



Effective People Management in Global IT Industry. An Overview

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Introduction

People work in projects to produce something for people. The problems in projects are human problems. For every technical, financial or schedule problem there is a human problem behind it. The most important resource any company has are its people. An important element in managing a complex project is knowing how to manage your most valuable asset - your human resources.

Probably the greatest challenge that is presented by a global project is the management of the human resource pools. This is true at a macro (overall staffing levels) and micro (delegation of work to labor pools) level. Human resource management is now assuming a greater role to strategic business partners. Successful companies realize that true competitive advantage lies in their people. They have been forced to redefine their responsibilities and develop a compelling response for critics who dispute human resource's value to the bottom-line.

Human Resource Management in Projects

I would say Human Resource Management is the key to success in any project. A team can make or break the project. Effective Project Managers must possess strong organizational skills. They must motivate others to work on low-grade work; they must energize them to work harder and put more effort into their work; they should inspire others to invent new things; they should build job satisfaction for others and help them reach self-actualization. Human Resource Management is a serious business. Low team morale is a hindrance to success in any project and it is the Manager's responsibility not only to ensure that the project is successful, but also see that the team is satisfied.

So it is important to look at the:

- Leadership
- Staffing
- Project Organization and
- Teaming

in any Project based on varying priorities and parameters.

Based on my experience in different countries such as US, UK, Germany, Thailand and India I have set out below what we need to do to have a good, effective team. I have looked at four types of teams with different drivers and skills.

Type A Project Team.

High Priority, Very large project team size; scarce skills; differing organizational goals and project cultures, wide experience requirements; Team is scattered in multiple countries.

Project Leadership:

- Select Project Manager with self-discipline, coaching experience, excellent communication skills, political savvy, technical and vast project experience, and experience in diversified culture
- Provide active sponsorship, leadership and senior management oversight.
- Managers need to become more flexible in respect of "ownership" of staff, sharing responsibilities for staff assignment, staff development, synchronizing project and routine business activities, and collaborate effectively with other project managers.

Staffing Plan:

- Determine skill levels from work package estimates and identify experience requirements and gap analysis
- Use metrics as critical success factors;
- Plan hiring and training to meet deltas
- Identifying opportunities for synergy, such as opportunities for collaborative staffing actions
- Identifying language requirements and provide adequate training to team members.

Project Organization:

- Document project roles and responsibilities at all levels
- Map organizational breakdown structure (OBS) to WBS and communications plan
- Use *projectized* or *strong matrix* structure
- Ensure a project management culture that requires all staff to focus more on roles and tasks, and less on formal grades and hierarchy. It requires staff and management to be flexible in respect of time management, multi-tasking, and self-development.
- Ensure Human resource issues are aligned with the organization's strategic management, aims and objectives
- Carry out organization level program combining formal and on-the-job training to give new employees the knowledge and skills to become qualified for the required working level.

Team Building:

- Articulate a team building vision, objectives, and strategy. Get Senior Management support to meet those

- Provide goals, supportive resources and tools, and meaningful measures of success
- Develop team ownership of this process
- Be a strong motivator and work at benefiting other's self esteem
- Effectively reward the team.
- Carry out regular review of the current distribution of work and use of resources and consideration of alternative scenarios to optimize effectiveness and efficiency
- Formulate individual development plans, which emphasize work-related learning experiences;
- A Web site/Team Room can create a sense of connection and help distant employees exchange information.

Type B Project

Large, diverse project team; unfamiliar and divergent cultures. Team working in various geographical Locations within the country; potential scarcity of skills and staffing;

Project Leadership:

- Ensure management commitment and a highly disciplined approach
- Emphasize good communications, metrics, and issue/problem resolution.

Staffing Plan:

- Perform structured analysis of skill types and quantities
- Use resource scheduling estimates
- Plot graph of staffing requirements versus actual and report status periodically
- Determine key factors contributing to retention and development of critical skills, in the face of intense market competition for talent
- Formulate and implement strategic staffing plans and action plans for meeting needs, including recruiting, redeployment, and staff reduction

Project Organization:

- Consider matrix/projectized organization with strong PM functions and administrative support
- Document a plan to surmount structural short-comings
- Use cross-functional teams to help concurrencies
- Provide opportunities for employees' professional development and training with their job skill area and also in such areas as cultural sensitivity and personal development

Team Building:

- Identify criteria for successful team performance

- Articulate strategy and plan for achieving team goals. Get Senior Management support to meet those.
- Develop metrics and monitor status
- Invest to improve team dynamics and cohesiveness
- Define key result areas, performance objectives and measures, action plans, and accountability for results.
- Design and implement performance review processes and incentive compensation to recognize performance
- Create a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, comments and perceptions from all team members

Type C Project

Medium sized team; divergent organizational groups; available skills and staffing; familiar with project culture.

Project Leadership:

- Establish clear goals and roles
- Institutionalize practices of good communications and good will
- Identify and resolve issues and conflicts
- Delegate to workgroups, build ownership and establish success metrics.

Staffing Plan:

- Consider project tasks and organization first, and then plan staff to fill requirements
- Build staff plan from Gantt resource estimates
- Delegate ownership of staffing plan
- Early involvement of team in planning process.

Project Organization:

- Publish and maintain organization chart
- Address conflicting goals and loyalties
- Promote team ownership of integrated solutions.

Team Building:

- Conduct team sessions to improve communications and facilitate issue identification and resolution
- Build team identity
- Solicit and address team concerns
- Develop career models that provide a framework for assessing individual capabilities, development planning, and progression.

Type D Project

Small project team; cohesive team culture; experienced in project areas; previous working relationships; Team Collocated

Project Leadership:

- Communicate goals clearly
- Manage the project team as a group
- Foster ownership of plans and tasks
- Build relationships through proper communication and consideration
- Set high standards and lead by example.

Staffing Plan:

- Identify resource requirements, assign staff, and get them applied to the project work
- Decide what before who
- Monitor adequacy of staffing and report status to project sponsor.

Project Organization:

- Identify clear and unambiguous roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships
- Discuss plans to cope with organizational disjoints
- Encourage informal communications.

Team Building:

- Take responsibility for leading the team
- Develop strategies and plans to build group cohesion
- Motivate others
- Work with team to identify needed skills and behaviours to enhance team performance
- Taking team for parties, lunch, dinner is a hygiene factor and not a motivational factor so there is a greater need to help them get job satisfaction.

Conclusion

No matter what sort of project you are managing, the human resource side is one that requires constant attention. It is suggested that you decide which of the four types of project best fits your situation. Print off the list for that project and quietly evaluate your own performance as a project manager. How many of the points are you adequately addressing, and where are the areas for improvement.

About the Author:

Sujit Mishra, PMP working as a Project Manager in IBM Global Services India. He has 13 years of industry experience. Prior to this he had several technical publications in leading International Journals including IDUG. He is also a faculty member in Project Management Institute, Bangalore Chapter

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