

In today's world of both flatter organisational structures and rapid change there is an ever greater need for businesses to be able to successfully execute projects in order to evolve. This is especially true in commercial departments where projects both within and across functions are becoming the everyday norm.

One of our clients came to us recently with a real dilemma - they knew that their sales and marketing team needed to get better at project execution but they could not find any project management training which was pitched at an appropriate level. Upon searching the marketplace they could only find specialist project management courses aimed at highly complex, long term and high budget projects - this was quite simply overkill for the level/type of project their commercial team faced.

Our response was to work with them in the development of a “**Commercial Project Management Programme**” - this programme was designed specifically for the commercial team and to be delivered in a two day practical workshop session.

The results were fantastic - teams developed full project plans to our “good practice” standard for a real live business opportunity over the two days and the process has not yet failed [over twenty projects delivered on time and within budget].

Lets look at the process in a little more detail...it contains six *Key Elements* and eight *Planning Templates* which effectively form the backbone of our programme as shown below :

The 6 Key Elements...

PROJECT SCOPING
PROJECT ROLES AND TEAM SELECTION
THE PROJECT KICK OFF MEETING
PROJECT ROADMAP MEETING
MILESTONE REVIEWS
PROJECT CLOSURE

Key Element 1

Project Scoping is critical in order to ensure that the business issues, objectives, barriers, risks etc are all fully understood before the project even gets underway. Our experience told us that poorly defined scope/objectives are the biggest killers of project success.

Key Element 2

Project Roles and Team Selection is vital as we find that far too often individuals are co-opted onto projects without the necessary attitudes, time or line manager support. This can often lead to stresses later and project work not being completed [the “*day job comes first*” syndrome] within timescales. In our process individuals cannot form part of the project group unless they have both the right technical skills, attitude/approach, time AND line manager support.

Key Element 3

Is the Kick Off Meeting - our checklist ensures that all of the necessary hoops are jumped through to ensure that the project workstreams are identified and allocated successfully and workstream leaders are crystal clear as to their responsibilities.

Key Element 4

Is the Project Roadmap meeting in which the workstream leaders present back their detailed plans. It is critical at this early stage to ensure that each plan is complete and robust and that all dependencies are discussed. Flushing out project weaknesses early

Key Element 5.....

are the Milestone Reviews - these are held at each milestone within the project plan and the key is to report only exceptions/variances vs plan and then invest as much time as possible looking forward to and planning for the likely challenges to be faced in reaching

The last Key Element.....

is Project Closure and is vital to ensure both that project success is recognised and celebrated and to inject a continuous learning and improvement culture into the business.

The Eight Project Management Templates

1. Project Scoping
2. Team Selection
3. Kick Off Meeting Checklist
4. Project Communications Plan
5. Roadmap Review Meeting Checklist
6. Workstream Action plan
7. Milestone Review Meeting Checklist
8. Project Closure Report

Project Managers within our client now know that simply by following six key steps fully they are almost certain to deliver their projects successfully. They have the necessary supporting documentation [the 8 templates] but are not using planning methods designed to construct Wembley Stadium in order to plan a promotional campaign or distribution drive !

TWO OTHER CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

1. The training methodology employed to deliver our programme was we believe critical - the very first iteration of our workshop training was delivered to the senior commercial team and included a module focussed on ***their role*** in driving the new Project Management standard as a company expectation. Because the team genuinely bought into the practicality and enormous value of the Project Management Programme they committed to drive its cascade through the business. Project Sponsors immediately demanded the process be used and also used it themselves -hence modelling and embedding a new way of working effectively.
2. We focus heavily at every stage of projects on COMMUNICATION. Only if all the right people are kept informed [via an appropriate medium] will the project continue to enjoy support...poor communication kills perfectly good projects stone dead !

If you would like to improve your success in delivering commercial projects - and so improve your chances of gaining competitive advantage - contact Chris Hudd our Director of Training and Development on 0870-2243381 or e-mail chris@springboardcs.com