Project Management as a Standard Standard

By: Collin Quiring

During a class I was teaching on Project Management, I started thinking about how those of us in the Project Management field can help a company implement the standards of PM and make them a "standard" methodology. There are numerous books, seminars and information with great details on how to implement standards of PM effectively. So, I am adding my own 3 steps to the process (not that they are the only steps or in place of all those other books).

1. Make the standards the standard way of work

Before any concept or process becomes a standard methodology of doing business, the business must make it part of the regular process of business. I think that this is the main area where PM starts to falter. Management allows "exceptions", which tend to beget more "exceptions" and before long only certain projects have to follow the PM process. And, even on those projects that do follow the process, there are parts of the project that get to be exceptions from the process.

If we make a "no exception" rule there is immediate gnashing of teeth and a host of seemingly valid reasons as to why that is a bad idea. If a company were to implement the no exception rule I think that this would become part of the standard procedure. And, with a no exception rule must come a "level of detail" rule. For example, a small project gets only a one page Project Charter while a huge project gets a multi-page Project Charter. The amount of documentation and rigidity can vary, but there should be documentation and a standard!

A great example of how other standards become standard within a company is found in how payroll is handled. The employees of a company know that if they want to get paid, they must turn in their time. For some employees, that might mean punching a time card and nothing else. Every week, a new timecard shows up with their name on it and they just have to do their little piece – punch the card. For other employees, they have to manually track their hours, whether on paper or in software and then they have to report those hours. For employees whose hours may be billable, they have to track their total number of hours, and separate out the hours for each client and even each job that they work for each client. And, still other employees don't have to do anything – they get a paycheck on a regular schedule for a set amount, whether they worked 30, 40 or 80 hours that week.

2. Time and New Hires

The second issue that helps to make PM standards an ingrained part of an organization is time. As time goes on, the longer that a certain standard is "the way we do it" becomes the way it is done by everybody. Along with time, comes personnel turnover – as people are hired into the company and standards are already in place, they are more willing to accept that "this is the way we do it" here. Every company has different cultures, methods and processes that a new employee has to become a part of

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when they join an organization – and if they join one that has PM standards in place, then those just become part of the way that work is done.

3. **Commitment**

To accomplish making PM a standard of doing business, the PMO, Senior Management and others with authority must be committed to it! That one may appear on both lists but it can never be understated. If it takes time and a "no exception" rule then it takes commitment to see it through. Senior Management can't undermine the "no exception" rule – and they have to keep supporting that rule over a long time.

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