

Week 3 Blog

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Leading Projects Across Boundaries

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Welcome to my week 3 blog!

While a member of the Peace Dragon team in Baghdad, Iraq from March 2010 thru June 2011, I had the great pleasure of working with the Project Management Office (PMO) as well as the Project Manager (PM) Tony Pala. While I had an idea of the issues faced by the PMO and the PM, I took this opportunity to reach out, renew our relationship and pick his brain so-to-speak. In speaking with Tony, we discussed the difficulties and unique opportunities working in another country, project hindsight, as well as advise he wished someone would have taken the time to impart to him before the project had begun.

Ben: Tony, what was the hardest part of working in another country?

Tony: For me, the hardest part was supply chain management and the lack of infrastructure to support timely international shipments of material to support the aircraft. DHL, FedEx, and UPS all had satellite offices in and around Baghdad International airport, but when the troop levels drew down to a point where the transition of land ownership reverted back to the local population, the offices relocated back to downtown Baghdad. Without a secure means of traveling to and from the shipment offices, what would normally take 4 to 5 days suddenly became 3 weeks or more. In addition, the use of the Airforce Mobility Command (AMC) was no longer available once U.S. forces had been removed from Iraq.

Ben: Looking back, what would you have done differently to prepare for that assignment?

Tony: If I had to do it all over again, I would have spent more time creating primary and alternative avenues for the movement of manpower and material. When initially planning for hot sections inspections, we had planned on the use of the AMC to help relocate components in a timely manner. When they actually came due, AMC was no longer an option and the use of

civilian freight operators also failed to support the customer and mission. In addition, I would have used support services within the region rather than relying upon those resources routinely utilized with the United States.

Ben: Tony, what advice would you give to someone considering an international PM assignment?

Tony: First, don't think as you would if you were back home. The solutions available in one location are not those of another. In our plan to utilize Pratt & Whitney Canada to perform hot sections, we failed to take advantage of an authorized facility located in Africa. This should could have supported our needs in a third of the time and even come to our location to perform the work in situ. Second, I would take time to identify what you need, what is available, and what you need to meet the mission/project objective. By doing so, you may discover alternatives not previously thought of. Take the time to speak to your international counterparts as they have firsthand experience in working in their environment.

References

Larson, E. W. & Gray, C. F. (2014). *Project management: The managerial process (6th ed.)*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.