

Trip Report

Stanford Center for Professional Development



STANFORD ADVANCED PROJECT
MANAGEMENT: “Managing without Authority”

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General Concepts:

- Ask how you can help make the other person’s job more effective. Ask what obstacles there are in the task being assigned and what can be done now to help mitigate those obstacles should they arise.
- Map task #'s in e-mails. Don’t send the team an overall project plan unless requested. It’s hard enough for them to see changes in their own tasks when they have other priorities and projects on their plate.
- Avoid using the generic term, “We” as “We” never does anything, it should be “You’ll do this” and “I’ll do that.”
- People choose to do what they do on the basis of what they think, not on what you think.
- Rather than saying, “Please try to call me if your plans change” say, “Can you call me when your plans change?” This is effective when you want acknowledgement of your request and their response back.

Ways to Influence:

- **RECIPROCITY:** Ask for more than you need and then negotiate a lower requirement acceptable to the other party.
- **LINKING:** Proximity is important – get closer to the other party attend one on one’s, use the phone instead of e-mail.
- **COMMITMENT:** Have voluntary sign-ups for tasks. Also involve team members in project plan drafts.
- **SOCIAL PROOF:** Mimic the behavior of others. Also try to gain someone’s agreement and then ask them for their opinion in a meeting. Try going to another person that the subject values the advice from and have them go to the subject with your plan.

Credibility is Obtained in Two Ways:

1) Via, expertise, trust, information, relationships, obligation or achievement.

OR

2) Most often this must be obtained via re-assignment of parasitic team members, bringing in of new blood, working outside the organizational chart and helping to bring in new reward and punishment systems.

For Complex Projects:

- Get the facts– written
- Get statistics
- Get a trusted 3rd party opinion
- Get scope, sponsorship and budget clarified
- Ask, has this been done before?
- Analyze risks – new technologies
- Geography and virtual teams can add complexity

How Do You Solve Task Delays Or Problems?

- Understand problems come from two sources:
 - A Motivation constraint
 - An Ability constraint
- If there is a motivation constraint, try to show the subject the priorities of the task and explain downstream natural consequences. One must always be:
 - 1) direct 2) specific and 3) non-punishing
- If this is an ability constraint, first find out if this is an internal knowledge and skill based deficit or an external obstacle or resource problem. Again one must be:
 - 1) direct 2) specific and 3) non-punishing
- Remember:
 - 1) Communicate the Problem Situation
 - 2) Diagnose the Cause, motivation or ability
 - 3) Communicate the consequences or diagnose the ability
 - 4) Determine Who does What by When
 - 5) Follow up on a specific date
 - 6) Lastly ask the question: What could be done in the future to prevention this problem from coming back?

Team Planning:

- Having people come to the table assumes they are interested in the success of the project or -- in that they are forced to participate.
- Assume people at the table have both the ability and motivation to do the job, or -- neither.
- Does the team treat problems as a group problem or an individual problem to be solved without help?

Diagnostic Open-Ended Ability Questions:

- Is this task a priority for you?
- Are you facing an obstacle here?
- I’m not sure I understand what the problem is; can you help clarify this to me?

Solving the Ability Problem:

- Ask the subject for ideas on how to solve the problem – you may be surprised.
- Determine who does what by when
- Set up a follow up time – be specific
- Follow up

Motivation or Ability Problem Matrix:

		IS THIS A MOTIVATION PROBLEM?	
		NO	YES
IS THIS AN ABILITY PROBLEM?	YES	<i>Pure Ability</i>	<i>Mix</i>
	NO	<i>Problem Solved</i>	<i>Pure Motivation</i>

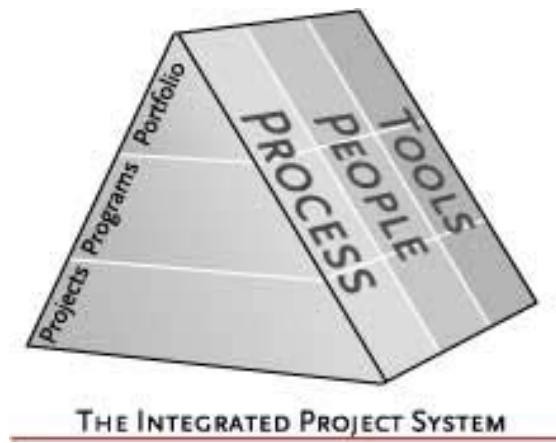
Emergent Problem Assessment:

- You must balance your desire to understand vs. the push back you must give when appropriate.
- Try to determine what the subject’s value accusation is. Is the frustration based on anger, fear, or just a bad day?
- Practice active listening – restate what you hear from the subject in your own words.
- Seek first to understand the other person’s point of view before jumping in.
- Communicated back what is expected, not what is observed.
- Use a phrase such as: “You seem _____, is it because of this issue or is it part of a larger problem?”

Relationship and Expertise Values Matrix:

		YOUR RELATIONSHIPS ARE?	
		Weak	Strong
YOUR EXPERTISE IS?	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find an ally • Build a network • Explore concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be tactical • Suggest solutions
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many start here • Form a strategy to build on your expertise • Try building your relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use outside help/experts • Build expertise/research • Ask questions

Remember the Integrated Approach:



Final Thoughts:

- Be proactive, not reactive!
- Review handouts!