PMO SIG February 2016 Meeting Summary

Discussion Topic: Project Management and Stress

Unrealistic Expectations
- "Iron Triangle"
  - Constraints - Scope, Schedule and Budget, are firm and fixed
  - No flexibility from management, sponsors to change any of the three major constraints
- PM should still explore where flexibility might be possible
  - Need to evaluate consequences, risks

Sources of stress
- People are often primary source of stress
  - Some may apply stress as a motivator
- Executives pushing projects as means to get results
  - Some push is needed to challenge team, but too much burns team out
  - PM needs to protect team from executive "bullying"
- Stress is not in the work itself, but in how we deal with situations and circumstances
  - Typically rooted in something PM cannot change or influence
  - Need to decide personally how to deal with it emotionally
- Untruths
  - Statements made regarding the project that are untrue or unprovable
  - Waste of time, can divert or derail projects
- New turf, unfamiliar territory
  - Uncertainty can feed stress
  - PM should seek knowledge and expertise, mentor
  - Taking small steps, trial period, proof of concept can alleviate uncertainty
- Distraction, frustrations and annoyance of 'simple things'
  - Scheduling a meeting across busy calendars
  - Contacting an elusive person
  - Serving as administrator
    - Administrative assistants are few, everyone is 'on their own' for handling administrative tasks
    - Time consuming, distracts PM from managing, more administrative work
  - Everyday tasks can add stress on top of workload
- Multitasking
  - e.g. Doing emails while attending a meeting
  - Taxing, distracting, often ineffective
  - Affects team overall, impedes communication and collaboration

Career expectations
- PM is a difficult job, stress should be no surprise
- Expected to 'work miracles', organize chaos, please everyone
- Prospective PMs need to understand and prepare for high expectations and difficult work

"Do more with less"
- Tired, worn out concept
  - Formerly used to define constraints
  - Overused, becomes ineffective and unheard
  - Does not motivate
- Does not provide a solution or clear direction
  - Adds uncertainty, restriction, complexity
  - Summarizes ingredients for stress in few words
- Euphemism for difficult circumstances, lack of strategy
- Simplicity of such statement may not introduce stress until details are explored, revealing challenges and stress factors

"Wearing many hats"
- PM typically has multiple roles
  - Project manager
  - Team resource manager
  - Business analyst
  - Product owner
- If/when any role becomes too challenging, distracts from other roles, adds stress
- Some roles pushed to PM may be completely different jobs
  - e.g. Acting in sales role
  - May work in other areas where resources and time allow absorption of role
  - Will add stress when extra role is delegated without addressing or acknowledging constraints or difficulties
  - PM needs to explore alternatives, clarify roles, manage expectations

Flexible workplace
- "Work from anywhere" more and more prevalent
  - Advantages
    - No commuting
    - Able to be at home if needed (personal reasons)
  - Disadvantages
    - Less separation of work/home life
    - Clock never stops, never leave the office to go home
- Geographically disperses team, adds communication and teamwork challenges
  - Communication and collaboration is virtual
    - Teleconferences, emails, instant/text messages

Meetings
- Too many meetings fills workday
  - Less time for productive work
  - More overtime to catch up on productive work
- Block your calendar to reserve work time
  - Advise overworked team members to do the same
- Don't invite everyone to every meeting
  - Enable others to get work done
  - Sub teams can divide and reduce overall meeting time

Next Meeting

Next meeting is in March. Suggested topic "Value of PMBOK".

PMO SIG Discussion Topics to Consider

Proposed Topics (items in bold are recent suggestions)

1. PMO Practice
   a. **Types of Charters**
   b. **Using BAs in PMO Models**
   c. PMO Resources - Templates, Websites, etc.
   d. PMO Governance and Portfolios

2. PMO Promotion
   a. Looking at the PMO from the Outside
   c. Promoting the value of the PMO
   d. Explaining the benefits of the PMO

3. Organizing and Starting the PMO
   a. Defining the Role of the PMO
   c. The PMO and Cross Organizational Matrix Management
   d. Lifecycle of a PMO, how to start one and pitfalls at different stages of the lifecycle
   e. Where should the PMO be migrated into with a company that re-organizes, downsizes?
   f. Criteria to establish a PMO in your organization - When does it NOT make sense to have a PMO?
   g. Should the PMO be in-sourced or out-sourced? Why?

4. Other
   a. Sphere of control vs outside your control - knowing the difference
   b. **Internal Audit Projects**
   c. **Enforcing Results Offshore**
   d. Thanksgiving Project Management (November meeting?)
   e. Model PMO Job Descriptions (Maude Fribourg has sample, find others)
   f. **Several 15-minute talks on PMO topics of interest**

Attending: Charles J. Cante, Charles R. Cante, Christine Williams, David Morgen, Howard Paul, Jason Fox, John Grazier, Marlo Moss

February 9, 2016   Chair: David Morgen, PMP
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