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It's All About Commitment!

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One of the biggest challenges a practitioner Project Manager can face, is a project with a tight deadline. Given today's economic and market conditions, that is a very common trend nowadays. But the key to drive a project of this kind in its way to success is held by people, so in order to get what is needed from these people, it is extremely important to gain their commitment to the project, since the very beginning.

But, what exactly is commitment? How can it be defined? It can be described as a shared vision, a vision that makes people work in synergy to achieve any given objective. Commitment is a sum of many factors, including at least:

- Understanding of business' needs
- Willingness
- Communication
- Sincerity
- Negotiation and conflict resolution

Factor #1: A clear understanding of the business' needs

All stakeholders should invest time and effort figuring out which are the real needs of the business. A clear and concise project - and requirements - definition is critical. Once all these needs are gathered and perfectly defined, every stakeholder will be able to understand the reasons why the project is being developed, so they can start working toward their common goal. It contributes to create a shared vision for the project.

Factor #2: Willingness

In order to achieve their common goal, all stakeholders have to be willing to provide the resources that are required from them, including time, money and information. They all have to be willing to collaborate with each other. This kind of behavior also facilitates the creation of a team culture.

Factor #3: Constant communication

To keep people engaged with the project, from beginning to end, all aspects of the project's status should be communicated promptly to all stakeholders. In order to do this, it is necessary to create a communications plan, appropriately adjusted to the project's needs. It is extremely important to address all risks and issues as soon as they occur, so everyone is informed, and actions could be taken in a timely manner. The communications plan should be updated frequently, to reflect all changes in communication requirements.

Factor #4: Sincerity

Even when things are getting tough, all stakeholders should be accurately informed of the status of the project. If every stakeholder is honest about issues affecting the project and their possible consequences, the other stakeholders will understand what is going on, and they probably will provide all the support that is needed.

Factor #5: Appropriate use of negotiations and conflict resolution techniques

Every project, regardless of its size, faces many conflicts. Some of those conflicts may be difficult to address; some may not. But all of them require the use of negotiation and conflict resolutions techniques, in order to achieve a win-win solution. Therefore, it is critical for a Project Manager to know how and when to use these techniques, so he/she can avoid a possible threat to the project's ultimate goal.

As it can be seen, typical project restrictions like budget, time, scope or quality, do not translate a project into an impossible undertaking. If a Project Manager can find some creative ways to gain people's commitment, he/she will have the opportunity to work on a project with many chances to succeed.

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