

ROLE OF PROJECT MANAGER

The project manager is usually responsible for four outcomes on a project:

- To complete the project on time
- To complete the project within budget
- To complete the project to the standards specified (no greater; no less)
- To maintain the relationship with the client.

In order to achieve these four outcomes the process around identifying the right person for the job needs to be identified and followed diligently. A good source for this information is the approach taken by The Mechanical Contractors Association of America which is along the following lines.

A Resource Management

The efficient planning, organizing and scheduling of the following elements

- ⊙ Labour
- ⊙ Subcontractors
- ⊙ Materials
- ⊙ Equipment for installation
- ⊙ Supplies
- ⊙ Tools
- ⊙ "Install Only" items
- ⊙ Budgets & invoicing
- ⊙ Construction equipment (rental and company owned)

These are the resources that you have to plan, organize and schedule so that you get the maximum benefit from each element. Remember *"the sum of the parts should be greater than the whole."* For example: Using labour, sub contractors and materials in an effective or innovative way can lead to additional cost and time savings.

B Liaison Activities

This covers the range of people that touch the project. The project manager has to be able to work with each of these

- ⊙ Project owner and their representatives
- ⊙ Architects & engineers
- ⊙ Cost engineers
- ⊙ Workers Compensation/safety managers

- ⊙ “Green Building” specialists
- ⊙ Inspectors and city or municipality officials
- General contractors
- Mechanical contractors
- ⊙ Project management companies
- ⊙ Subcontractors and other trades
- ⊙ Own labour forces, including foremen
- ⊙ Material suppliers
- ⊙ Own company’s management team, including accounting and estimating
- ⊙ Neighbours/local businesses/general public and media

C TEAM COORDINATION

The real skill of the good project manager is in combining the resources and the liaisons to ensure the successful completion of the project.

THE SKILLS & MAKE UP OF A PROJECT MANAGER

Skills

- ⊙ Logical thinking
- ⊙ Able to make sound decisions
- ⊙ Good communications
- ⊙ Team leadership
- ⊙ Planning
- ⊙ Prioritizing
- ⊙ Ability to handle a crisis
- ⊙ Entrepreneurial thinking
- ⊙ Good attention to detail
- ⊙ Good reading and writing skills
- ⊙ Systems oriented
- Some estimating
- Organizational
- Technical knowledge of mechanical/electrical systems
- ⊙ Technical knowledge of construction systems
- Not letting other intimidate him/her

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT MANAGER

- ⊙ Profit orientated
- ⊙ Clear and concise communications
- ⊙ Self-motivated
- ⊙ Assertive
- ⊙ Disciplined
- ⊙ Will meet deadlines
- ⊙ Works well in a stressful environment
- ⊙ Can prioritize activities and processes
- ⊙ Analytical and attentive to details
- ⊙ Systematized
- ⊙ Self confident
- ⊙ Team leader
- ⊙ Enthusiastic
- ⊙ Persistent and consistent
- ⊙ Formal education and a solid track record at minimum of foreman level
- ⊙ Good decision making ability
- ⊙ Ethical and prudent
- ⊙ Able to deal with a broad range of people

You should edit these lists to ensure that they are relevant to your needs, then develop a series of questions and or tests that will help you identify how your candidates relate to each of the key points.

Ask open questions about their experiences that will help you identify the elements that you seek.

- Tell me about some of the projects that you have worked on
- What challenges have you had to overcome?
- What did you learn from these projects and challenges?
- What would you do differently as a result of these experiences?
- What procedure manuals have you used?
- Have you ever developed any?
- Have you brought any with you today?
- How do you recommend handling the handover of the project from the estimator to the project management team?
- What is the first meeting you would call after taking responsibility for the project?
- How soon after the project is awarded should this happen?

- What are some of the financial indicators you would use to manage your projects effectively?
- What are some of the non-financial lead indicators that you would use throughout the project?
- How do you deal with “verbal change orders”?
- What would you do when you are instructed by the client to do work that you believe is outside the contract but the client says is part of the contract?

Why not give them these questions in advance and ask them to prepare for the interview in this way? This will give you an opportunity to evaluate how they prepare for a project. After all, getting this job should be one of the most important projects they will ever work on (from their perspective). Have they pre-planned the interview? Have they anticipated other questions? Are they assertive in sticking with their perspective or can you intimidate them into changing their principles.

Keep the four outcomes that you as an employer want to achieve and make sure that you are constantly evaluating the candidate on how their responses and comments impact each of those four areas. Many of the above questions will impact more than one of your four outcomes.

Use a points system to score each candidate on how well they are responding to each question in relation to your objectives. This will allow you to make a more impartial decision.

Once you have customized this process for your business and for your project manager position it should be easy to modify it for the other key positions in your company such as project coordinators, estimators, sales people, accountants and general managers.

Take a leadership role in your business and become a teacher and teach others so that they benefit from your experience. By documenting this procedure you can create a tool that many others can use.