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Seven things a beginner project manager must NOT do

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Every new experience brings with it a lot of new - and probably contradictory - emotions. That's exactly what happens in Project Management; every project is a whole new experience by itself.

As in every other areas of life, you never stop learning. Fortunately, we can learn by our own or by anyone else's experiences; that's precisely why, based on my previous experience (best known as 'Lessons Learned'), I'd like to share these seven things you, as a beginner project manager, must NOT do, in order to succeed in your new career:

1. Accept the job without knowing what it is about: If you do not know what exactly project management is, the impact that project management can have in organizations, and how to define a successful project, be sure to figure it out before you take the job
2. Refuse to learn about project management theory and practice: project management, as many other professional fields, requires you to engage in a constant learning process, especially at the very beginning. If you are not willing to do that, you'll start on the wrong path.
3. Refuse to learn about business processes: a project manager has to be an open-minded person. We all have to learn about the project and the business's environment, corporate processes, market threats and opportunities, thus expanding our corporate vision. Many of this information can be gained by experience, but it'll make things easier if you start collecting it since the beginning, before your first project initiates. It'll help you better understand your client's needs and, therefore, the purpose of the project.
4. Refuse to involve the client or end-user in all project life-cycle phases: you are managing a project, and someone is going to use its end result. So why not involve this user in the whole process? After all, he's the one who knows exactly what he needs and why, and he's the one who will approve or reject your project at the end.

5. Reject advice: there probably are people in your organization who have much more experience than you. They should have read a lot about the topic, they should have worked in many projects, or they probably have experienced the same troubles as you. Their experience is a valuable asset for the organization, and it could be valuable for you as well. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

6. Engage in project management for the wrong reasons: if you are entering the project management field only because you'd like to be someone else's boss, think about it twice. If you do not care about the benefits the organization as a whole will receive from project management, how can you inspire your team to achieve their goals? It'll be harder for you to gain credibility and acquire leadership if you think that way.

7. Try to do all technical work by yourself: It is especially true for all of us coming from a technical field like IT. As the project manager, it is your job to guide the team (whether you chose the teams members or not) to complete the agreed scope, within a given timeframe and under a specified budget. It is not your job to tell them how to do their work. Think about an Orchestra. The director guides them throughout the melody, but he does not tell them how to play their instruments; they already know that, this is why they are part of the team.

Moving into Project Management, especially for those who are new to the field, can be a wonderful but frightening experience. However, if you plan ahead of time what your expectations are, and how you are going to handle them, you'll have success guaranteed.

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