Understanding the Perspective of Your Team

By Kenneth Darter

Everyone has a different perspective. Ask five different people what is going on in a project and you will get five different answers. The project manager should understand all the different perspectives on the team and be able to provide an objective perspective to manage the project and the people on the project. Understanding the different perspectives will help the project manager create a cohesive team. The first step is to know where people are coming from and how they see the project work. While people bring their own unique personality to the team, it can be helpful to understand the many roles that people have on a project team. Someone just may be seeing or thinking something that may surprise you.

The Stakeholder

The stakeholder's perspective is the result of the project. While the project manager and the project team are buried in the nitty-gritty details of the project, the stakeholder is concerned about things like when the system is going to be delivered and what benefit the new system will give to the corporation or the client that will be using it. Trying to explain lead time or requirements analysis to the stakeholder might just be a complete waste of time. When communicating with the stakeholders on the project, understanding their perspective is vital. They are usually not interested in the nuts and bolts of the project; they want to know the bottom line. Often their time is very busy, and they have more on their plate than just your project. Keep communications brief and to the point, and make sure you address the bottom line concerns that they have to meet their needs for your project.

The Delivery Lead

The delivery lead on a project is concerned about delivering the results. While the project manager and the project management office might spend their time dealing with processes and workflows, the delivery lead is worried about finishing the product or the software system, or whatever is being created by the project. The delivery lead's perspective is focused on the result. While the processes and procedures in place may actually be helping them get to the
result, the delivery lead is not going to be very interested in them as it may just seem like a distraction from the work that is going on. To that end, the project manager should make sure he can explain how the project processes and procedures can help the delivery lead get to the end goal and show that they are not just 'busy' work or distractions.

The Matrix Resource

The matrix resource has a very different perspective on the project. In fact, the project is probably not the top priority in their view of the world. Their perspective is to get in and get their work done so they can get back to their 'real' job, whatever that might be. In dealing with matrix resources, the project manager should keep in mind that they do not consider the project in nearly the same light as resources who are dedicated full time to the project. Keep in mind that most matrix resources have multiple projects that they are working on, plus whatever regular work needs to be done. Treating matrix resources as if their only concern is your project and expecting them to churn out work the same way a dedicated resource does, will only lead other managers to stop volunteering their resources to your project.

Taking the time to understand where people are coming from and what perspective they have will lead the project manager to a deeper understanding of how the people on the project operate and work. This better understanding will help the project manager create a cohesive team. And hopefully, that will lead to the one thing everyone can agree upon - delivering a successful project, however that success is defined by the project team.

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