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Planning? Yes, indeed, planning!

By Germán Bernate

Knowledge workers love action: Their immediate boss has not even finished assigning a job when you may see them rushing around to fulfill his/ her commands. Act quickly! Time is a natural enemy! Just a couple of hours later the final product is ready... But, without exception, there will be a party pooper who dramatically, pointing out with his/her forefinger will state: "That product is wrong". A closer look to the product will unveil multiple errors. By this way the assiduous employee will become aware of the multiple errors made and will get to a two ways road: The first alternative, to ignore that bothering party pooper: Who he/she thinks he/she is? He/she is not the one to judge my work! ¿How he/she dares?

After a fast reflection the activity's executor realizes something: Certainly product is wrong. What should he/she do? For sure his/her manager will not accept such a deliverable. Should he/she start all over again? He/she, undoubtedly, has lost time, resources and the opportunity to use the product in a timely manner. Sadly, he/she discovers that his/her mistakes are caused by a single error: Lack of planning.

The knowledge worker acting our story decides to start from the very beginning; hence, he/she seeks advice from some colleagues to determine what should he/she learn and where. Business Administration and Project Management books drive him/her to an interesting conclusion: All authors agree that he/she must Plan, Manage and Control. They also advise to act prudently.

An old history reference, claimed on behalf of Napoleon Bonaparte, comes here to help: "Dress me slowly that I am in a rush" It might be a fable or it might be true, however it points out something which is important: Planning is a mental exercise of future's creation that must follow a certain type of methodology – whichever it may be – and must be developed with the key support of our intellect.

To prepare a plan the first thing is to know, in full details, what you intend to do. As an example let's suppose that your city's mayoralty wants to develop a "Pedestrian Education Campaign". Too many questions arise: Which are the pedestrian groups in which we are interested? What people walk in city's downtown area? What people are in the business districts? Now we have started to make it interesting: Scope is defined, this means that definition is made on what is to be done. Campaign is addressed to city's downtown area. Only for this area, and if new areas are to be incorporated, that will represent a different project. Why is it? Well, because it is vital to establish a clear framework and to avoid severe changes.

Next plan is related to time. It is necessary to define the date in which the campaign will take place. After that a complete list of all the activities required to comply with such target must be prepared. Then, the Costs plan must be prepared. In it questions are also too many, and conclude in Budget's preparation. All of above mentioned plans must be submitted to High Management approval, and after that, at last, we are ready for action and to start developing the project... and certainly things will now result better.

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