Information Gathering Techniques

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Information is required in order to apply logical thinking, provide analysis and develop effective projects. This is especially true when trying to identify, forecast and mitigate risk. Information can be objective or subjective. Objective meaning based on documented statistics, agreed standards or any other documented source generally agreed to be fact. Subjective is that which is based on opinion. Because risk levels are different for each person and they are subjective. It's important to gather risk information based on people opinions to be able to compile and qualify and quantify risks.

Although subjective information is opinion based it doesn't mean it's entirely without merit. Most people develop opinions based on experience. Repetitive experience rendering the same results and is where logical people gain opinions. Where opinions are dangerous is when they are based on hearsay instead of experience. For the purpose of this assignment the discussion opinion will be that of people with experience.

Many of the Gathering information processes in project management are opinion based. Paragraph 11.2.2.2 of the Project Management Institute (PMI) *A guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK guide)* Information Gathering Techniques we find Brainstorming, Delphi technique, Interviewing and Root causes analysis. Most of these are based on expert opinion or opinion supported by experience.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an iterative process of meeting, surveys and questionnaires which are review and analyzed and brought to consciences. When dealing with risk finding all the possibilities and applying appropriate level of severity and probability for threats and opportunities are critical to effectively managing these risks.

The first step in brainstorming for risk is to gather all the information possible on the subject. No idea no matter how silly it may seem is rejected at this time. At the winding down of the flow of inputs a decision is made by consciences to proceed to the evaluation of the information provided. Then the group will evaluate all the inputs and decide which are likely risks. The PMBOK guide (2013) suggests that these ideas can be placed into a risk breakdown structure at this point to track them (*Brainstorming,* p 324). Once a list of risks have been identified then evaluations and analysis of how those risk affect the project are conducted based using a number of statistical process.

Delphi Technique

The Delphi Technique is an evolutionary iterative process of the results of anonymous surveys sent to experts in different fields related to the project. Surveys are sent out without names for answers to questions dealing with risk. When these surveys are returned, "the responses are summarized and …then recirculated to the experts for further comments" (PMI, 2013, para 11.2.2.2 *Delphi technique*). Then a facilitator continues the process until the risks are identified and placed in the risk breakdown structure. Sampling of this type can also give a sense of how a risk is viewed by the larger percentage of people who respond similarly to it. Because the surveys are anonymous it helps to "reduce bias in the data and keeps anyone person from having undue influence on the outcome" (PMI, 2013, p 324)

Interviewing

William Dow and Bruce Tailor in their *Project Management Communications Bible (2008)* say, a project manager should be able to determine a stakeholder's risk tolerance the first meeting. (Determine customer tolerance levels, p 31) I don't know about that, but at least through interviews you can ask direct and indirect questions which can lead to discover their risk

tolerance, whether that is at the first interview or subsequent interviews. Either way interviews are an important risk information gathering tool. Often people will open up more effectively in personal interviews over group meetings. The last subsection in the PMBOK guide on this topic is Root Cause analysis. This is more of a monitoring and controlling tool and can be a factor for analysis risk that are known, so I'll not address it here in our discussion or risk identification.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Gathering information on risk is critical to not only identifying the risks but later qualifying and quantifying the risks. Group Brainstorming can identify large number of risk. The Delphi method is a good technique when dealing with upper management input to reduce bias or influence. And lastly individual interviews can narrow the focus of the risks and find concerns and help identify risk tolerance levels.

References

Project Management Institute (PMI). (2013) A guide to the project management body of

knowledge (PMBOK guide) Newton Square, Pa

Dow, W., & Taylor, B. (2008). Project management communications Bible. Hoboken, NJ:

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