The Role of the Project Manager

~ By Duncan Haughey

A project manager is a person who has the overall responsibility for the successful initiation, planning, design, execution, monitoring, controlling and closure of a project. Construction, petrochemical, architecture, information technology and many different industries that produce products and services use this job title.

The project manager must have a combination of skills including an ability to ask penetrating questions, detect unstated assumptions and resolve conflicts, as well as more general management skills.

Key among a project manager’s duties is the recognition that risk directly impacts the likelihood of success and that this risk must be both formally and informally measured throughout the lifetime of a project.

Risks arise from uncertainty, and the successful project manager is the one who focuses on this as their primary concern. Most of the issues that impact a project result in one way or another from risk. A good project manager can lessen risk significantly, often by adhering to a policy of open communication, ensuring every significant participant has an opportunity to express opinions and concerns.

A project manager is a person who is responsible for making decisions, both large and small. The project manager should make sure they control risk and minimise uncertainty. Every decision the project manager makes must directly benefit their project.

Project managers use project management software, such as Microsoft Project, to organise their tasks and workforce. These software packages allow project managers to produce reports and charts in a few minutes, compared with the several hours it can take if they do it by hand.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the project manager encompasses many activities including:

- Planning and Defining Scope
- Activity Planning and Sequencing
- Resource Planning
- Developing Schedules
- Time Estimating
- Cost Estimating
- Developing a Budget
- Documentation
• Creating Charts and Schedules
• Risk Analysis
• Managing Risks and Issues
• Monitoring and Reporting Progress
• Team Leadership
• Strategic Influencing
• Business Partnering
• Working with Vendors
• Scalability, Interoperability and Portability Analysis
• Controlling Quality
• Benefits Realisation

Finally, senior management must give a project manager support and authority if he or she is going to be successful.