

Project teams and stakeholder management

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

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1st Lecture

Lecture (1)



Lecture

1

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

Lecture 1: Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project.

Lecture 2: the search for the high-performing team.

Lecture 3: Context: Laying the Foundation for Team Success.

Lecture 4: Composition: Getting the Right People on the Bus.

Lecture 5: competencies: Developing Team Skills for High Performance.

Lecture 6: Change: Devising More Effective Ways of Working Together.

Lecture 7: The Project Team's Environment (Stakeholders, Developing and Using Project Networks).

Lecture 8: Leading Project Teams.

Lecture 9: Managing Conflict in the Team.

Lecture 10: Writing Project Reports.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- 1. The Project's Mission Statement.**
- 2. What is a Project Mission Statement and What Role Does it Play?**
- 3. Stakeholders in the Project's Mission.**
- 4. Project Parameters: Project Scope, Costs, and Timeline.**
- 5. The Project Charter.**
- 6. The Project Plan.**

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

1. The Project's Mission Statement:

All projects have a mission. That mission is to help address some need, solve some problem, or seize some opportunity for a client. Constructing a formal mission statement helps leaders to understand and clarify the broader aims of a project, and mission statements themselves play a number of useful roles in it. Writing a mission statement is the first step project leaders need to take.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

As a project leader begins to organize the project around its mission, it is important as well to identify the important stakeholders of the project. **Who those stakeholders are, and what interests they have in the project,** are important determinates of any project's success or failure.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

2. What Is A Project Mission Statement And What Role Does It Play?

A **mission statement** states the purpose of a project—its general direction and aims. In a few sentences or paragraphs, it states what the project and its sponsoring clients are trying to achieve. Mission statements play a number of roles in a project, but two are very important. **The first** is that a mission statement helps establish and maintain the project's overall direction. **The second** is that it can help establish “common ground” among a project's stakeholders.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

FIRST: Provides Project Direction

Many people play different roles in a project and make a variety of contributions to it. All those roles and contributions are supposed to fit together in some way to produce what the project is expected to deliver. Mission statements help tie all these contributions together. In managerial terms, a mission statement helps provide unity of purpose and unity of effort in the project. It does so by clarifying the project's goals and requirements.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

When a project team is first assembled, **for example**, the mission statement provides a common orientation to the project and its direction. As work is broken down and assigned, members can see how their efforts contribute to the project's mission as a whole. As a project moves forward, project members quite often work at different locations and narrow their project focus to their own particular jobs.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

The project's mission statement can help team members make sure their individual efforts will contribute to the team's goals for the entire project.

In a similar manner, those outside the project team can also assess their contributions in terms of the project's mission. Mission statements provide suppliers, consultants, regulators, and other external contributors with a common idea of the aims of a project and their role in it.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

SECOND : Establishes Common Ground

Mission statements that are designed with the principal **stakeholders'** advice and consent become a declaration of the stakeholders' common aim. As such, **they provide common ground for those stakeholders' interests.** That common ground can be used throughout the project to keep stakeholder ties strong, especially when unforeseen events arise and call for project changes.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

In these cases, the interests of different stakeholders may come into conflict, but mission statements help the principal stakeholders to keep their “eyes on the prize”—the project’s ultimate purpose. During such times, the broader aims of a mission statement can provide a common “venue” where stakeholders can negotiate in good faith.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

3. Stakeholders In The Project's Mission:

Any project will have a number of **stakeholders**—those who have an interest in the mission of a project or how it will be achieved and who can deeply affect it in some way. Success or failure of a project often turns on how well project leaders identify and work with these critical project stakeholders. Important stakeholders in any project include the **clients** of the project and the **host or performing organization** in which the project is being done. The **project team** is an important stakeholder, as are the **end users** and various resource **suppliers**.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

1. The Client

The project's client or customer is the reason a project exists. It is the person or organization for whom the project is being conducted and who is paying for it. Every project is designed to address some need brought by a client, and the client is the ultimate source of funding and resources for the project. **Clients' interests** lie in having their needs met as much as possible, as quickly as possible, and, generally, for as low a price as possible.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

2. The Host Organization

The performing or host organization is the organization in which the project is conducted. The traditional model is that clients come to an organization to serve their needs. The organization, in turn, assembles project teams to do so.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

3. The Project Team

The project team—the group of people who actually carry out project activities —is a critical stakeholder of any project, and the project leader will do well to look out for its interests even before it is assembled.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

4. End Users

End users are those ultimately intended to use or benefit from a project. Their interests focus on the utility of what is produced for them.

5. Suppliers

Projects often need suppliers to deliver the products and services that the team itself cannot supply. Many of these are provided by suppliers outside the host organization also called vendors, sellers, and subcontractors. The primary interest of outside suppliers is to increase their revenues by servicing the project.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

6. Dealing With Stakeholders

Key stakeholders are those who have the power and authority to make important decisions about the conduct and outcomes of the project. Although all stakeholders should command attention and respect, key stakeholders require extra time and attention.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

4. Project Parameters: Project Scope, Costs, And Timeline:

The project's mission statement and objectives address what the project is trying to achieve. The deliverables address the products and services that will be produced to achieve them. Three other basic elements now require attention: the **project's scope** and the **resources** it will take to produce those deliverables, what they will cost, and **how long it will take**.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

1. Project Scope

The project scope includes all those tasks necessary to produce the deliverables required. A final project plan will detail those tasks in the form of a work breakdown structure (addressed in the next chapter). At this stage, however, some basic estimates can be made about the work that will be required and, importantly, the resources needed to support that work.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

