

# Be a Smart Project Manager

By Barry De Boer

The key to being a smart project manager is to remember how you are going to manage your project, to know what to do if it does not work, and to win and keep the support of all of the project stakeholders.

## How are you going to do it?

Remembering the following key points should ensure a successful project:

- Use your project methodology
- Focus on your project initiation document (PID), the specific products, maintaining quality, your risk register, your project work plan and always use change control.
- Use your experience
- Understand the corporate culture, learn any lessons from previous projects and get the best people available for your project team.
- Use your common sense

Manage the expectations of the customer, the users and the project board. Know your assumptions for the project and include them in your PID.

## What if it does not work?

Having said all of the above, mistakes and problems will occasionally happen, despite all of your best efforts as project manager. If this is the case, the important thing to do is to rely on your project methodology:

- The project board is a major component of your insurance policy. Risks and problems are shared.
- The risk register is another part of your insurance policy. If your risks are declared and accepted at the outset, any subsequent difficulties can be managed and overcome.
- The assumptions and constraints included in your PID complete your insurance policy.

## Win and keep the support of your stakeholders

If you are a smart project manager, you will have established:

- A strong relationship with your customers.
- Your position as an equal with the project board.
- A strong relationship and trust with the project executive, who is usually the project sponsor.

There may be other stakeholders that you need to be aware of and work with during the course of the project. These could include senior corporate management, external suppliers, trade associations, trade unions, future recruits or government departments, depending on the organisation and the nature of the project.

If you are unsure as to who are the most important stakeholders in the project, it may be worth using a tool such as a stakeholder influence and interest matrix which cross-references the interest and influence of each person. Individual stakeholders can be placed in the grid based on

your assessment of their influence on and interest in the project. An outline of this matrix is provided in the Project Skills eBook available from my-skills. Building these relationships, especially with the project board, project executive and customers, puts you in a position to get the rules changed in your favour.

### **Close the project in the right way**

There are a number of important steps that should be carried out in order to close a project in the right way:

- Obtain customer acceptance of the final product or outcome, ideally in writing in the form of acceptance certificates.
- If appropriate, obtain operational acceptance in the same way.
- Produce the final end of stage report for the project board.
- Archive all project documents for future reference.
- Record the lessons learned during the project.
- Conduct a review of the project in relation to the original business case, in order to ensure that the required products or outcomes have been met.
- Finally, handover the finished product or outcome to the customer.

Whether you are a smart project manager or just an average one, you will carry the can for problems, whatever the cause! Accept that this will happen, welcome it and even play to it. You will gain respect and support from all of your stakeholders and colleagues.

*Barry De Boer is a leading project management consultant with over thirty years experience in successfully managing major projects for industry and government worldwide. This article is an abridged extract from the Project Skills eBook written by Barry De Boer and published by my-skills. Further details are available by reviewing the project management solutions available from my-skills. For eBooks and learning solutions in a range of business areas including training and personal development, visit [www.myskills.co.uk](http://www.myskills.co.uk)*

Article Source: <http://www.articledashboard.com>