



Project Performance Secrets – Managing Underperforming Personnel

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

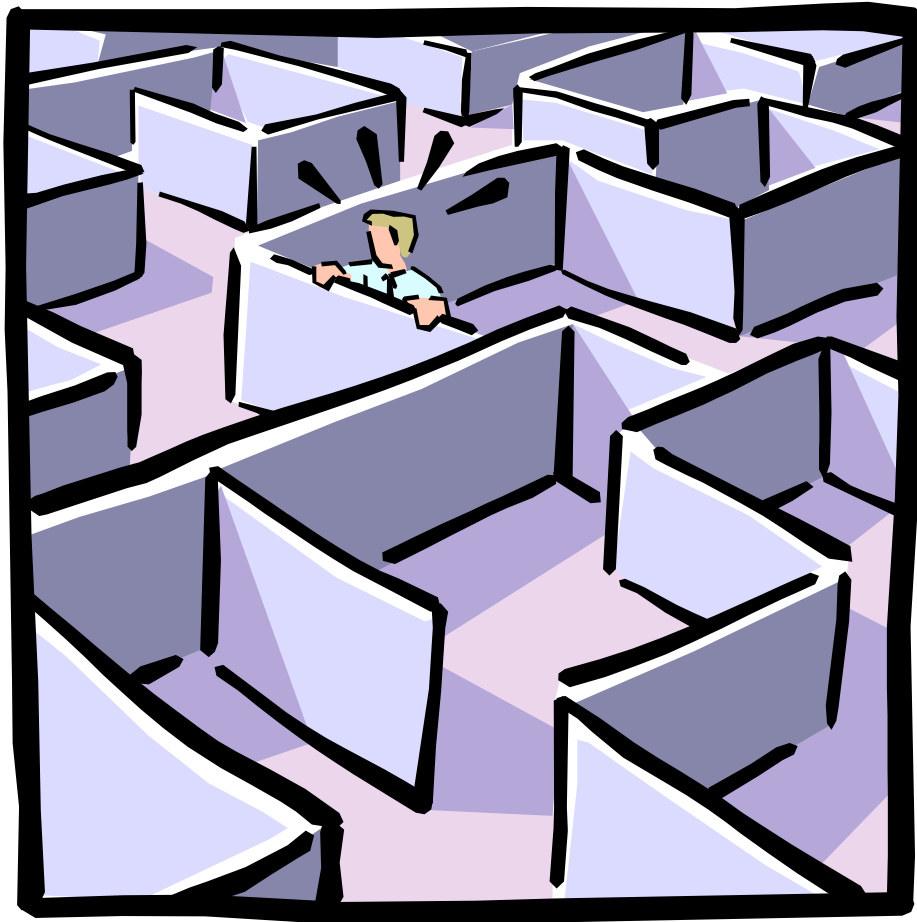
Course Number: FM-5004

Credit: 5 Hours / 5 PDH / 5 CPD

Project Performance Secrets – Managing Underperforming Personnel

Success in spite of Your Experience

Richard Grimes



LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students completing this course will learn:

1. To analyze typical project work processes for opportunities of process improvement
2. Why a different approach to a situation is required for a different outcome.
3. To identify the difference between being productive and busy.
4. To express performance expectations in terms guaranteed to result in productive outcomes.
5. To identify opportunities within existing work flows a potential trip wires to stimulate action
6. To explain the benefit of a "Project Emergency Kit"
7. To list elements for inclusion in that Emergency Kit.
8. To reduce the typical time to productivity of a new project team member.
9. How to lead function leaders within a project in analysis of their work flows for potential problems or delays
10. How to determine whether work flow problems are single events or a dangerous trend.
11. How to determine if the project workload is too much for the existing staff or whether they are underproductive.
12. How to help talent recruiters find the additional help a project may need.
13. How do identify specific behavioral requirements for the job that are not part of the position's technical skills requirement.
14. How to analyze team member performance issues to isolate the root cause of the problem.
15. How to make sure efforts at solving performance problems to not act as demotivators for project team members.
16. How to determine whether team members are getting appropriate performance feedback.
17. When to train, retrain, or terminate team members whose performance is not meeting requirements?
18. How to define a project's job description more specifically
19. What kind of term to avoid when interviewing project team applicants.
20. What clues to look for in a team applicant's resume that should set off warning alarms
21. To develop a strategy to speed a new team member's assimilation into the project.
22. To create a project Who's Who database to improve project internal communication and speed new member assimilation.
23. What to look for in the selection of a mentor for a new member on the project
24. How to use the concept of Working Styles to enhance team performance and member interaction

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This course is designed for new, “seasoned” or potential project managers who are willing to consider a fresh way of looking at project execution in a search for improving performance. This course can help them avoid many traditional problems that impact a project’s performance while learning tips on decreasing the time-to-productivity time gap of new team members.