2. Costs

Project costs are all the costs related to doing project work and acquiring its resource needs. For different reasons, project costs are always of concern to clients, the host organization, and project teams. Although ballpark figures tend to get discussed early on in projects, it is important to understand that early ballpark figures often determine stakeholders' expectations. Those expectations need to be handled carefully right from the beginning.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

3. Timeline

Like costs, the project timeline—the time allocated to get a project done— largely determines what can be done. Generally speaking, clients and host organizations want projects done as quickly as possible. Project teams, ever pressed for time, generally want more of it.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

5. The Project Charter:

Host organizations that routinely perform outside projects for their business often kick off a project with a project charter. **A project charter** is a thorough description of a project, and it formally authorizes the project to proceed. The idea of developing and using a project charter is a good one for all project leaders whether or not their organizations require one. A project charter can be as formal as those used in project organizations or as informal as a memo or email that has been approved by the **project sponsor**—the manager with the authority to approve a project and commit organizational resources to it.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

A **project charter** describes the project in enough detail that a **sponsor** can make an informed decision about whether it is worthwhile to commit resources to it. It describes the mission of a project and ties that mission to the broader organizational purpose(s) of the mission—why the project is worthwhile to the host organization.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

The project charter also lays out what will be needed for the project by first tying the project mission to the project's main objectives and deliverables. It then goes on to lay out expected timelines and enough cost information that all stakeholders can make an informed decision to move ahead.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

A project charter should also address what will be needed to make the project successful. Time and budget needs are based on time and cost estimates. Human and other resources needed are described. What levels of authority are needed to conduct project activities should be considered, as well as any other assumptions critical to project success (e.g., the availability of key personnel).

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

6. The Project Plan:

Before they begin actual construction, contractors need blueprints of the building they are to construct. So, too, do project leaders need their own blueprints of the project—the project plan. Project plans will vary in content, complexity, and detail depending on the projects they address. At the very least, however, a project plan should include a number of common elements.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- **The project's mission statement:** The mission statement lays out the general purpose of the project. The general purpose of the project needs to be tied to the broader objectives and mission of the host organization.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- **The project's objectives:** What the project is trying to achieve in specific terms. These are made relevant to the project's mission statement.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- **All deliverables and quality criteria:** Deliverables include both the final set of deliverables to be given to the client and all interim deliverables. If required, any quality criteria or other specifications for those deliverables should be included.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- **A complete work breakdown structure:** This is a complete specification of all project work that needs to be done—the project's scope.
- **The project schedule:** This is a schedule showing which tasks are to be done by what dates in the project. Typically, the schedule specifies the start and end or completion dates for all project tasks.
- **All resources needed for the project:** These include human resources, materials, equipment, facilities, and the like.

Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

- **The project's budget:** The budget should be laid out by project task so it can be used to control costs throughout the project as those tasks are performed.
- **Risk assessments:** Project risks include those that threaten the attainment of project objectives, push back project dates, increase project costs, or detrimentally affect project deliverables. These are addressed in a project risk plan.

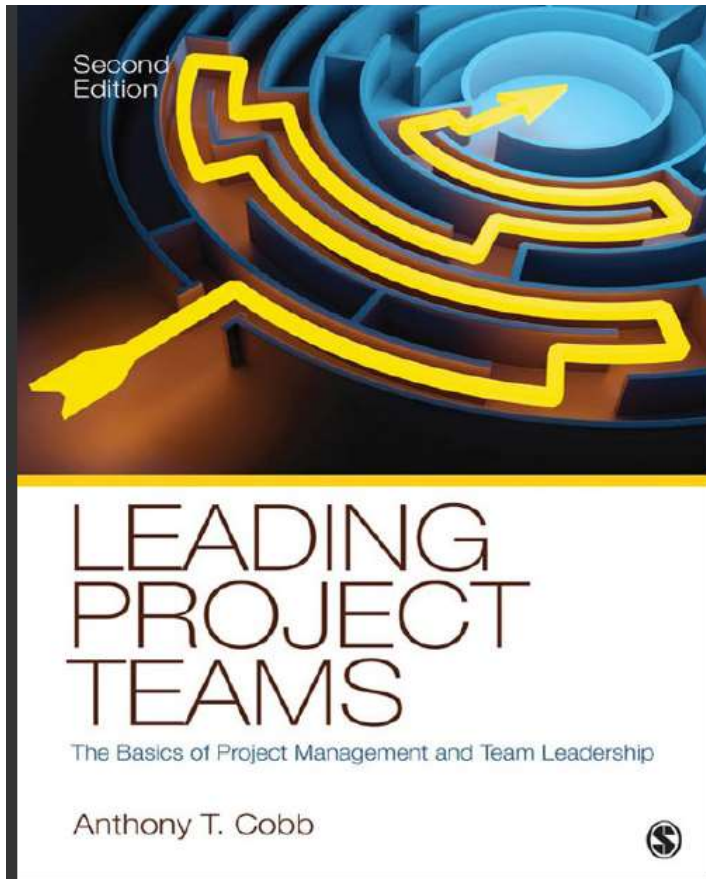
Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project

The project plan, then, is really a series of project documents. Whether they are kept in three-ring binders or on a computer, project leaders will continuously refer to them as the project moves forward. They will also keep updating the plan as changes are required. They will add other documents to the plan as well—authorization for changes, sign-offs for work done, and the like. Keeping track of all these documents is an important administrative task for project leaders. They always seem to come in handy down the road and are often required by one or more key stakeholders.

Lecture

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Determining the Direction and Initial Specifications of a Project



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Thank You