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October 2015 – Vol 9 Issue 9

Across the Board

By Jennifer Evans


Jennifer Evans

The Annual General Meeting is held every year to inform member-owners of previous and future activities. It is an opportunity for the member-owners and partners to receive copies of the company's accounts as well as reviewing fiscal information for the past year and asking any questions regarding the directions PMI-SFBAC will take in the future.

At the 2015 Annual General Meeting held on August 13th, the Board presented to member-owners a comprehensive Annual Report on company's activities throughout the preceding year. Annual reports are intended to give member-owners and other interested people information about the organization's activities and financial performance.

Prior to the start of this year's PMI-SFBAC Annual General Meeting, the Board invited member-owners to participate in several informal Workshops. During the break out sessions, member-owners were asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes for Chapter priorities in the areas of Leadership, Mentoring and Volunteering. This was an interactive group setting where participants were free to talk with others and at the end of the workshop member-owners voted and ranked the desired product outcomes. The top three priorities from each

Workshop are listed below:
Leadership
1) Job hunting skills
2) Facilitation skills crowd control
3) Enhance career

What area of Mentoring is most important?
1) Leadership/Relationship Skills – negotiation/long-term relationship building
2) PMI Processes & Procedures – calculate and measure the success of project, what's common to use (Earned value, project schedule, etc.)
3) Industry Specific – as a new PM and mentee, am looking for experienced PM who can advise how I can best utilize my background and experience for a successful PM career

Volunteering
1) Establish a volunteer PM pool that works with local non-profit organizations that need some help with an event of initiative
2) PM opportunities to make a difference in the lives of project managers. Work with the

Middle/High schools and community colleges
3) Mentoring process for volunteers so they can explain, communicate how to be a volunteer.

The information gathered from the Workshops and 2015 Annual Member Survey provided valuable input to help Board and Operations teams to work together during the August 15th Strategy Retreat to identify actions required to maintain, enhance or realign Ends policies with member values and intent. The Ends concept of Policy Governance is where the “Ends have three elements:
(1) a benefit
(2) who experiences that benefit (the beneficiaries), and
(3) the worth or relative priority of that benefit.”

The Operations team leveraged the shortlisted topics from the Annual General Meeting to solicit speaker proposals which enables the Chapter to launch talks around those topics for our member owners. If this sounds interesting and you’d like to know more or get involved we encourage our member-owners to attend any of our regularly scheduled board meetings, which occur in the morning on the third Saturday of each month.

Email bod@pmi-sfbac.org for monthly meeting location information. To familiarize yourself with recent board activities and governing policies, please visit our board governance page. We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming board meeting or at one of our many chapter events.

Empathy at Work: connecting with team members

By Tom Hallet


Tom Hallett

Many of us know people who have reached a certain point in their careers because of excellent technical abilities but they somehow don’t get along with team members, because they’re less accomplished in their people skills.

This might be due to the insensitive manner in which they ask co-workers for things, the way they never seem to listen to what others say, or their intolerance for other methods of working.

Workers with poor people skills can often find themselves in the middle of unnecessary conflict. This can be exhausting and stressful for all concerned, and it can destroy even the best laid work plans.

Many people are confident that they can develop new technical skills and knowledge through training and experience. However, there is a common belief that “you are how you are” when it comes to “soft” skills (interacting with other people) and that there is little or nothing you can do about it.

Fortunately, this is far from true. A great place to start improving your soft skills is by developing the ability to empathize with others.

What is Empathy?

Empathy is simply recognizing emotions in others, and being able to “put yourself in another person’s shoes”, understanding the other person’s perspective and reality.

To be empathic, you have to think beyond yourself and your own concerns. Once you see beyond your own world, you will realize that there’s so much to discover and appreciate!

People who are accused of being egotistical and selfish, or lacking perspective, have often missed the big picture: that they are only one person in a world with billions of other people (although, yes, this can be overwhelming if you think about it too long!)

If you’ve been called any of these things, then remind yourself that the world is full of other people, and you can’t escape their influence on your life. It’s far better to accept this, and to decide to build relationships and understanding, rather than try to stand alone all of the time.

Using Empathy Effectively
To start using empathy more effectively, consider the following:

1. *Put aside your viewpoint, and try to see things from the other person’s point of view*
When you do this, you’ll realize that other people most likely aren’t being evil, unkind, stubborn, or unreasonable – they’re probably just reacting to the situation with the knowledge they have.

2. *Validate the other person’s perspective*
Once you “see” why others believe what they believe, acknowledge it. Remember: acknowledgement does not always equal agreement. You can accept that people have different opinions from your own, and that they may have good reason to hold those opinions.

