



How to Develop (or Save) A Project Team

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

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How to Develop (or Save) A Project Team

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this course, *How to Develop (or Save) a Project Team*, may sound like it is trying to cover two completely different concepts at the same time.

“How can you discuss developing and saving a project team in the same course?” is a reasonable question.

If you consider there is a strong possibility that the reason a team needs saving is because it was not developed correctly in the first place, it makes sense to take this approach.

We will look at first how to develop a team from scratch for a new project. Then we will assume you have been called in to rescue an existing one that is sinking.

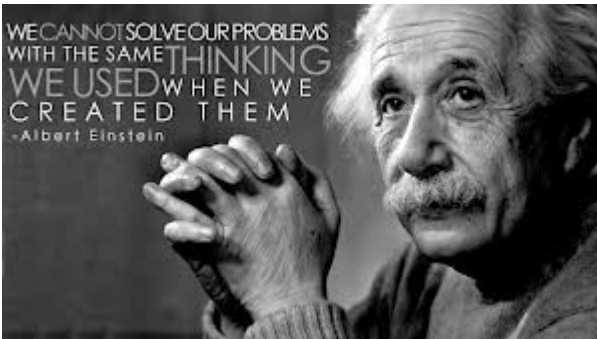
Once you understand the elements necessary to develop a *productive project team*, your first analysis of the problem can be looking for the extent to which these elements are present. There is a high probability there are not many. If this is the case, introduction of these elements will begin to stabilize the team.

Also, there may be some project team members who prefer chaos and anarchy instead of maintaining social order. These you will have to remove as quickly as possible.

Once they are out and you begin to implement the activities that lead to team development, things will settle down quickly as the remaining team members breathe a sigh of collective relief and focus on work. After all, that is why they are there, and humans really do enjoy being productive and effective.



SELECTING YOUR PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS



We will base this course on Einstein's statement, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

In this course, we suggest you consider a different way of selecting team members in case your existing practices do not always provide what you

want in terms of project members.

Consider the way Southwest Airplanes approaches hiring when they say, "Hire for *Attitude*, Train for *Skill*!"

Why would this approach be useful for Southwest?

You can teach people how to be ticket agents or baggage handlers, but you cannot teach them to smile and be courteous to people. That is a part of our inborn personality.

Would that be a useful approach for your project?

What kind of questions would you use in interviews?

How about this one, "Describe a time when you had to tell a client "no" but still had to maintain good will." Ask any questions looking for examples of them using the traits you seek.

What "train for skill" considerations are there for professionals hired into your project?

Obviously, you will not be teaching people to be engineers, accountants, or any other profession: they are already that when they come to your project. But you can "train" them how you want them to apply their customer service talents within the framework of your project team.



Here is a way to identify the traits (Attitudes – Behaviors) you want on your team. Try this with friends who are project-experienced and put their responses on a flip chart so they can learn as this develops.

Traits of the best team member I ever had...	The impact of those traits on me...	The impact those traits had on my work...
You may get something like, <i>“She always smiled and didn’t gossip, had time to listen to my stories about my kids, asked if I needed help with work when she finished hers.”</i>	It made coming to work pleasant instead of something I dreaded. It also made me think twice about doing the same for her and other team members.	My work productivity was high because I was not wasting energy on complaining, focusing on the job and not project politics.

What kind of behavioral traits would you like to see in your team members?

The emphasis is on behavioral traits – doing something. This is different from useless, attitude focused, and clichéd terms such as “team player” or “professional attitude” because you can get 12 different definitions of “team player” from a dozen different people who have different opinions of what it means.

However, if you get them *talking about behaviors that mean the person is a ‘team player’*, then you are on your way to universal agreement of what it means and a common understanding of what to expect from each other.

You may get examples like these:

- When they finish their job, they look around to see what else needs to be done
- They focus on solutions, not obstacles
- They are quick to offer help rather than waiting to be asked
- They can keep secret something told to them in confidence
- You can count on them to do what they commit to doing

Once you have identified the traits, what do you do with that information concerning selecting project team members?

You focus on finding people with those traits by asking applicants, “Tell me about a time when... [they used the trait you are seeking.]”

How likely are you to find 100% of what you are looking for regarding the “traits?”

It is unlikely that you will find 100% but there is a strong probability you will find more than you think because most people have experienced situations like those that you are describing. The interview with you will probably be the first time anyone has asked them about it.

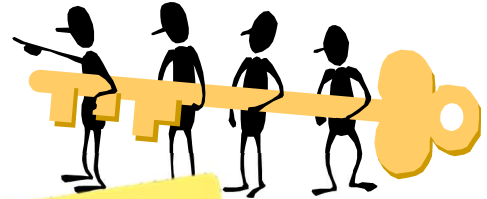
If you will not find 100% of what you are looking for, how would having these traits publicly displayed (or readily available for review) around your project be useful?

You will have made a public statement that these are your expectations. If you reference them periodically, you will gradually raise the awareness of it in your team and you will start to see them acting that way.

EIGHT ESSENTIALS FOR A HIGH-PERFORMANCE PROJECT TEAM

Project team development, as we use it here, is the *process of personal, professional, and organizational development that occurs with the team over the life of the project.*

The team members gain confidence in themselves and each other. Reliability, trust, and cooperation are present in everyday work; they are not elusive dreams we hope to find in the next project.



Project management is a key to building a cohesive team. Obviously, a team that goes on a golf outing after work, which the project manager might not want to see.

In order to create a high-performing team, the project manager must be engaged, motivated, and performing well in their own work environment. Team members must also require in their own work environment.

Here are eight key elements to a high-performance team. Some of these in this course include:

1. **Sharing Best Practices** (From the course, "No Co\$T Ways to Improve Productivity" on this website)
2. **Sharing a Common Vision** (From the course, "No Co\$T Ways to Improve Productivity" on this website)
3. **Having a Proven Process for Setting Performance Goals** (From the course, "No Co\$T Ways to Improve Productivity" on this website)
4. **Having a Chance to Work Toward Those Goals** (self-evident)
5. **Getting Periodic Feedback On Goal Progress** (See #3 above)
6. **Receiving Help and Guidance When Needed** (See #3 above)
7. **Rewarding Success with Pay Or Praise** (See #3 above)

To view the remainder of the course material and to take the quiz for PDH credit, you must purchase the course.

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