BENEFIT TO THE AUDIENCE

The potential benefit to the audience is a way to look more closely at project work flows for potential “barnacles” that can accumulate along the project “ship” and gradually erode its performance. Once these potential dangers are identified and warning “trip wires” put into place, PMs can create an early warning system to allow them to act proactively to prevent project problems instead of reacting afterward to contain them.

Also, this course contains strategies to help a PM get members on board and productive faster whether they are replacements for existing team members or new adds to the team.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

“Project Performance Secrets – Success *in spite of* your experience” – what do we possibly mean by ‘in spite of your experience?’ We humans tend to solve (or try to solve) new problems with old remedies that have worked before without determining the extent to which the old problem is like the new one.

Albert Einstein is credited with saying (paraphrased), “*Insanity is doing things the way you always have and expecting different results.*” For many people, when familiar activities do not produce the expected results, they try harder *doing the same things* that led them to their current predicament. That is why we say, “in spite of your experience.”

This course will lead the students through a step-by-step process of analyzing the way they have always done projects and make suggestions for new ways of looking at them. The payoff is that implementation of these secrets to the fullest extent possible on a project will go a long way to improving project

performance, reducing the amount of work process obstacles that arise, and speed the assimilation of new members into full productivity as quickly as possible.

COURSE SUMMARY

This course will guide project managers *who are willing to consider an alternative way of approaching the typical work flow* in the installation of monitors and trip wires that act as an early warning system to potential problems.

Also, there are specific secrets the PM can use to speed the finding, selection, and assimilation of new or replacement team members as part of the overall project performance picture.

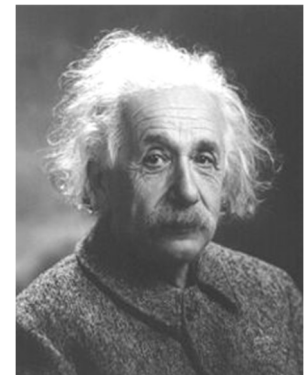
INTRODUCTION

“Project Performance Secrets – Success *in spite of* your experience” – what do we possibly mean by ‘in spite of your experience?’

What we mean is this: describing a project manager (or anyone for that matter) with twenty years’ experience does not automatically mean there are twenty years of progressive learning although that is what everyone assumes when they hear the number of years. It may be that their learning curve peaked after three years and the last seventeen have only been a repetition of year three!

Also, we humans tend to solve (or try to solve) new problems with old remedies. We look at the new problem and try to determine if any part of it is something we have encountered before. If so, we apply the familiar remedy and hope to solve part of the problem which still leaves the unfamiliar piece unsolved. We may experiment with other remedies or try the familiar one again in case we missed something the first time. The unfamiliar may go unsolved until it either fixes itself or goes away. Rarely will we try something new – especially if we have many years’ experience! It is like the old saying – *if your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.*

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Read this following situation and ask yourself if it sounds familiar.

A project kicks off with a good scope, schedule, and budget with all of the principles agreeing, “Yes! That is what we want to do.”

Inevitably, though, it grows larger beyond all initial estimates and problems begin to surface. Since the experienced PM wants to protect his or her reputation and deliver the project on time, within budget, and meet all client expectations regardless of the changes, he or she will be reluctant to add team members (negative budget impact), adjust the schedule, or negotiate with the client about reduced expectations. He or she will exhort the existing members to work harder and longer. Translated to mean, “*Keep doing the things as you always have – just do more of them faster!*”

Naturally, this only fuels more tension-based conflicts between team members as their normal tolerance with each other diminishes with the increased workload. Burnout appears, errors increase, the schedule starts to slip as the budget expands, and the once-agreeable project principles begin to grumble. Finally, the PM admits the project ship is about to hit the reef and over-reacts by throwing resources at the problems in hopes something works. The schedule and budget are certainly blown by now and the client expectations are in jeopardy. The unhappy client says to the PM's executives at the end of a contentious conference call, "I thought you said he (she) was experienced!"

What went wrong? There was probably not a significant problem with but hundreds of small performance issues that were not able to look past his or her perspective – they may have been able to look past

This course is designed to help you understand the human factors that can lead to catastrophic events. It does not tightly control the human element of performance. The leaking of fuel accumulate in the bare wire in the engine compartment, leading to a fire.

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Consider the project example we described earlier. Even if the PM were willing to bring in additional players when he or she first saw the work expanding or changing, there would still be downstream issues associated with making that decision. Plus the lag time between a decision to act and the result of that action on the project. And, the longer they wait to act only makes the potential for trouble increase exponentially.

We will explore some things that a PM can do as preventive maintenance as insurance against the little things accumulating into a disaster.