

BUILDING TEAMS

5.2 - Deliverable: Blog - Building Teams

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Welcome to my Week 5 Blog!

This week's blog has to deal with what a Project Manager (PM) can do to achieve the triple constraints for project success. In order to describe what a PM can do; we need to understand what is meant by triple constraints. A triple constraint are the competing demands of time, cost, and scope. These constraints frequently represent trade-off decisions to be dealt with by the project manager (Larson and Gray, 2014).

Sitting here, I can't help but reflect upon the time when I was part of a twelve-man team sent to Baghdad, Iraq to form the Peace Dragon team. Twelve people from differing backgrounds, experience and leadership levels, and attitudes had to come together to form a functional and productive team. You wouldn't think that a strong norm of teamwork would exist from the outset, but it really did. While each team member brought something different to the table, each had a strong desire for the project and team to work. I believe this helped overcome some of the initial differences and friction, at times, that normally comes with trying to form a team with people you don't know.

The Peace Dragon Team consisted of two maintenance leads, one quality manager, seven maintenances and two avionics technicians. In our case, I would say the five-stage team development model was the key to our success. We understood what we were there to do but had not yet established team structure, responsibilities, and what would become our team norms. The initial meeting was heated at times and it was from that meeting that our forming and storming took place. We developed our shift teams and organized manpower into a structure that would lead to our 100% mission readiness recognition. From there, we would settle into our routine or norms and continued performing. Before we all knew it, seven months had passed and we were turning over a successfully establish team plan to our reliefs. To this day, the team still operates under our design with great success.

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As part of our forming stage, the Chief Inspector would lead the 04:00 to 13:00 team. At 04:00 the previous night's assignments were logged into the aircraft records and that day's maintenance would be distributed to each of the three teams. The early team would perform preflight duties, and maintenance due, and ready mission aircraft for departure. The team would remain in place until relieved for breakfast. After breakfast, the Chief Inspector and Maintenance Manager would meet to discuss assignments for that day. This hand-off would help ensure a success and well distributed work load, and prevent mission delay. The next meeting would occur when the day shift would turn-over to the night shift at 16:00.

Meetings occurred on three levels:

1. Daily shift meetings between crew leads,
2. Maintenance Manager & Chief Inspector meetings to discuss aircraft status, and
3. Week mission conference calls back to the U.S.

By structuring meetings and establishing a normal routine for those meetings, the Peace Dragon could assure smooth transition and support for each team. Should this team form again, I would recommend the same team structure to ensure all team members are informed and aware of their duties and responsibilities. I feel this lack of confusion helped contribute to our success.

My only recommendation to increase team effectiveness would have been to include our Iraqi Airforce counterparts. The cross-cultural interaction worked on a small scale but could have been greatly enhanced by expanding our team to include their support.

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References

Larson E. W. and Gray C. F. (2014). Project Management: The Managerial Process (6th Ed.).

New York, NY. McGraw-Hill.