Project Management - A Systemic Approach

By Joseph Devine

If your business model is service-oriented, project management becomes a key part of making your customers happy. Sometimes these projects can get out of hand, especially if there are numerous components involved. So, with huge a project that requires massive amounts of materials, coordination, and people, how do you make sure the done gets done in a timely manner, with exceptional quality?

A systemic approach seems appropriate. A systemic approach implies looking at projects as though they are a system designed with a specific goal in mind. The best way to conceptualize this is comparing a system to a car. A car is designed to move from point A to point B using a complex network of parts, and synaptic mechanism to get the job done; starting the ignition, putting the car in drive, and stepping on the gas pedal. The idea behind this analogy is that all the parts of the system work together in unison in order to achieve the same result. Each piece has a specific done that contributes to the overall plan.

This is the beginning step when looking at a project holistically; understanding which pieces go where and why, but also trying to make them better so that the entire machine will work more efficiently. The key to understanding is gathering information. The key to gathering information is asking questions and developing relationships between pieces of information.

It makes sense here to take note of the people aspect. People have needs as well, and if those needs are not met they will not be able to work as efficiently as needed. It may be beneficial to think of the people aspect as a system that works within a system. The same principles apply in this case, specifically in the case where teamwork is required to get a job done.

Flexibility is also a key element in good, systemic project management. The realization that things do not always go according to plan will benefit you greatly. Sometimes surprises pop up and you must react. Being to rigid will not give you the dexterity needed to withstand and storms that may arise.

These are some of the key elements in managing a systemized project. Once the system is in place, maintenance is the only thing that is in order. Like a car, you must change the oil frequently, continue to fill it with gas, and change the tires and batteries every few years.

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