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Project Leadership – 87334
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The reading materials reaffirmed my knowledge and experience as Project Manager. The article, *Manager's Spotlight on Risk Management*, Chapter 4, "Preventing Scope and Schedule Risks" states scope, schedule and budget risks plague every project. I agree scope and schedule undergo more fluctuations that require an integrated change management plan to help prevent risk. In my opinion, the biggest risk factor to any project is human resources, (i.e., "The People Factor") from the Project Manager to the subject matter experts. As stated in the article, if it was not for people, all projects would complete on time, on schedule and on budget. Unfortunately, it takes people to perform the tasks and meet the project goals. This was my frustration during the last Simulation because I felt the resources were a big factor in the project's failure due to their inconsistent feedback and performance. From my perspective, the simulation gave no indication the resources helped to provide estimates to develop the schedule. Thus, I assumed they were not involved. In fact, management imposed the aggressive schedule, scope, and budget. I believe their resistance, inconsistent communication, and poor performance demonstrates the importance of involving the team to develop estimates and provide input into the development of the schedule. It is true that some project managers do not feel they need team member's input because of either ego or fear. As a new project manager (over 17 years ago), I was embarrassed to ask for input into the development of estimates, requirements, risk planning, schedule development, etc because I felt that I was suppose to

know it all. Knowing it all was part of my job, right. Wrong. Knowing when to ask for “directions”, whether male or female is a big deal because it shows vulnerability. When I realized I needed to start involving my team members, I noticed the same benefits as pointed out in the article, *Manager’s Spotlight on Risk Management*, Chapter 4, “Preventing Scope and Schedule Risks” such as improved motivation and accountability, buy-in from the team members, more accurate estimates and timelines; resulting in increased productivity. Quite honestly, involving the team helped me to become a better project manager, more knowledgeable and confident as their leader driving the project to completion.

As my experience matured and I gained more confidence, I learned that at the heart of a successful project is a strong motivated team. Among other favorable traits, a strong team will communicate well, possess passion for project progress and bring metrics in on time and under budget. To build a team of this caliber, one does not have to hand-select from the top of Ivy League schools, dig in a sea of resumes or build a game room in a data center. The secret to a strong motivated project team is simply proper “macro” management of team resources, allowing team member’s creativity for how they will complete their tasks, establishing communication checkpoints and expectations around scope, schedule, and performance. A PM is not expected to know every technical or business answer, but it is important to equip the project with strong business and technical support. Bad designs and decisions in the planning phase of the project will almost surely cause the project to fail. Failure to “get the right people on the bus and in the right seats” can lead to delays, cost increases, unexpected issues, and other negative consequences such as project cancellation.

The two most important characteristics of a project team is having the right project manager and a strong team that work synergistically to achieve a common goal. Referring to the PMBOK, 5th edition section 2.3, “the structure and characteristics of a project team can vary, but one constant is the project manager’s role as the leader of the team, regardless of what authority the project manager may have over its members.”

A critical component to having a motivated team that the article did not touch on is the importance of having a project manager’s skill set matched to the complexity level of the project. As part of the predecessor course to this one, ORG 240 – I touched on this element:

“Project management is a complex process that requires a broad range of skills.” Everyone is a project manager at some point in his or her personal or professional life. There are many critical success factors of project management and one of them is having the right person for the right job. Let us be honest, not everyone is cut out to be a project manager. If you are a project manager, it is important to be setup for success. A project manager’s skill set must align with the level of service, project size, and project complexity, which will help to reduce risk of project delivery overruns and increase profitability of success.

It is also true that a project needs to have the right resource assigned based on their skill set and the complexity of the project.

As pointed out in the article, *PMI’s Pulse of the Profession: The High Cost of Low Performance*, organizations running projects lean on resources is detrimental to overall project success and the financial bottom-line. Organizations are trying to accomplish more with fewer resources. According to the article, “Declining project success rates have ramifications that extend beyond the scope of any individual project. When project

timelines are not met, when budgets are exceeded or when intended project goals are not fulfilled, unintended demands are placed on other resources—people, projects, products, budgets and overall organizational goals.” In my opinion, many of the simulations have put a lot of pressure on the team to complete the project based on an aggressive schedule, tight budget, and lean staff.

With our resources being paramount in the success of a project, organizations need to invest in their resource’s continued training and education. As noted in the article, “*The High Cost of Low Performance*” Figure 8 (p. 8), “High performers have more training in place than low performers, which implies that focusing on talent management improves project success.” To improve an organization’s outcomes, leadership needs to focus on talent management by integrating a formal development process, ongoing training, and a defined career path. The result of this investment is high performers with exceptional results completing projects on time, on budget and meeting goals, which contribute to the organization’s bottom-line; thereby, significantly reducing dollars at risk by an estimated \$260 Million according to *The High Cost of Low Performance, Driving Organizational Success* (p. 6).

In conclusion, when an organization has high performing talent, exceptional project management leadership with a unified team the result is a successful project completed on time, on schedule, and on budget.