

PROJECT MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

CREATE PROJECT CHARTER



Lesson learned

the End

“When John F. Kennedy launched the Space Race in the early sixties, no one knew if it was feasible or how long it would take to actually get to the moon. Fortunately for him, JFK just gave the overall goal, “go to the moon”, and the time to do it, “before the end of the decade.” There’s nothing quite like a challenge to motivate the troops, especially if they’re short on time. But beyond that, NASA and its consultants have a plethora of methods to choose from and an unlimited budget to do so. *(Source: keeward)*

Although we can track the project management concept to as back as the era of great pyramids, almost all current project management techniques started to evolve around 1950s’.

On our journey from a small time web development agency to a global product company we have learnt and practiced to improve our operational efficiency as an organization.

All elements and features of our tool were designed with a solution driven mindset to our operational challenges.

In this issue we will discuss about the essential skills and elements for a successful project management, finally how to kick start projects with project management software, and finally why project management is not micromanagement.

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#1

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO START A PROJECT?

We all talk a lot about Project Management; but, before we proceed, let us just understand, ***what a project is? Does any activity carried out by an individual or a group of people for a prolonged duration classify as a project?***

Wikipedia explains a Project as –

In contemporary business and science, a project is an individual or collaborative enterprise, possibly involving research or design that is carefully planned, usually by the project assigned team, to achieve a particular aim.

One can also define a project as a ***set of interrelated tasks*** to be ***executed over a fixed period*** and ***within certain cost and other limitations***.

PMI has outlined the following description of a Project –

A project is ***temporary*** in that it has a ***defined beginning and end in time***, and therefore ***defined scope and resources***.

And a project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal. So a project team often includes people who don't usually work together – sometimes from different organizations and across multiple geographies.

The development of software for an improved business process, the construction of a building or bridge, the relief effort after a natural disaster, the expansion of sales into a new geographic market — all are projects.

And all must be expertly managed to deliver the project on-time, on-budget results, learning and integration that organizations need.

The definitions above are very distinct and crisp. They have established that we must know the following at the least before we dive into a project.

Project Team – Who all will be working on the project?

Goal – What do we want to accomplish at the end?

Scope – What are my key deliverables and boundaries?

Schedule – What are the Start and End dates?

Stakeholders – Customers, Management, PMO, PM, Project Team etc.

RACI – What are the roles and responsibilities of the team involved?

Project Communication Plan – Who, When, How, Why and How much?



The above outlined items are crucial to project success. Having them mapped out correctly, not only brightens the chances of project success but also acts as our guiding light.

Being a PM or a team lead you know what you are supposed to deliver, how and when; giving you the right impetus to bring your team on-board with absolute clarity of purpose.

Everyone knows what they are supposed to do, how to do and when!

All you need to do is put all the pieces together and bring them on a single platform.

Ready to get going with your Projects?

Download Free Now

Sign Up Free Now

Request a Demo

**If you have been facing problems in initiating your projects,
organizing your team and scheduling their tasks,**

You now know – Where to start from!!

#2

HOW TO KICK START YOUR PROJECTS WITH PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Projects are as much a part of our work-life as the coffee machine.
Strange but true!

A typical work day of any professional is filled with all sorts of project meetings – status update, project review, Stakeholder review, management review and as many visits to the coffee machine!

At times, it feels like a ritual to pay a visit to the coffee machine before entering the meeting room?

Why is it so?

Is it that a good coffee in the morning sets your tone for the day? 99% of we coffee lovers will say “Well YEAH!!”

This simple daily act has an important message – “kick-offs are important” and all efforts and focus must be deputed to ensure we start things on the right note with our best foot forward.

And, projects are no different!

I consider Kick-off meetings to be one of the “**Critical Success Factors**” of any project. It is your opportunity as the Project Manager to rally your troops behind a common goal.

It's like your foundation laying ceremony if I may?

You get to present the project vision, the expectations, stakeholders involved, the TEAM & its GOAL!

It is best if you have the basics of a project setup in your chosen project management tool. For e.g. create the project, invite the project team, define user permissions, create the initial tasks & define timelines.

Let us quickly see how we can prepare and orchestrate an effective and successful **“Project Kick-Off Meeting”**.



Understand why you are here?

Kick-off meetings are your means to introduce the project and project charter. Project Charter is the Project Manager's bible for a simple fact that it outlines everything between today's problem and tomorrow's expected solution.

It clearly explains to you –

- ✓ The problem statement for undertaking the project
- ✓ The solution to the problem
- ✓ The timelines for completion of the project
- ✓ The project deliverables & goals
- ✓ The stakeholders – management, client, team etc.
- ✓ The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder
- ✓ The foreseen risks and current identified constraints

Introduce your Project Team

Your TEAM is the most important part of your project after the charter. Getting them to know each other, building rapport and explaining their roles & responsibilities on the project is key to successful project delivery.

The finer execution details can wait for now.

