The Six Principles of Project Management

~ By Theo Gilbert-Jamison

Right now project management certification is all the rave, but I have been using a similar change model for quite some time with great success. It’s called the ‘Six Principles of Service Excellence’, and it transitions easily to basically any type of project or initiative you are trying to effectively implement. For the project management aficionados and novices out there, think of it as the six principles of project management.

As a Performance Consultant, I regularly use these basic principles when launching a new initiative or learning and development programme, and especially when integrating new HR, Quality or, Operational Improvement Processes.

Principle 1: Vision and Mission

In order to be successfully executed, every project or initiative should begin with the end in mind. This is effectively accomplished by articulating the Vision and Mission of the project so it is crystal-clear to everyone. Creating a vision and mission for the project helps clarify the expected outcome or desired state, and how it will be accomplished.

Principle 2: Business Objectives

The next step is to establish two to three goals or objectives for the project. Is it being implemented to increase sales and profit, customer loyalty, employee productivity and morale, or product/service quality? Also, it’s important to specifically quantify the amount of improvement that is expected, instead of being vague.

Principle 3: Standards of Engagement

Simply put, this means establishing who will be part of the project team? What will be the frequency of meetings? What are the meeting ground rules? Who is the project owner? Who is designated to take notes, and distribute project meeting minutes and action steps? This goes along with any other meeting protocol that needs to be clarified.

Principle 4: Intervention and Execution Strategy

This is the meat of the project and includes using a gap analysis process to determine the most suited intervention (solution) to resolve the issue you are working on. There are many quality management concepts that can be applied ranging from a comprehensive “root cause analysis” to simply “asking why five times.” Once the best possible intervention has been identified to resolve the issue, then we must map out our execution strategy for implementing the intervention. This includes identifying who will do what, when, how, and why?
Principle 5: Organisational Alignment

To ensure the success and sustainability of the new initiative or process brought on by this project, everyone it will directly impact must be onboard. To achieve organisational alignment (or buy-in), ongoing communication must be employed in-person during team meetings, electronically via email and e-learning (if applicable), and through training. The message must include the WIIFM “what’s in it for me” at every level; otherwise most stakeholders will not be interested or engaged around the new initiative.

Principle 6: Measurement and Accountability

And last, how will we determine success? Well, a simple project scorecard that is visually interesting is a great way to keep everyone updated and engaged. A scorecard is an excellent resource for holding employees, teams, and leaders accountable for the implementation, refinement, and sustainability of the new initiative or project. Accountability means that consistently, top performers will be rewarded and recognised; while those needing improvement will be coached with specific expectations and consequences clearly outlined.

While my six principles of project management may not be all inclusive, my hope is that it has ignited creative juices as you think about how you will approach your next project - whether implementing a new system/process or refining one that is already in place to enhance its effectiveness.

Theo Gilbert-Jamison is CEO of Performance Solutions by Design, a global performance consulting firm that caters to luxury and premium brands with an emphasis on transforming organisational culture. She is also the author of two books, The Six Principles of Service Excellence (2005), and The Leadership Book of Numbers, Volume I (2008). As the creative force behind Performance Solutions by Design, Theo is a highly sought after speaker and consultant to CEOs and senior executives in high profile organisations. Please visit Theo’s website at Performance Solutions by Design for more information.

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