3. Examine your attitude
Are you more concerned with getting your way, winning, or being right? Or, is your priority to find a solution, build relationships, and accept others? Without an open mind and attitude, you probably won't have enough room for empathy.

4. Listen
• Listen to the entire message that the other person is trying to communicate.
• Listen with your ears – what is being said, and what tone is being used?
• Listen with your eyes – what is the person doing with his or her body while speaking?
• Listen with your instincts – do you sense that the person is not communicating something important?
• Listen with your heart – what do you think the other person feels?

5. Ask what the other person would do
When in doubt, ask the person to explain his or her position. This is probably the simplest, and most direct, way to understand the other person. However, it's probably the least used way to develop empathy. It is fine if you ask what the other person wants: you don't earn any "bonus points" for figuring it out on your own.

For example, the boss who gives her young team members turkey vouchers for the holidays, when most of them don't even cook, is using her idea of a practical gift – not theirs.
Practice these skills when you interact with people. You'll likely appear much more caring and approachable, simply because you increase your interest in what others think, feel, and experience. It is a great gift to be willing and able to see the world from a variety of perspectives and it is a gift that you can use all of the time, in any situation.

© 2014 Tom Hallet. Mr. Hallet works for the Mind Tools and he writes about communication management for the Mind Tools website.

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/EmpathyatWork.htm?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=16Sep14#np

Mapping and Improving the Processes in Your Organization

By Keith Jackson


Keith Jackson

When thinking about your organization, have you ever said to yourself that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing? Chances are you have. Despite all the efforts people have made to streamline business operations and flatten organization structures, there are still a great many activities that involve more than one department or team.

Whether you organize your department or teams by function (marketing, accounts, operations, R&D, manufacturing), by purpose (for example, corporate customer management) or by any other means, the fact is that a department or team needs to work with other departments or teams.

This means connections, communications and hand-offs between departments and teams. These create the risk of processing gaps, inefficiencies and duplications, which can contribute to reduced performance or higher costs.

Even well designed processes and interactions are at risk of inefficiency creeping in, it is a fact of human nature that needs to be managed. By having a formal method for identifying and integrating processes between departments and teams, you can ensure the connections, communications and handoffs are well designed and well managed. One such approach uses "Swim Lane Diagrams," also known as "Rummler-Brache Diagrams."

Swim Lane Diagrams were proposed by Geary Rummler and Alan Brache in their book Improving Processes in 1990. This method of diagramming allows you to quickly and easily plot and trace processes and, in particular, the interconnections between processes, departments and teams.
Like other process diagramming techniques, with the Rummler-Brache method, you map processes linearly as a series of tasks across the page. Lines and arrows between tasks represent the flow of information, goods or work in progress, and also represent changes in responsibility.

The identifying feature of Rummler-Brache is the use of "swim lanes", horizontal rows across the diagram page. Think of a swim meet where each competitor has his or her own lane to swim: In this diagramming method, each "swim lane" may belong to an individual, a team, a department, or any other organizational unit you choose.

Process diagrams, in general, are a great tool to help spot processing gaps and inefficiencies. The added advantage of the Rummler-Brache or Swim Lane Diagram approach is that it focuses on the high risk interconnections between departments and teams, and helps you spot more clearly issues and risks associated with these.

Improving the Process
Once the diagram is complete, it is easy to see who is responsible for what and it is also easy to start identifying potential inefficiencies. The

diagram technique helps you break down your process so you can spot the bottlenecks, redundancies, and other causes of inefficiency, and so get on with improving your business process.

For example, when you look at the XYZ Corp manufacturing process, there is potential redundancy in the raw material inspection. If the Receiver were to inspect the raw material before sending it on to Welder or Joiner, then both of those guys could concentrate on their main activities: welding and joining.

Creating and Using Rummler-Brache Diagrams
The first step to spotting inefficiencies and making improvements is to break down your organization's processes into manageable pieces. If you tried to look at everything at once and in detail, you would be overwhelmed. So before you get started, it is important to clarify what you are trying to accomplish with the Rummler–Brache method, and so determine the right areas of focus and level of detail.

If you are trying to find strategic inefficiencies, then analyzing every process in detail is unnecessary and cumbersome. Here you might assign each main functional area to a swim lane and look at the interchanges in and between them. This would help you spot disconnects between functional areas of the business.

If you were trying to diagnose inefficiencies in your hiring and recruitment process then you would look at specific roles, departments and perhaps some key individuals and assign these to the swim lanes.
For a comprehensive approach, you may start by analyzing the processes and organization using high level swim lane diagrams. Then, once you have spotted areas you need to focus on, you can drill down these using more detail diagrams.

