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Achievement-driven Project Management Approach

Our AdPM™ approach is a little different. We don't just start work the moment the project sponsor or client mentions some vague mission statement mush. That would be foolish, yet project managers do it all the time. A little story may help. Imagine that you work at the drive-thru window of a fast food joint. A customer drives up and says, "I'm hungry." Would you launch into a frenzy of hamburger flipping and taco rolling? Most assuredly not, you'd ask some questions because the answers to them would substantially improve your chances of satisfying the customer. Our AdPM™ approach has the same focus. We spend a lot of time asking questions, structuring the project, detailing accountabilities and making clear the achievements (measured achievements) that we expect from everyone.

Overview

In the high-level summary below, we begin with a lengthy broadbrush planning process (your plans may not take 10 months but if this was a big project with a duration of a decade it might). So, we start with a lot of planning and then proceed through launch, risk assessment, fine-tuning and the steps leading to approval. Then we begin our tracking process using the plan we've developed. We've outlined the approach in the charts below with the time elements distorted so that you can see the sequence without the Gantt's being so wide that they display on the monitor of the person sitting next to you. Okay, with the big picture in mind, let's look at the details of the planning phase which we call broadbrush planning. Our approach is for cross-functional corporate projects. You know, the projects where they don't give you a set of blueprints when you start. The broadbrush planning process creates a blueprint and forces us to deal with all the messy politics on the front end. This is also where you ask for and hopefully get "requisite authorities." As an example, it's a lot easier to get authority to remove team members during planning, rather than wait until you're into the work and find out that the lazy bum on task #345 is the boss's niece. Before the broadbrush plan is done, we begin the launch phase. That's where we schmooze with the stakeholders and try and avoid having too many of them stick knives in our back. We also use the MOS™ (Measure of Success) to communicate the project purpose widely. Finally, we get to the part that most of you start with, the detailed work breakdown structure. Sure, it's fun to lay out all those tasks, predecessors and work assignments. This is micro-manager's heaven where they sternly look at your plan to make sure you really have scheduled everyone's toilet trips for June of 2003. Our approach focuses on managing the project with achievements, not micro-tasks. Take a look at the [AdPM™ Overview](#) if you want some detail on that. The fine-tuning steps below are based on our "4-Corners Planning™" approach where every project has four measures: achievement, budget, duration and risk. When all four are quantified we can work trade-offs like "if we cut the budget by 20%, what happens to the risk level?" This trade-offs process allows you go into subsequent approval sessions prepared to answer questions like, "How can we do this faster?" That these questions are always asked should never come as a surprise. Here we go with status reports, variance analysis and those awkward explanations about why you are 65% over spent. We also like to monitor culture and spend a lot of time rewarding the people who reach their measured achievements.

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