



Selecting and Eliminating The Team and Project Manager

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There are a lot of articles, blogs and even some books about how Project Manager's should be selected. Also, stories abound about how people find themselves in the role of Project Manager because "they were there" or by some other fortunate series of events (or some would say, misfortune ☺). The same is often said for the team that is assembled – they were there, or they were the only people available or whatever other criteria was used to choose them. Unfortunately, in many cases, the team and the Project Manager are chosen not because of skill sets or abilities but due to any of a thousand different reasons.

My son and I have been enjoying a television show on the History channel called "Top Shot". This is yet another reality show and in this one 16 people from around the United States compete for a \$100,000 and the title of being "The Top Shot". They go through various team and individual challenges where they use different weapons (firearms, bow and arrow, tomahawks, etc) and people are eliminated. A key piece of information is that the worst marksman is NOT necessarily the one eliminated. The best marksman is NOT necessarily the one that is the most likely to win.

How does this apply to Project Teams? I was thinking about the way the 16 people were initially chosen. Basically, anybody that wanted to be on the show could apply (with a list of rules and legalese with some simple requirements – like never having made terroristic threats). As a participant, you must have skills in the area of marksmanship. I was thinking that this would be a great way to obtain the Project Team – have folks volunteer! But, then reality sunk in and I realized that getting volunteers to form the team for a project are few and far between. And, the prospect of giving one team member a prize of \$100,000 for being on your team seems unlikely. It would be great to get the people with the correct skills to volunteer for a project. Barring a great bank of volunteers trying to get on a project, at least having a known skill set pool to help select from would be great. And, some sort of criteria, other than immediate availability, for how a person gets on the team would be beneficial.

What about the Project Manager? I have only watched Season Two of Top Shot but assume that the way the group leader's were selected on Season One is the same as this season. The best two marksmen in the very first competition become the Team Leaders. Those Team Leaders then pick their teams from the other 14 participants. One of the two new Team Leaders interviewed everyone and made a list of how he would rank the team members based on his own criteria. The other team leader



seemed to only talk to a few folks, get their opinions, and then decided on a few key people that he wanted and the rest kind of fell into place.

In Top Shot, the method of selection for the team leader is a bit random and a bit selective, or specific. First, the “specific” part - every one of the 16 people are highly skilled marksmen and they all have passed the requirements to be potentially selected as the lead. Therefore, from a purely skill set perspective, they are all relative equals. However, the random part is that they all had to use a weapon that they no doubt had never seen before and had to hit a target – and the “best” or “most skilled” marksmen may not have shot the closest to the bull’s-eye in this one event. And, being the best skilled on this one occasion or being the best skilled overall doesn’t necessarily make a person a leader. To me, this is very like picking a Project Manager based upon who came into work on time or early on the second Tuesday of the month.

This does have me thinking though about the way the Project Managers are chosen. Maybe we could at least start choosing Project Managers based on some minimum set of rules about their skill sets, rather than just their availability. Or, perhaps if we got a team together in a room and then had them select their own Project Manager we might get some better teams and better leaders on our teams.