Reflection Paper

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Anatomy of Project Organizations

PMGT-611

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the fundamental concepts surrounding project management theory, and the necessary human interaction needed to ensure project success. Personal knowledge and technical ability have always played an important role in leadership, but when dealing with people, an added element of relationship development and personal traits play an equal if not more important role. Processes discussed include the importance of the strategic business plan and how organizational project work in support of that plan, personality traits and how they impact a project manager's abilities in relationship to tasks and relationship development, and finally how this information impacts the creation and execution of the human resource plan.

Reflection Paper

Introduction

Bringing together nine weeks of studies into one centralized reflection paper is exciting and challenging for me. I think about my employer and the many projects I've had the pleasure of managing and why those projects were selected while others were not. I think about my organization and why I don't have complete control over all aspects of labor. Wouldn't that be easier than having to coordinate with other shops and their supervisory chain of command? I think about how I manage my projects, how I interact with assigned team members, my strengths and weaknesses as a project manager, and how I utilize what I've learned to help motivate my personnel, create a positive and synergistic environment, and succeed for both my customer and my organization.

Strategy and Project Selection

Strategy

Organizations exist to provide a better product or better service to a customer. Whether that product is a new military aircraft, a new style of Barbie Doll, or perhaps even a new Information Technology (IT) system for a mid-size university, the product or service must meet the sponsors objective and also fit within the strategic business plan of the organization itself. The strategy is fundamentally deciding how the organization will compete (Larson & Gray, 2014, p. 25), and then deciding which projects it will undertake to support its strategic management plan. Just as a toy manufacturer wouldn't undertake making cars, an automobile manufacturer wouldn't undertake making toys. This is not to say that they are incapable, but

simply that this is not part of their strategy for success. To succeed, they must pick the projects that support their vision, mission, and strategy.

Project Selection

Never has the importance of matching the customer's need(s) to the organization's strategic plan been more important than in today's global economic environment. Today, I read that President Obama signed into law the Program Management Improvement and Accountability Act, also known as S.1550. The press release indicated that the Project Management Institute (PMI) uncovered that 64 percent of government strategic initiatives ever meet their goals and business intent and that government entities waste $101 million for every $1 billion spent on project and programs ("PMIAC," 2016).

   Reflection

I must admit that before taking PMGT-611, I never really thought of the organization's strategy or why they selected certain projects over others. In my world, the knowledge related to how the projects are created and selected is performed above my level. Once the project is created, it is assigned to me. Looking back at that process, I can see why Professor Morris stepped outside the traditional Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) to express his concern that project managers be involved from the point where the project is idealized, validated, and shaped by multiple stakeholder forces (Pinto & Winch, 2015, p. 238). If project management expertise had been involved government strategic initiatives, perhaps the untold hundreds of millions or even billions might have been saved for better use elsewhere.

Structure and Culture

Structure

In week two we studied how Mr. Everett Kircher created his dream of opening a ski resort. In the beginning, he was a one-man-band so to speak. He operated the ski lift, took care of his customers, and even worked as the lodge's chef. Mr. Kircher's organizational structure could be seen as a vertical type structure with the majority of all authority resting at the top. Over time, the business would grow; other properties would be added; and even expansion into real-estate was not out of the question. As a result, Mr. Kircher would have to relinquish authority and redefine his organizational structure is he was to continue to grow and remain successful. As a result, his organization structure became decentralized, with each local area general manager (GM) having authority. Now a matrix type structure, each GM would share responsibility for the success and failure of the business.

Culture

Whether seen or not, each organization has within it a culture. Larson & Gray (2014) define the organizational culture as a system of shared norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions which bind people together. Cultures can be both good and bad. In the case of Mr. Kircher and his dream of creating his resort, he was gifted with the desire to work hard and remain focused on quality and customer service. In time, Mr. Kircher had established his vision and culture within the entire organization. Infectious in a way, a strong culture can assure success as easily and a poor culture can destroy hard work.

Reflection

Before the study of organizational structures, I was unaware of any structure except that of a vertical structure, such as the military chain of command. A believer in the chain of

command, I entered the civilian workforce and ran head-on into something I could quite understand. As a project manager, with a blended matrix organizational structure, I share authority with functional management. I must admit that, before this class, I was not a proponent of this type of structure, but now understand the value and efficiency it brings to the project equation. The efficient use of human resources makes it possible for multiple projects to exist at one time.

Influencing: Power, Politics, Networking, and Negotiation

Power

Lussier & Achua (2013) define power as the leader's potential influence over followers, and because the power is the potential to influence, you do not have to use power to influence others. Sources of power come from the positional authority given by organizational management and from person power derived from the individual itself.