As a Project Manager, you must take enough time to ensure the stakeholders also know each other's expertise & strengths so that they can reach out to the right person when in need.

Exude confidence, hope and trust while you explain the team as to why they are the chosen ones and what is expected of them. It would be a good time to introduce the “**RACI Matrix**” to your team so that they know who is **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, will be **C**onsulted or **I**nformed.

R	Responsible <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person who actually carries out the process or task assignment• Responsible to get the job done
A	Accountable <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The person who is ultimately accountable for process or task being completed appropriately• Responsible person(s) are accountable to this person
C	Consulted <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who are not directly involved with carrying out the task, but who are consulted• May be stakeholder or subject matter expert
I	Informed <p>Those who receive output from the process or task, or who have a need to say informed</p>

Clearly defining **“User Roles and Privileges”** at the beginning of the project would further enable clarity, smoother collaboration and execution.

Positive sentiments among the team would go a long way when the going gets tough.

Plan your project Execution

Once you have the team introduced and settled with the project scope and problem at hand, begin with the timelines of the project.

Be specific in communicating the start and end dates, the periodic milestones, projects within project if any, allowed deviation and expected results from each task and the overall project.

A visual and interactive **“Gantt Chart”** and **“Kanban View”** would come in very handy while sharing the project schedule, task assignment and timelines for your team's easy understanding.



You can further boost their productivity, save their time and reduce any duplicity of efforts by using the **“Workflow Management”** offered by your project mgmt. tool to your team's advantage.

During execution it is important to ensure **“Resource Availability”** and to measure and manage your **“Resource Utilization”** so that you stay within the budget and do not run into resource issues which ALWAYS lead to huge stand-off in the organization and result in project delays.

Share your Communication Plan

Communication if well managed can work wonders for you and your team. It is always recommended that you set some ground rules around project activity communication.

Everyone in the team MUST know the “authorized” recipients of the information along with the expected timelines and intervals for every project communication.

Some activities may require a **“Daily Catch-Up”** or an instant discussion over a **“Chat”** engine and yet be recorded within the project management software for audit and future references.

Having automated email notifications would be a blessing in disguise while working on projects with a lot of stakeholders. Updating and/or submitting a reply or comments to a task can fire away the key updates and progress with your desired stakeholders in a matter of seconds.

Similarly, issue logging and change requests processes must be well documented and clarified to avoid planning and approval delays.

Given the sheer amount of project documents involved having a central project repository that allows for changes, is controlled by proper user privileges and available when needed is a must. Even better if it allows for social sharing via Google drive, Dropbox etc. provided your project manager or company authorizes it.

Clarify Project Risks

Before you embark on a journey, it is wise to gather as much info about the impending terrain as possible. This mainly translates to **risks and constraints** in project management terminology.

Knowing the risks and preparing for them in advance would reduce your project delays, budget overruns and save your team a lot of stress.

You may face supplier, resource, budgetary, government regulatory etc. risks depending on the nature of your business and project.

Ensure you have a proper **Risk Mitigation Plan** and a Rapid Response Team who are aware of the “ASK” and your entire project team knows whom to reach out should an emergency occur.

Ensure THE GOAL is understood

Each project begins with a defined end result that is expected to solve the problem at hand. The tangible and intangible deliverables must be clearly explained and shared with all relevant stakeholders.

You must stay away from use of any management or technical jargons and buzz words. Explain in simple yet detailed terms each relevant objective that is supposed to be met by the team.

The team's alignment to the common goal is of utmost significance for project success. There should be no room for guess work.

More than that, the team's belief in the end result and the rewards it entails will also go a long way when it comes to flawless execution and on time delivery.



Allow Interactive Session

Now that you have shared your vision, associated goals, time lines, productivity and delivery goals with your team it is utmost important that they provide feedback.

Depute a reasonable amount of time to answer all their questions and/or concerns if any. You may unearth crucial information and facts that may prove beneficial for the project.

Urge the team to be forthcoming with their ideas, recommendations, to highlight their or other members' strength and expertise.

The higher the interaction, greater the chances of team collaborating and willing to bring facts to the decision making table. Not only will this lead to better planning and execution but also provide time and money benefits.



Before signing out –

- ✓ Do provision time for a quick recap of the meeting
- ✓ Go over the crucial points, deliverables, goals and risks etc.
- ✓ Acknowledge the key contributors of your interactive session
- ✓ Record their points with the project documents
- ✓ Promise to follow through on any unaddressed items from this session
- ✓ Thank people for their time and affirm your trust in them
- ✓ The above actions will help build mutual trust and confidence among the stakeholders and encourage each one to work in the best interests of the project.

All of which are very crucial for a successful project delivery.

#3

PROJECT MANAGEMENT IS NOT MICROMANAGEMENT

Extremism in any shape and form is unacceptable and dangerous.
And it applies to project management too.

Most often Project Managers (PMs) are so caught up with their project tasks and activities that they lose sight of the larger goal and end up controlling and dictating every action taken by their teams.

