

Getting Work Done – The Human Side of Project Management

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Project Management is defined as the art and science of getting work done with the active cooperation of individuals and organizations who are directly or indirectly involved with the project. This includes Senior Management, Project Sponsors(s), Customers, End-users, Stakeholders, Team Members, Sub-contractors, Vendors and Consultants. Given the reality of minimal authority and total responsibility for the outcome of the project, the Project Manager's biggest challenge consist of "Getting Work Done".

Professional Project Management today is subject to increased industry pressures from accelerated implementations, restructuring and downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, faster technology obsolescence, and the use of new and unproven technologies. Furthermore, the project environment itself is rapidly changing with the use of distributed and virtual teams as organizations implement new "Projectized" cultures.

The Challenge for the Project Manager consists of attracting the right resources, forming a cohesive team, keeping the team motivated, meeting individual aspirations and getting the work done – all within scope, cost, time, and customer satisfaction! How should we meet the challenge of dealing with the human side of Project Management? Here is a checklist with the "**Ten Golden Rules**" to help you assess the maturity level of Project Management and team effectiveness in your IS/IT projects. Place a check mark against each question, only if you can answer it with a confident "Yes".

Golden Rule # 1: Develop a Project Organization

- Are there specific individuals who are identified as the Sponsor and the Customer or Client for the project?
- Does everyone know who has the single source of responsibility for the project?
- Is there a Project Organization Chart with individuals identified for each role including team members and internal/external stakeholders?
- Are the roles, responsibilities and expectations clearly defined for each individual?
- Have the responsibilities and commitments been formally accepted by the individuals?

Golden Rule # 2: Formulate a Team Purpose

- Is there a common understanding of project objectives and deliverables among all players?
- Are the "Vision, Purpose, Goals" of the project documented and supported by a scope definition with SMART objectives (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Target-driven)?
- Is there an agreed baseline schedule with resource commitments and intermediate milestones and deliverables for the project?
- Are the functional organizations that are impacted by the project on board with the project objectives and project plans?
- Did team members have input into the norms, rules and processes to be followed for smooth functioning of the team?

Golden Rule # 3: Scope and Sell the Project

- Do you know who your clients are and do you have their enthusiastic support?
- Do you have a presentation that explains the business benefits of the project, its major components, how the project will be implemented and why it takes as long as it does?
- Do you have a Risk Management plan that you can execute if and when a major risk event occurs?
- Do you keep your client(s) positively engaged in the project and hold regular update/review meetings with your client(s) and project team?

- Does the Project Sponsor understand the complexity of the project and support the Project Manager in resolving problems that are outside his/her control?

Golden Rule # 4: Insulate Team from Management Issues

- Is there a process for escalating problems to management and resolving issues?
- Is "Project Politics" practiced in a positive way to advance the project towards its completion and influence the intended project outcome?
- Is the Project Manager experience/trained to effectively delegate work, coach and support the team?
- Is the Project Manager experienced in exercising various communication tools and soft skills?
- Is there a well defined process for decision-making within the project team and is the process working?

Golden Rule # 5: Teams Optimize, Individuals Maximize

- Does every team member clearly understand his/her deliverables, acceptance criteria, and the individuals who will be approving or accepting the deliverable?
- Is there an agreed facilitation process for team discussion and issue resolution?
- Are decisions arising from team meetings based on a decision making process primarily driven by consensus?
- Are the team members excited about the project experience? Do they see it as a learning opportunity for improving their competency, knowledge and skills?
- Is there a regularly published newsletter to communicate project and team achievements to all clients, stakeholders and the project team?

Golden Rule # 6: Encourage & Facilitate Open Communication

- Is there a formal and structured communication process in place consisting of reviews, status reports, minutes of meetings and management updates etc.?
- Does the Communication Plan include weekly "One on One" reviews with team members?
- Does the review process allow for discussion of potential problems & possible solutions?
- Does the team environment genuinely believe in and encourage sharing and trust-building?
- Do team members believe that the team is empowered to make decisions relevant to how the work is to be done (as opposed to being micro-managed)?

Golden Rule # 7: Institutionalize Positive Mindset

- Do your team members believe that their meetings are generally productive?
- Do you invite team members to provide feedback on the content and process of the meeting so that you can continually improve the management and performance of meetings?
- Are meeting participants willing to interact and listen effectively during your project meetings?
- Do your meetings focus on problem resolution as opposed to assignment of blame?
- Do you proactively ascertain the confidence & commitment of team members regularly?

Golden Rule # 8: Remember the Five "R"s

- Does the project team practice and follow through the 5Rs - Respect, Recognition, Rewards, Rest and Recreation?
- Is the project baseline schedule realistic and based on reasonable assumptions?
- Do the team members believe that the project goal is both challenging and achievable?
- Do you celebrate significant achievements and milestones throughout the project life cycle?
- Do you formally thank, congratulate & recognize team members for their specific contribution on the project?

Golden Rule # 9: Implement Consistent & Predictable Processes

- Are team members trained in the fundamentals of Project Management and are they familiar with the organization’s business terminology and Project Management Methodology?
- Do team members clearly understand the differences and context of the various methodologies used for project management, system design, systems development, proprietary solutions and IT operations etc.?
- Is there a clear understanding of work packages, milestones, critical path and related project dependencies among the team members?
- Are team members trained to provide meaningful, clear & concise weekly status report?
- Do team members have the opportunity to develop their communication and soft skills as part of the project experience?

Golden Rule # 10: Transition the Team Graciously

- Do you get a formal signoff from the client whenever a project deliverable is approved and accepted?
- Do you take the time to provide feedback to team members on their project performance?
- Do team members know their responsibilities with respect to Change Requests, Enhancements, Support, Warranty and Maintenance regarding the project deliverables.
- Do you hold formal debrief sessions including a post-implementation “Lessons Learnt” review with the team following project completion?
- Will your team members enthusiastically volunteer to be a part of your next project?

Creating successful teams requires conscious and deliberate investment of time and effort. Teams are built around four basic principles that recognize the importance of Team Structure, Team Process, Team Culture and Team Politics. Teams must embrace a common purpose, and develop and follow a set of common processes based on a set of values and culture adopted by the team. The Project Manager’s role in team building is to guide, coach, mentor, facilitate and direct as required to achieve the intended project outcome. The success and survival of project teams depends on understanding the human side of Project management.

Score and assess your Project Management and Team Building Skills

Check your score by counting “Yes” responses to the questions and refer to the guideline below for assessment of the team building maturity level in your project organization:

Total Score	Team Building Maturity Level	Team Building Maturity Assessment
1-10	Initial	Level 1: No processes for Project Management and team building; Working mostly on an “Ad-hoc” basis
11-20	Repeatable	Level 2: Basic formal processes developed and used consistently for team building
21-30	Defined	Level 3: Demonstrated management support and processes for Project Management and team building
31-40	Managed	Level 4: Evolving towards a “Projectized” culture and high performance teams
41-50	Optimizing	Level 5: Implemented self-managed High Performance Teams In a fully “Projectized” environment

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