1. Determine what you aim to accomplish
• What business process do you want to analyze?
• Is it operational, strategic, functional, etc.?
• What organization units are involved and what level of detail do you want to analyze these to spot inefficiencies?

2. Clarify the processes you are focusing on
A process is defined for this purpose as a series of tasks that have a specific end result, such as hiring a staff member, producing a product, acquiring a new customer.
• For each process you are analyzing, what is the end result?

3. Identify all participants in the processes you are analyzing
These include all the organization units participating in the processes, and anyone who provides inputs or receives outputs from it. Depending on the level of detail you have chosen, these may be by departments, teams or individual people; or even a computer system that performs certain parts of the process.
• Which organization units participate?
• Where do the inputs to the process come from?
• Who receives the output of the process?

4. Now it's time to start creating the diagram
List the participants in the far left column of the diagram.
Assign each of these participants to a horizontal band (swim lane). It is helpful to assign the swim lanes in sequence, with the first column assigned to the participant who provides the first input. (For customer facing processes, this is often the customer.)

5. List the step or activities required at each stage of the process:
• Follow through the process sequentially.
• Remember you are mapping how the process is currently being done, not how you think it should be done.
• The key to creating a useful diagram is to keep it as simple as possible. Try not to include too many loop backs (unless you are focusing on exceptions) and keep the process mapping moving forward.

6. Analyze the diagram for potential areas of improvement
• Are there any gaps or steps missing?
• Is there duplication?
• Are there overlaps, where several people or teams perform the same task or activity?
• Are there activities that add no value?

Once you have identified potential areas for improvement, the next step is to decide how to address the issues and make changes. Rummel-Brache diagrams can also be used at this stage to map out the proposed process changes. As with any proposed changes in the organization, the pros and cons need to be analyzed, and any change that follow must be carefully planned.

For example, if you are considering removing duplicate processes, you must first look at whether there is a legitimate need and also what would be the impact of removing the duplication: A duplicate process may exist "legitimately" to provide, for example, proper financial or safety controls. (Techniques like Brainstorming and Impact Analysis can help you think through the consequences of a change.)

© Keith Jackson and Mind Tools Team. Keith graduated from Bembridge School and currently the editor with MindTools.com. He resides in Brighton, England.

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_89.htm?utm_source=nl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20Jan15#np

Building Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

By Caroline Smith

Caroline Smith

People often think that the longer you work for an organization, the more you know and the less you need to learn. However, younger members of staff who are just entering the workplace often have new skills and expertise, and they can provide fresh perspectives and ways of working that can benefit their more established colleagues.

Companies are now starting to realize that top-down learning is not always appropriate, particularly where social media and use of technology are involved, and “reverse mentoring” programs are emerging as a result. These give junior team members the opportunity to share up-to-date skills and knowledge with more senior colleagues.

We’ll look at reverse mentoring in this article, and we’ll discuss how you can use it to build your skills and bridge generational gaps.

What is Reverse Mentoring?

In reverse mentoring, a junior team member enters into a “professional friendship” with someone more senior, and they exchange skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, a younger person might be more comfortable with tools such as Pinterest®, WhatsApp® and Hootsuite®, so encouraging a pairing with an older colleague who has less experience of using these technologies can improve that person’s ability to connect with potential clients or customers.

The former CEO of General Electric®, Jack Welch, is credited with inventing the concept of reverse mentoring. He recognized his lack of technology skills in the late 1990s, and believed that the youngest people joining the company were far more knowledgeable about new technologies than their managers. So, he asked 500 of his top executives to seek out mentors from among these new joiners.

Usually, a mentor is expected to be more senior and more experienced than his or her mentee. However, reverse mentoring recognizes that there are skills gaps on both sides, and that each person can address their weaknesses with the help of the other’s strengths. For example, a younger team member can pass new skills and ideas up the corporate ladder, and someone older can become a role model or a career coach.

Why Form a Reverse Mentoring Relationship?
Reverse mentoring can play an important role in bridging the gap between the generations currently in the workforce: baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976), and Generation Y, also called millennials (born between 1977 and 1998). These groups have experienced vastly different social and cultural situations, which has resulted in varied work ethics, mindsets and attitudes.

This has led to a number of prejudices and stereotypes forming that can be difficult to overcome. For instance, some people view millennials as spoiled, unmotivated and self-centered, while some millennials view older generations as inefficient and resistant to change. Executives and other leaders need to learn how to cross the generational divide and communicate with, motivate and engage younger team members. Reverse mentoring can help to challenge these stereotypes, and benefit your team members and the organization as a whole.

