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PROJECT MANAGEMENT: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

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Project Management: Sphere of Influence

INTRODUCTION

The project manager, typically don't own a team of dedicated resources. Instead, they interact with a project organization and must acquire business resources who don't report to them to deliver the project.

Because of that, it's exciting to look at the project manager's sphere of influence because it varies and is different from a typical manager's sphere of influence. For example, the average manager will directly impact their team – they can tell their people exactly what to do with real consequences. Sure, a project manager can in some ways do that as well, but it's much more prominent as a functional manager will have direct control over their resources.

BACKGROUND

Project managers fulfill many roles within their sphere of influence. These roles reflect the project manager's capabilities and represent the value and contributions of the project management profession.

SOLUTION

Leadership, planning, coordination, and communications play an essential role. A project manager influences their project, organization, industry, professional discipline, and other fields. As part of these, the influence spreads to all the project stakeholders, for example, suppliers supplying resources, tools, or information to the project. All are influenced by the PM's work and the outcome of the project.

MAXIMIZING THE PROJECT MANAGERS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

A project manager needs to lead the project team, meet the project objectives, and meet or manage stakeholder expectations. When changes arrive, a project manager will use their skills to ensure that stakeholders support the project instead of going against it and even to support the project decisions even when they disagree with them.

That can be a very challenging situation, but it will be something that be worked through. As noted in the PMBOK guide, that the top 2% of project managers demonstrate average relationship-building and communication skills while displaying a positive attitude. They display a positive attitude and work through those issues, so they can maintain positive stakeholder relationships and work through issues that arise in the future.



A project manager must also influence the organization, working with other project managers. As an example, a PM is assigned to ten projects going on simultaneously, and each requires unique resources which sometimes overlap. The PM uses their power, influence, and skills to ensure that tasks still get done while at the same time helping other projects around the organization.

It can be a tricky situation, but it is something that will need to have visibility. Each project impacts other projects due to demands on the same resources, funding, and impacts of the change to the business. Sometimes the company can only manage so much change at once. Additionally, they have the business-as-usual work to complete, often leading to capacity constraints on the client side.

As project management capability increases, it's also essential throughout the organization that everyone works from the same playbook, ensuring everyone is on the same page. Working with others is more advantageous when everyone works from the same process steps.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT

The project manager must be fully engaged with the industry as well. They need to stay informed about current industry trends; change is constant, and it's up to the individual to be aware of what's happening in industry because these trends will impact the project. Something could come out of the blue and completely change the landscape; early knowledge of these items can make all the difference in the effectiveness of the PM response.

Examples include product technology development, new market niches, regulations, or broader economic forces, for example, maybe the stock market is starting to fall, or money is flowing out of the industry. Knowing these new tools, skills, and disciplines (for example, Agile came into IT more than a decade ago and is now into project management and operations management) is a key to providing high client value and staying relevant in the PM profession.



A project manager needs to influence and be aware of their professional discipline. That means continuing our professional development, continuing to learn, continuing education, and sharing that knowledge. Sharing knowledge with others in the organization helps everyone sing the same melody and work from the same process steps. Helping others improve their way of work and their methods for delivering projects improves the whole industry and drives improvement to the entire human experience. It might change the standards for delivering projects worldwide. Interactions like this are beautiful. Being a solution provider while developing project management knowledge and expertise makes the job have meaning.

CONCLUSION

Lastly, the project manager's sphere of influence will occur across disciplines. And that's part of the actual value of project management because project management is a skill set that applies to any industry. A project management process that works across disciplines can help coach, improve, and inspire others in that method to help them get the business value they need.



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Serving as an Associate Director of Program and Project Management at CAI, Patrick Hayes works with a team of experienced professionals in bringing integrated services to the client. A former Coast Guard Officer, Patrick specialized in human performance technology, focusing on international training and development to allied and developing countries. Patrick has over 22 years of experience planning and executing capital projects, with significant experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Patrick has a comprehensive understanding of the various workstreams and efforts necessary to achieve Operational Readiness in a manufacturing facility. Patrick has a BS in Business and Organizational Development, MBA in Organizational Operations Management, a Certified Six Sigma Black Belt, and multiple Project Management Certifications.



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