

The Role of the Project Manager

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The mission of the Project Manager is to perform at least the following functions in such a manner that the goals of the company are attained, as well as the goals of the customer. The company concept is *customer for life*, that is, as a result of your performance of this project, the customer will prefer your services for future work over any other competitor; the concept being that your performance can eliminate or reduce competition in your region because your company is the preferential one in its field. Customer obsession begins with enhancing the ability of the company to perform in a manner that provides it an edge over the competition. *A company must earn the privilege of being the one preferred by the customers.* It must go beyond a mission statement or a bumper sticker into the blocking and tackling of the company which keeps it ahead on the scoreboard.

The mission of the project manager is key in this concept, and some of the criteria for the performance of the project manager is listed below.

1. **Knowledge.** The project manager will have knowledge of the following subjects:
 - a. **Technical aspects of the work**
 - i. This includes field experience. If the project manager doesn't have field experience, then he should spend as much time on projects as possible with superintendents, foreman, lead personnel and others to really understand not only techniques of field productivity, but from an attitude and personal point of view, what it's really like in the field with all the conflicts, weather problems, coordination issues, and frustrations that can occur.
 - b. **Terms and conditions of the contract(s)**
 - c. **Applicable laws, ordinances, codes, standards**
 - d. **All the elements of Project Management which include:**
 - i. **Scheduling**
 - ii. **Communication**
 - iii. **Supply Chain Management**
 - iv. **Applicable Management Information Systems (MIS)**
 - v. **Variance Management**
 - vi. **Coordination**
 - vii. **Team Management**
 - viii. **Principles of Negotiation and Conflict Management**
 - ix. **Cost Accounting and Reporting**
 - x. **Productivity Principles**
 - xi. **How to Price Changes, Delays, Labor Impact**
2. **Values and Principles.** The project manager realizes that effective companies and projects are based upon principles of honesty, objectivity, fair play, reliability,

accountability, and trust. Honest and objective change order pricing is paramount to developing a relationship of trust with the owner and its design team.

3. **Schedule Management.** Assures that the baseline schedule is in compliance with the contract and sets forth logic and durations which are prudent. Assures that schedule is routinely and accurately updated.
 - a. **Supply Chain Manager.** The purchasing, submittal process and delivery of equipment on a proper and timely basis is an essential element of every activity on the project. The role of the project manager is to assure that the proper equipment is at the right location at the right time . . .every time. (Some companies have separate Purchasing departments but the accountability for this function should never be taken away from the project manager.)
 - b. **The Management of Timeliness and Momentum.** Especially in today's construction world with its extremely tight schedules, the name of the game is to establish the momentum and keep it moving. Whether mobilization of your own forces, getting answers to RFIs or direction from the owner regarding changed work, successful projects keep the ball rolling, maintain the necessary momentum for crews to always maintain an effective work sequence. This is one of the roles of the project manager, and when that does not occur due to acts of others, to protect the contractor from the financial consequences therefrom.
4. **Built in Quality.** The project manager is committed to comply with the contractual requirements and develop a program with field personnel to build in quality (instead of the old inspect and correct system). Every project should have a goal of no or minimum punch lists.
5. **Safety.** The project manager is committed to work with field supervisory personnel to develop and execute a safety program which assures that each worker goes home at night in the same physical condition as when he left in the morning. Performing safe practices takes priority over the budget. Every project should have a goal of no injury, not just no lost time.
6. **Decision-making.** The project manager needs to make decisions on a timely and objective basis, but there are others with whom he deals (such as the owner, designer, others) who also must make timely and objective decisions. The project manager must be able to manage others in such a manner that their actions and decisions do not impede the progress of the project.

- a. **Conflict Manager.** Construction is an industry of conflicts, both content and relationship. The project manager must be a conflict manager, preventing as many as possible, and resolving those which can not be prevented with no or minimum impact to the project. Nonetheless, the project manager realizes that the most successful projects are characterized by a collaborative approach and works to achieve that goal both inside the company and among all the players on the project. The project manager should treat all with respect. The days of yelling and shouting have passed. Managing relationships is one of the strong attributes of the project manager.
7. **Variance Management.** A change to the drawings is a variance, as is a change to work sequence, or site conditions. Submittal and equipment delays are variances; so is inadequate manpower and excessive turnover and absenteeism. The cost of some variances are compensable if handled properly (change orders as an example); others are not compensable (such as delays due to weather) and some are out of pocket to the contractor (workmanship issues for example). So the project manager is also a variance manager, again acting to prevent variances where possible and then acting to protect the contractor through effective management of field operations by the project management team, and complying with contract vehicles such as Changes and Changed Condition Clauses, clauses relating to schedule extensions, and clauses relating to dispute resolution.
8. **Communication.** The project manager is the central nervous system of the project, the middle person between home office and the field, the company and the customer, the customer and all the other players (like suppliers). This function can only be performed with outstanding and real time communication. The project manager must assure that a system is in place which assures that communication (and documentation) remain at the “top of the game”.
9. **Contract Manager.** All of the above are embraced explicitly or inherently in the construction contracts. So the project manager is really the “contract manager” whose responsibility it is to manage his own forces so as to comply with its terms and to cause others to perform their duties on a timely and prudent basis. As the contract is also the document which allocates risk, the project manager is then also the risk manager. And today we see multiple delivery systems being used (design-bid-build, design-build; construction managers and construction managers at risk; prescription specifications and “design not yet complete”), and each must be understood and therefore managed in a different manner.

- a. **Documentation Manager.** It is the responsibility of the project manager to set up the logs for submittals, changes, RFIs; to oversee that daily dairies are maintained; schedules updated; written notifications provided on a timely basis . . .

10. The Assistant For. Everyone in a company is a team member, meaning that each person has a job to do that may involve just him or herself, but that always also involves other people, that assists others in the performance of their duties. The project manager is the assistant for the field personnel to provide tools, equipment and information as needed on a timely basis. The project manager is an assistant for the field personnel to assist in protecting the contract through change order administration and schedule updating. The project manager is the assistant for the field to assure timely communication. And to have their back.

- a. **Recognition of field personnel.** It is important to provide feedback to the field, and recognition for the job the personnel do. Project managers should understand the importance of giving the pat on the back to their supervisory personnel.
- b. **Dialoguing with field personnel.** The field should be the experts on how to get it done in the field. Instead of just giving direction, ask questions to obtain their input and suggestions. Have them participate in the process, don't just direct the process. Be a coach, not a dictator.

11. Relationship Management. In the book Emotional Intelligence, the idea of seven criteria for intelligence should be evaluated. Of course, verbal and math are among the seven. But two of the most important are:

- a. **Intrapersonal.** This is the trait of a person who is self-confident, has strong values and the needle on the compass always pointed to knowing the right thing to do and doing the right thing right.
- b. **Interpersonal.** This is the trait of the person who is gifted with the intrapersonal, but who also is a team leader as well as a team player. The leader has the ability to work with others, collaborate and not just cooperate, be considered trustworthy by others so that what he or she says is given weight and credibility by others.

Successful project managers must have effective relationships with all the members of the project team, from the owner and designers to all the contractors, inspectors others involved in the project. In addition, there must be a positive relationship between the project manager, field, and other members of the home office, including the administrative and financial personnel.