Note:
It’s important to remember that not everyone from a specific generation will have had the same experiences or share the same behavioral traits. Treat each member of your team as an individual, and use your best judgment when setting up a reverse mentoring relationship.

Drawbacks of Reverse Mentoring
You may experience several potential drawbacks when you engage in a reverse mentoring partnership.
First, more senior team members may not believe that their younger mentors have valuable knowledge to share, and they may not be open to receiving feedback from people with less experience. Conversely, younger team members need to feel confident enough to share their opinions, and they may be less willing to participate if they are afraid of giving feedback to older colleagues.
You may also find that people are unwilling to dedicate time in their already busy schedules to mentor a person they don’t like or respect.

Finally, your role may not need much knowledge of new technology or Generation Y trends – in these situations, reverse mentoring partnerships may only be “nice to have,” not “highly desireable.”

How to Create a Successful Reverse Mentoring Partnership
Follow these five steps to set up an effective reverse mentoring relationship with a more junior team member.
1. *Identify Good Potential Partners*
An effective mentoring relationship needs good chemistry between both participants, so don’t choose someone “just because they’re young.” Instead, your ideal partner should have skills or knowledge that you need and be willing to build a relationship with you. You may want to conduct a Personal SWOT Analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses that you can address.

You can also develop a relationship with someone externally who has different life and work experiences. Be careful not to share sensitive information about your organization if you do this, and get appropriate permission first.

Tip:
Managers are busy people, and are unlikely to find the time for something unless they like the people they're working with. Likewise, more junior employees need to be able to like and respect the people they are paired with.
HR departments should try to avoid forcing mentoring relationships on people who, fundamentally, have no interest in engaging with them, or who don't respect the person they're being paired with.

2. Set Clear Goals and Expectations
You should discuss your expectations for the relationship with your mentoring partner upfront. Make sure that you're both committed, and that your goals are aligned. What do you want to get out of the relationship? What specific skills do you want to learn? What knowledge, skills and experience can you provide? How and where will you meet?

3. Work on Your Communication Skills
It can be challenging to communicate with someone from a different generation. For example, younger people may feel more comfortable engaging with others by email or instant messaging, while their older colleagues may prefer to speak on the telephone or meet in person. So, make sure that you're sensitive to the other person's communication preferences and needs.

4. Be Tactful, Patient and Open-Minded
Both you and your reverse mentoring partner must be open to learning from one another. So, remain respectful, and listen actively without any preconceived ideas.
Don't get frustrated if your partner doesn't understand the skills you're trying to share. Instead, communicate with tact, and give encouraging feedback that does not belittle his knowledge. Use constructive feedback to help him understand your perspective.

5. Measure Your Progress
Check in regularly to ensure that you are both happy with the relationship, and that you're getting the information you need. However, if you are not making your desired progress, schedule a brainstorming session and discuss new ways to achieve your goals.

© Caroline Smith. Ms Smith has a background in Human Resources, having worked in a number of global organizations' HR departments, and thereafter as a writer/researcher for a leading HR journal. She has a CIPD-accredited postgraduate Masters degree in HRM, and her interests include project management, coaching, change management and career development.

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/reverse-mentoring.htm utm_source=nl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=13Jan15#np

Upgrade your computer skills

By Sandy Mitchel

PMI has negotiated with a local computer training firm, AcademyX (www.academyx.com), to offer subscribers to this newsletter 20% off any AcademyX class if they register before October 31. They offer MS Office, Adobe, web development, and other classes at their branches in San Francisco, Sacramento and Santa Clara.

Just use the code "PMISF" on checkout on the shopping cart and your total will be reduced by 20%. Or, just call AcademyX at *800-716-4324* and mention this newsletter.


Sandy Mitchel

Did You Know...?

Nearly 70% of organizations implementing project managers report that project success rates have improved significantly as a result.

90% of global senior executives and project management experts say good project management is key to delivering successful results and gaining a competitive edge.

More than 16 million people regard project management as their profession.

Source: http://www.cornerstonedynamics.com/interesting-project-management-facts/

Membership Certification

By Mark Franks

As PMI members almost all of us are familiar with the PMP certification — in fact, we try to publish monthly the list of members who have recently achieved their PMP certification. What has gone under appreciated until very recently is that many of our members are attaining the other PMI certifications. Due to the membership database structure we cannot easily distill monthly data for these achievements; however, acknowledging the effort and accomplishment of these successes is important. We will strive to recognize our fellow Chapter members' achievements semiannually by listing all those that attain certification.

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