Sure, managing multiple projects with a large number of team members who are quite diverse and dispersed is an uphill task. And so is monitoring their work and progress. But this does not necessitate that every project activity have our stamp of approval.

It is indeed important that as PMs we ensure:

- ✓ Project works are completed on time and with quality
- ✓ Continuous and timely monitoring mechanism are put in place
- ✓ We are on top of approaching deadlines and milestones
- ✓ Timely updates are delivered to us and the stakeholders
- ✓ Foresight of any looming delays

Because these activities are integral to project delivery and success. But in the right dosage!

But it is NOT OK to

- ✓ Be the **“Do it ALL yourself”** guy
- ✓ Be **obsessively controlling** of every activity
- ✓ Be on a **fault finding** mission
- ✓ **Immerse yourself** in every **other person’s** tasks
- ✓ **Refuse help and guidance** from **experienced members** of the team
- ✓ **Lose focus** of the **bigger picture** and **drown** in the **least important** of activities
- ✓ Be **unable** to **delegate** tasks

The list is endless and I can go on and on...



These traits spell disaster. Simply put they certify that you are a MICROMANAGER!

And if you aren't aware –

“Micromanagement is just plain bad management”

Micromanagement is bad news for everyone involved i.e. your team, your business, your company, your clients & stakeholders. But most importantly YOU!

Here is what Micromanagement costs all individuals and businesses alike:

- ✓ Absolute loss of trust and confidence of your team members
- ✓ Team members no longer wish to contribute
- ✓ Loss of commitment and productivity
- ✓ Highly demotivated team members
- ✓ Stressful team environment
- ✓ Deliverables that are low on quality and missed deadlines
- ✓ Delays due to the greatest bottle-neck which is YOU
- ✓ Little to no timely decision making
- ✓ Disrupted operations
- ✓ Loss of stakeholder and customer confidence
- ✓ Loss of revenue and business

& the winner – End of your career!

If you have been at the receiving end of such traits or unfortunately possess any of such traits then here is what you must practice and remember for the greater good –

Learn the Art of Delegation – the more you delegate, the more you have time for important things – both personal and professional.

It is ok to let go where needed – identify every single step that needs your approval and remove as much as required and possible. Processes are meant to remove bottlenecks not create them.

Be realistic in your approach towards perfection – A timely good enough delivery is far more acceptable than your delayed best. Timeliness is a cherished trait!

Invite Feedback & Listen – It is very crucial to be a good listener given that fact that you are at the driver's seat. Take constructive feedback in the right spirit and make necessary changes as applicable.

Empower teams to make their own decisions – Once you have assigned tasks to your people leave it up to them to complete and see their tasks through.

Show you care – It is important that the team knows that your care just as much about them as for the end goal.



Give Opportunity – Invite team members to contribute, share their experience and wisdom. A simple innovation can lead to great results.

Be the Coach and Mentor – Where needed show them 'how to fish' rather than server every meal! Let them find their own path to success. Teach them how to play; you cannot always step in to play for them.

Take one for the team – When things aren't going as expected take ownership of any team failure. You owe it to them as they strive and sweat it out for you.

Appreciate and Share credit – Nothing motivates like an appreciation. Take every opportunity possible to appreciate and give credit to the worthy.

The 10 Tenets above have time and again proved to have

Boosted motivation, productivity, loyalty and commitment. Above all they help you earn respect of your team and your customers.

The key idea here is you can win laurels and accolades on your own but those won't take you far. Leadership and true success lies in showing and enabling teams to realize their full potential.

“Of all the thing I’ve done, the most vital is coordinating the talents of those who work for us and pointing them towards a certain goal!”



Walt Disney

Do share how you have managed under a micro-manager and what would YOU do if you found out you were one of them!

@ Blog.Orangescrum.com

About Orangescrum

As a software development company, we know the pain of managing projects via emails. We wanted a software/tool - to manage projects more efficiently, to have quick communications and to become more productive.

We tried with different project management and team collaboration tool. As our projects grew over the period, we looked for a way to help us manage projects effectively and meet our client's expectation. We could not find one tool to answer our worries.

Than we decided to start building a project management tool. In less than 30 days we build our own project management tool. We gave the name as "**TheOrangescrum**". Because, our daily **scrum** meeting became easy with TheOrangescrum.

Interestingly like Facebook, later on we removed the "The" from "TheOrangescrum" and renamed it to "**Orangescrum**".

Orangescrum gives an eagle's-eye view on the productivity and progress of your projects and team

In no time Orangescrum attracted small and medium businesses from an array of diverse industries, not limited just to software/consultant firm.

We took the good feedbacks as appreciation and the bad feedbacks as lessons. We learned a lot over the period and trying to make it really powerful.

Start Your Free Trial

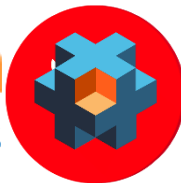
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