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Project Planning and Management Transcript Introduction to Week 7

Hello and welcome to the final week of Project Planning and Management! This week is focused on the Stakeholder Management and Communication Management functions, specifically how to identify and analyse stakeholders, and then engage and communicate with them. These are quite new areas in project management, mainly (on the surface) promoting the need for soft skills, although still attempting to introduce some 'hard', analytical elements into the respective management processes.

Your journey on this module is approaching its unavoidable end and by now you know so many instruments to manage your projects efficiently and effectively. I hope these skills will help you beyond the module.

So, stakeholders and communications are our last element of the project execution plan to consider. According to the PMI PMBoK, the stakeholder management plan identifies management strategies required to effectively engage stakeholders. Communication activities should also be included in the project plan. Communications need to be confident and present an almost inevitable, positive future, which may help overcome resistance to project implementation. What we need to remember though is that creating any content requires effort, time and cost which should all be reflected in other areas of the project master plan.

The need for some form of stakeholder and communication management stems from the essential idea of what being a project leader means. Such person deals with issues across five different directions and each of those assumes not just dealing with technical tools, analytical methods, critical or strategic thinking, but also simply talking to people. Of course, on some projects this becomes a real challenge: think of a large product development project, with multi-cultural teams across different time zones, using different languages and jargon, and you need to somehow engage stakeholders, motivate team members, negotiate and resolve conflicts.

But who is a 'stakeholder' exactly? You can see three different definitions, mostly talking about the same: it's somebody with an interest in the project or somebody who might be impacted by it, or as some definitions point out, perceive himself to be affected.

Why Is Stakeholder Management so important? Because, as they say, stakeholders can make or break your project. For example, the Office of Government Commerce and National Audit Office identified 'Lack of effective engagement with stakeholders' as one of the 8 common causes of project failure. Furthermore, project success is often determined namely by the attitude of key stakeholders on the project. Delivering a project on time, on budget and to specification is not sufficient: if nobody appreciates the outcome of your project and its outputs are not used, it will be considered a failure.

To further develop these ideas, we will consider how stakeholders can be identified and analysed. This week, we will also deliberate whether we need to manage stakeholders as the standard notion presumes or we'd better pursue stakeholder engagement, concentrating on relationship building. After that, some interesting aspects of Communication Theory will be touched upon, with communication planning also being a focal theme this week.

As a result, you will be able to critically evaluate the complexity of stakeholder networks, analyse project's stakeholders in more detail, understand their needs and expectations, and recommend engagement and communication strategies.

Early in the week, you'll be expected to read the chapters from the core text and watch 2 mini-lectures for an overview of the relevant management processes. You'll be able to practically apply the acquired knowledge while doing a stakeholder mapping exercise. You will also participate in a discussion focussed on PR communications for project success. Thank you very much and all the best!



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