Politics

Politics is the process of gaining and using power (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 161). Project management brings to mind a great many principles that must be understood, but perhaps the most powerful underlying trait has to deal with networking. Networking is the developing of relationships for the purpose of socializing and politicking (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 161).

Networking

Networking has the highest relative contribution to successful management advancement (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 161). When we think of networking, we think of making those social connections required to remain successful or keep doors open for future

opportunity. Project management, within a blended matrix organizational structure, must share

authority and responsibility along-side functional management. Without an element of

networking and socializing, it may become impossible to establish the type of coalition needed to

ensure success.

Negotiation

Negotiation is the process where two or more parties are in conflict and attempt to come

to an agreement (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 475). The ultimate goal of any

negotiation process is that each party feels they are receiving a good deal for what they are

providing. The manufacturer or service provider will provide the product or services, and the

customer will provide the financial support. In the end, the customer must feel they are receiving

value for the investment.

Reflection

I must admit that my understanding of power, politics, networking, and negotiation was

limited at best. Not being someone who craves power, and has usually only attained power

through position, I've never taken the time to develop my power within and apply it toward

politicking, networking, or negotiation. I work with an individual who is incredible in this

process. At times, I jokingly accuse him of manipulating the process, and he responds the same

every time, "it's just a matter of approach." Now I understand what he means.

Behavior and Motivation

Behavior

Behavior is the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others

(Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Project management requires interaction between stakeholders,

shareholders, vendors, and project team members. How a manager conducts him or herself, affects a great deal. Without support, the project will fail to deliver.

Motivation

Motivation is anything that affects behavior in pursuing a certain outcome (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 475). Motivation is based on a want or need, and these desires can be driven by intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual, such as personal satisfaction in the accomplishment of a task. Extrinsic motivation comes from external motivators such as pay, job security, and benefits. During week sevens assignments, I had the opportunity to take

Reflection

During week sevens assignments, I had the opportunity to take self-assessment 3: Job Motivators and Maintenance Factors.

Self-Assessment 3 – Job Motivation and Maintenance Factors

- Motivating Factors: 24 out of a possible 30

- Maintenance Factors: 18 out of possible 30

The result of the assessment was that I lean more towards intrinsic factors than I do extrinsic factors. This does not mean that I don't desire pay, job security, and benefits, but rather I believe that intrinsic accomplishment will lead to those things. I've always believed that hard work and dedication will lead to a better life, and so far, it has.

Contingency Leadership Theory

Leadership theory is an explanation of some aspect of leadership; theories have practical value because they are used to understand better, predict, and control successful leadership (Lussier Ph.D. & Achua D.B.A., 2013, p. 113). While there are various leadership theories that

may be employed by leadership, the contingency leadership theory takes into account other factors, such as situation. This theory makes it possible for project management to employ varying aspects or traits that best fit the situation in an attempt to change the situation rather than the leadership style.

Reflection

Contingency leadership was eye-opening for me personally. When faced with differing situations, I always tend to change my style to work within the parameter of the situation. Was I wrong to do this? What I should have been doing is falling back on that portion of my skill that favors relationships to build the coalition necessary to get the situation resolved and project back on track. Having scored pretty much middle-of-the-road between task and relationship leadership styles, this should come more naturally. I will work on this.

Human Resource Plan

The human resource plan spans all industries and all project types (Dow & Taylor, 2008, p. 293). The purpose of the human resource plan is to consolidate, in one location, information about the project. The plan contains project background, timeframe, scope, goals, objectives, the staffing plan, and staffing requirements. It continues by detailing types of skills needed, resources to be employed, roles and responsibilities, required qualifications, training requirements, material needs, and any applicable contract terms.

The use of resource planning, the critical path method, help project management determine how many and what types of resources will be needed to complete a given deliverable. Adding together these deliverables provide insight into total resources required and cost to complete each deliverable. In the end, it is important to understand that a thorough

understanding of the project is key to ensuring the human resource plan is accurate and will

hopefully not require changes along the way.

Final Reflection

In a final reflection of PMGT-611 and my experience with Anatomy of Project

Organizations, I must take a view from thirty thousand feet, so-to-speak. Project Management

involves an understanding of the organization's strategic business plan and how each project

supports the organization's mission and vision. Once the final project plan has been determined,

project management involves the use of human resources in support of the plan. In some cases,

the human factor involves international relationships and the use of virtual teams. Understanding

this, each project manager must understand who they are as a person and how they interact with

others. This understanding helps establish a strong relationship leadership style and will help

establish a strong culture within the organization and team. I must admit that understanding the

big picture, and in some cases, the finite details, has helped me identify faults within my

leadership style and how I can work to correct those deficiencies. I can't wait to learn more and

see where my project management career with lead.

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