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Leading Ways #28

Don't let your projects derail !

SPEAKER TIPS OF THE MONTH

Great speakers:

- **Use statistics well** - Round off numbers in order to make them easier to understand. For example, use "close to half" instead of 48.5%, or "four out of five" instead of 80%.
- **Make your presentation personal** - use examples and anecdotes from your own experiences to illustrate the points you are making. People will be more persuaded by your personal experiences, rather than statistics.

I have been in several meetings recently where those meetings reminded me of ground-hog day. Yes, going over the same items that we had covered meeting after meeting and still things hadn't been done.... So I thought it was time we reminded ourselves about successful projects.

..... on to Leading Ways :: **Don't let your projects derail!**

Successful business owners and executives get things done..... they produce

results over and over.

Not-so-successful executives may not be procrastinators, but likely they are more likely to have a number of incomplete projects sitting on their desk, on the floor or stuffed away in cabinets.... (out of site, out of mind) All the best project plans..... the Visio's, MSPProject's and other great tools..... but still there are time and cost over-runs. Why?

Over and over I have seen it. When I ask who owns the project I am told 'the XYZ department.' **Wrong answer!** I guess that is why we are having the conversation, because the project is way off track, and likely there are cost over-runs also.

The building blocks for successful projects are easy, but if you want a project to fail then:

- Start making assumptions for stakeholders instead of asking.
- Start without a plan, or understanding what the project success will look like.
- Monitor reactively, rather than anticipating events and situations.
- Leave the scope flexible so it can evolve over time.
- Don't engage top management as an *active* project sponsor.
- Don't give the project manager both the responsibility and authority to get the job done. It's great to be held responsible for project outcomes; but project managers must obtain enough authority also, in order to get the job done.
- Stay focussed on process, rather than results or outcomes.

"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand."
- Confucius

With rare exception I have found that projects have been correctly scoped, but project meltdowns are usually the result of weak project leadership.

Remember that projects are often disguised by the use of the word 'Team' and if you find yourself on or leading teams, you're probably working together to complete a project.

Remember also that if you deliver more than one '*lumpy project leadership performance*' then maybe people will be less willing to work with you again, and it will certainly hurt your prospects for promotion.

Start by Laying the Groundwork

1. **How will you measure success?** Make sure stakeholders share a common understanding of how they will determine whether this project is successful.
2. **Your commitments** - Despite pressure to promise the impossible, never make a commitment you know you can't keep. Engage in good-faith negotiations about what is realistically achievable.

Plan the Work, and then work the plan.

3. **Yes, you need a plan** - The time you spend analyzing what it will take to solve problems and deliver a successful project will reduce the number of surprises you have to cope with later on..

Break it down, break it down, break it down! The smaller the tasks you identify and provide solutions to, the less likely that you will have project

surprises.

4. **Where is my 'active' sponsor?** We have all seen it where someone is the 'nominated' sponsor without necessarily having an appetite for the project. If you possibly can, avoid a 'figurehead' sponsor and find someone who is really passionate about a successful outcome.
5. **Projects must be sold, and resold.** Q. Why do 70% change initiatives fail?
A. Because people do not understand the need to change; people impacted by the change are not involved; and if there are negative impacts on staff those impacts are poorly explained and solutions to the impact are not provided. i.e., what will happen if they need retraining? Obviously, a strong communications plan is a must.
6. **You know how to do a project plan** – so now break the plan down into tasks and sub-tasks where you assign accountability back **to, yes individuals!**not to a committee or department but to people who will take ownership and deliver. Yes, you know the other part – *mutually agree on timelines for completion* at the time you make each assignment.
7. **Remember that projects require clear approvals and sign-offs** – ensure there are clear approval points, accompanied by formal sign-off by sponsors, and other key stakeholders.
8. **Review meetings shouldn't just be about on-time, within budget** – focus also on the quality of the work product or outcome. Don't just rush through to stay on time, but ensure project outcomes are of the highest quality.
9. **Visualize success** -- you and your team must early on create a tangible picture of the finished project or phase so that all effort is focused in the same direction. Avoid vague descriptions at all costs; spell it out, picture it, and smell the success.

"The general who wins the battle makes many calculations in his temple before the battle is fought. The general who loses makes but few calculations beforehand."

- Sun Tzu

10. **So, do we have any project risks?** – of course we do. Brainstorm possible risks, evaluate their potential threat, and decide how you can mitigate or prevent them.

Controlling

11. **When things don't go to plan** – things never go precisely as you plan on a project, so your budget and schedule should include some contingency buffers at the end of major phases to accommodate the unforeseen.
12. What if it is a long-running project? My best advice is to build successes around project milestones every say 45 days, **and celebrate those successes.** Don't forget also to celebrate the screw-ups!
13. **The Scope Usually Changes** -- Despite our best intentions as we are implementing our projects the scope can often change. The potential changes may relate to the "nice-to-have" through to those recommended changes which are "quasi-mandatory" if we want the entire project to be successful.

Adopt a formal Change Request Process which will include stakeholder sign-

By: Denis Orme

It's about solving one of man's three greatest mysteries which are identified in the book.

From a career dealing with facts, figures, data and business logic I decided to explore the biggie :: *RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX*

The question posed to me "Why do you think you are qualified to write and speak about relationships?"

Q. How many can be as good at golf as Tiger Woods?

A. None. But that doesn't mean to say that the rest of us can't improve our golf game, or in this case by using a coach, our relationships.

My experiences and observations may help others avoid the mistakes I have made. The book is simply one man's reality, and it is not theory-based, nor is it a self-help book.... although if you know me then you know I can't resist making suggestions....*an easy read.*

Available through :: www.tlsnz.co.nz and www.leader-success.com

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