Every Three Ring Circus Needs a Ringmaster!

Managing the Business of Change

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Objectives

Are you a "true" Ringmaster?

What are the risks of not managing "the circus"?

Understanding the true value of communication!
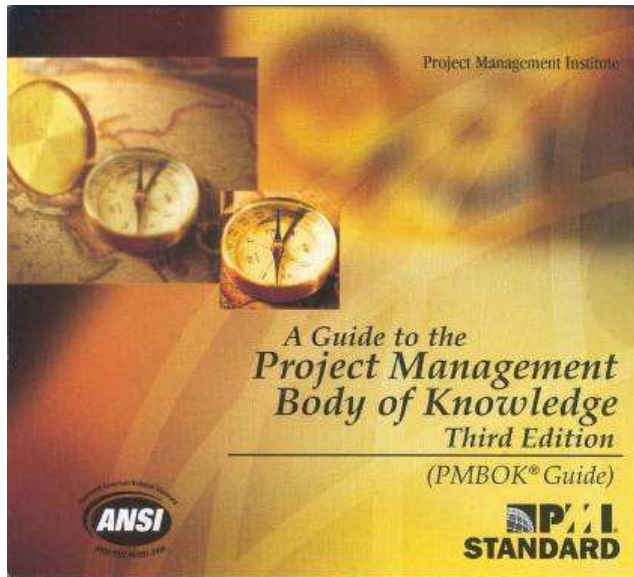
Agenda

- Have you ever been to the circus? What's going on?

- The PMI PMBOK perspective

- Communication is the key

- Leave a trail

- In the spotlight

- Go manage the circus!

The PMBOK Says…

"90% of a Project Manager's role and responsibility is communication."

- PMBOK Guide, Year 2000 Edition

The Ringmaster

- Manages the audience

- Manages the performers

- Manages the timeline for the show

- Provides leadership

- Manages expectations (audience and performers)

- Coordinates the 3 simultaneous rings!

Communication is the Key!

PM's are the Ringmasters

- Ringmasters have different communication methods depending on the size of the audience and location.

- Know your audience
  - Example: big coliseum vs. small town arena
  - Example: town hall meeting vs. virtual small teleconference

- Knowing your audience means you can determine and deliver the right amount of the right information to the right people using the right methods.

- This makes the "show" more effective and your success rate will increase.

Managing Expectations

- Communication is the key to managing expectations – what happens when the Ringmaster announces the act and the wrong act appears? What is the audience's reaction? What is the performer's (team member's) reaction?

- Lack of communication may lead to *unrealistic* perceptions and expectations – announcing a high wire act and then seeing the tightrope 3 feet off the ground causes a communication gap (and lost credibility).

- Lack of communication may cause team members to feel "out of the loop" – what happens to the performers when the ringmaster ignores them?

Why We Want to Communicate Effectively!

Leave a Trail…Not Breadcrumbs

- Compliance, regulatory and audit demands have changed drastically. Written communication is essential to meet the requirements of all.

- Verbal communication is as essential as written communication. It is too informal when the "trail" is needed, so know when to *leverage verbal vs. written or both together*.

- Written communication provides a history of project progress and decisions relating to a project. If someone were to ask about why the team took a particular direction 6 months ago, the written answer would be readily available.

Leave a Trail

- Verbal communication, though essential, can be *forgotten or misconstrued* (the "hallway" conversations). If it's important, follow up with written communication for validation and documentation.

- Communication plans are not just PMBOK "theories". They work for all Ringmasters and Project Managers and are critical to achieving success.

- The Ringmaster *validates* his communication plan with all the performers and general management and why wouldn't we do the same? Influencing and controlling the circus is similar to many of our project management practices!

11

Rehearsal or Live Performance

- Types of communication <u>depend on the circumstances</u>.

- Different modes of communication are used for effectiveness.

- Using a microphone vs. hand signals/cues – which one is *"performance" vs. "rehearsal"* (formal vs. informal)?

