



The Perfect Project Manager

By: Tim Gryder

So while the title of this article is something I doubt anyone can claim, we all have to admit that we either aspire to be the perfect project manager or sponsor the perfect project manager. I say this to address the reality that is the variation in experience in project managers. Variation of experience is understood but some things cannot be done without...so these are my thoughts on the perfect project manager.

First of all, I look for a PMI certified project manager. I want this because I know firsthand the value of a project manager that understands a healthy management process which we all know is often a complex situation to manage. After all, the management of scope, time, and resources are always a trade off and I want to know that best practices are being applied when it comes to choices and change and decision making.

A certified project manager is taught what the standard artifacts of project management are, how to use them, where to use them, when to use them and who will use them. Its best practices for things like documentation, costs, communication, risk, etc. These items are taught as textual readings, calculations, templates and general rules of engagement. These artifacts prepare the project manager for the topics of project management. This prepares them to be able to address the issues and risks and strategic considerations of project management.

But certification from an educational perspective is not enough for me. I also expect a good project manager to be able to tactically manage the project. By that I mean that a PM has got to be able to build out a WBS that results in a valid project task list. I am tired of people claiming to be PMP certified and then managing the project in a word document. Project reporting may be reported in a Word document but the tactical planning, tasking, resourcing, deliverables, milestones, constraints and costs cannot be managed in anything but a qualified project software tool.

There is also the other side of this and I have seen project managers that are really good at the tactical technical set up of project software and totally miss the strategic educational values discussed above. This too is unacceptable. These folks are often all wrapped up in making cool things happen in the software but yet miss the strategic management process all together.

So I want the best of both...I want a project manager that can manage from a best practices educational perspective and yet employ project management software with great skill and precision. So is this a point of anality or a point of great value? I believe the value of defining the project tactically in the



software does several things. First of all it communicates the specific dates of tasks, secondly it communicates who does specific tasks, and thirdly it reflects the status of the project. A word document is not the medium for the dynamic management of a project. Instead, project software can and should manage multiple variables and constraints and show you where you are and what the true state of the project is. For me this is an art form and is where educational aspects meet tactical implementation. Yes, some of these software tools are complex to use but complex projects may require complex software functionality to plan and manage well. Often the devil is in the details and I expect the process of dynamic project planning to be accomplished. I don't want to "feel" that the project is on schedule, I want some hard core task and resource data to confirm to me that the schedule is on track.

The old adage stands true...you get what you measure and deserve what you don't. So look for a project manager that can understand best practices and can actually manage strategically in a medium that manages tactically.