implications, and practical consequences. As a critical thinker the project manager will:

• Raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely;
• Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively comes to well reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards;
• Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
• Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

Project managers are constantly exposed to different types of information and need to make decisions not based on personal judgments or biases. To develop critical thinking traits, a project manager should adopt a perceptive rather than judgmental orientation; that is, avoiding moving from perception to judgment as one applies critical thinking to an issue.

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3. Results Based Project Management

International development organizations looking for funds to support their goals must be able to produce quantifiable results. Donors are asking for impact and development projects must show qualitative impact that donors can quantify, producing some outputs is not enough. For most organizations their current approach is not enough, they need new skills and tools to meet the demands of donors.

Few organizations can get away with stating vague aims or listing a few outputs. Donors demand quantitative performance, requiring that development projects are able to demonstrate the quality of their work. The numbers must be verifiable because the projects must not only predict their outcomes but also prove them. Results-based project management (RBPM) is a way of managing whereby an organization ensures that all of its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results. It depends on clearly defined accountability for results, and requires systematic monitoring, self-assessment and reporting on progress.

4. Project Management Competencies

In a highly dynamic environment, development project managers are expected to do more with less, project managers have to deal with the numerous request of the large number of different stakeholders. Despite these various challenges, project managers are still expected to complete projects on schedule and within tight budgets. Accurately assessing an organization's project management training and skill gaps enables managers to identify areas for improvement, create targeted development plans, and measure development effectiveness against a well-defined set of metrics and goals. Competence is a standardized requirement for an individual to properly perform a specific job. It encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills and behavior utilized to improve performance. As such, project managers must possess a set of critical competence in order to perform their role successfully.

A competency model outlines the key dimensions of project management competency and identifies those competencies that are most likely to impact project manager performance. A Development Project Management Competency Model is made up of five project management competency categories:

• **Strategic**, critical skills that enable project managers to link any given project to the relationships, resources, and mission of their organization.

• **Managerial**, application skills and knowledge of project management processes, tools and techniques in project activities

• **Technical**, Knowledge of the principles and methods of development projects

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RBPM is a strategy or approach by which a project ensures that its processes, deliverables and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated results. RBPM provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving learning and accountability. It is also a broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way projects operate, with improving performance and achieving results as the central orientation, by defining realistic expected results, monitoring and evaluating progress towards the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance.

Project should use it with partners to plan, , implement, monitor and measure the changes, rather than just the inputs provided or activities conducted. Using RBPM, the project ensures that its resources and technical assistance contribute to a logical chain of results that lead to outputs, outcomes and impacts. RBPM depends on critical assumptions about the project design, its environment and risk assessments, clearly defined accountabilities and indicators, and performance monitoring and reporting.

• **Leadership**, how the project manager is able to influence, motivate, and challenge others, and

how to adapt leadership styles to a variety of situations

• **Personal**, characteristics that underlie a person's ability to successfully manage a project

These five categories combine the art, science and craft of project management. Development Organizations that combine these competencies into best practices can significantly improve their project success rates. Competency management is the foundation for nearly all workforce development initiatives.

Defining competency models, assessing skill levels through skill assessments and then analyzing gaps

provides the essential information for strategic planning for training, staffing, performance management, and succession planning.

The 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. For more information about PM4DEV services, please contact us via email to info@pm4dev.com

Paola L. Diaz
Executive Director
paola.diaz@pm4dev.com