- Can you think of some performance vs. rehearsal types of communication?
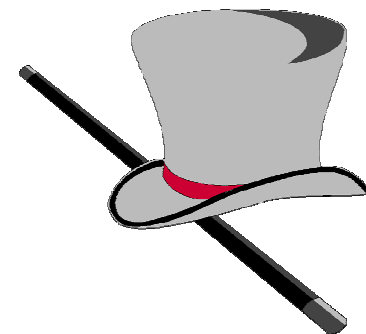
Case Study Discussion

Major Merger – Financial Services

- Lots of products are converted early, before the "big bang" conversion of the bulk of it

- Online banking is one of the early conversions – all goes smoothly

- The "big bang" conversion occurs – the figures are balanced

- All appears to be going smoothly

- Then all of a sudden customer calls are inundating the national call centers

Case Study Discussion

- It seems that ATM and Online Banking balances were not reflecting the converted balances – they would 2 days post conversion

- Customers, fearful of identity fraud were seeing balances that did not reflect what they thought they should be – and they may or may not have been aware of conversion cut-over weekend.

- Nationally, no other (non-conversion) customers could get into the customer call centers

- THIS TEAM STATED THIS WAS SOP, BUT FAILED TO COMMUNICATE IT!

Case Study Discussion #2

Hand Held Devices are Failing

- Project was initiated to replace them and the associated software (so old it all has to go!)

- Project was 18 months behind and they were floundering for a silver bullet solution

- Finally, they are off and running and due to lateness (i.e., feeling some guilt), they collected new requirements from the business

- With no communication regarding "due date" because of anticipated breakage of hand held devices – this is turning a $1MM effort into $4MM and getting ready to not make the "break date"

Case Study Discussion #2

- *So what do they do?*

- The management responsible for the project oversight and delivery "decides" what features/functions will "fit" the schedule

- The product/project is delivered – just barely meeting the anticipated "break of hardware" date

- The business is enraged as none of their expectations were met

- Communication level sets and manages expectations

- Just like the Ringmaster level setting customer (audience) expectations about what's next

Typical Project Communications

Let's take a look at some of the obvious:

- Progress Reports (milestone, budget, schedule)

- Decisions (changes to budget, scope, schedule, project terminations, Go/No Go)

- Issue Resolutions

- Risk Assessments (Project and Business/Operational)

- Agendas and Meeting Minutes

- Exception Reporting

- All Project Documentation (Charter to Lessons Learned/Closure)

- Budget Reviews

Typical Project Communications

And the not so obvious:

- The team and each team member

- The Advisory/Steering Committee – project oversight

- The PMO team

- The project sponsor

- The project vendors

- The project partners (Marketing, Finance, Legal, HR, Procurement, and the list goes on)

- The administrative managers of the team members

- All are part of the 3 Ring Circus

In the Spotlight

- Within the 3 ring circus performers are constantly changing, but the one constant is the Ringmaster who is always in the spotlight and staying the course of the show.

- The Ringmaster is responsible for pointing out the various performers, encouraging the audience to participate and applaud the performers.

- We, as Project Managers, have the same responsibility.

- Communicate and recognize the performers and encourage audience participation (your ancillary project partners). When the performers change, be prepared to bring the replacements on board.

- Communicate the success stories!

In the Spotlight

- Communication between Project Manager and team members is the only method for seeing "how they are doing".

- The Ringmaster makes time after the "show" to communicate with the performers.

- Open communication fosters TRUST.

- A good Ringmaster knows his/her performers, their capabilities and their limitations, and must support them throughout – as the show must go on – so similar to what we have to do and be as Project Managers.

Go Manage the Circus

- Just like a 3 ring circus would be chaos if not for the Ringmaster – for a project to be successful, the Project Manager must be the leader and lead source of communication.

- You have to juggle a multitude of activities and can be great at any and all of them.

- However, if you can communicate effectively – it won't matter how great you are at these activities because this communication skill will enable you to manage the circus!

Wrap Up

- Communication, communication, communication – let's not over emphasize it

- Keep it simple – use simple terms, no acronyms

- Keep it concise – those that want to read a book, use the library

- Verbal and written words are equally important

- Non-verbal communication is something to be aware of – it can be both positive and negative aspects of communication with others

- Know when an email will be effective vs. a face to face (there are times for both)

- Communication fosters relationship building or un-building

- Know the audience that you are communicating with

- Know the material that you are communicating about

Q&A