Project Management for the Rest of Us
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Introduction

Project management has a lot of tools that could help all of us do our jobs better. Many of these tools are similar to the nursing process and should be familiar, but are not often understood well or used with ease. The purpose of this article is to define project management and describe how project management tools can help you in your current position in nursing informatics, education, management or staff nursing.

Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of a particular project (PMBOK, 2008). A project is further defined as ‘a temporary endeavor to create a unique product service or result (ibid). Many of us do projects in our everyday work life, but we don’t think of them as projects because they rarely have a distinct beginning and usually feel like they go on forever. Some examples of projects include implementation of software, implementing a new quality methodology, assessing a policy or procedure, or implementing a new training program.

Why Project Management?

The goal of project management is to complete projects on-time, on-budget and within the planned scope (Houston, 2007). In healthcare, however, these...
goals are not often met. In 1996, the Standish group completed a study of implementation projects across many industries. They found that about 85 percent of all projects failed – either by being late, over budget or not delivering what they had promised (Lewis, 2003). Research since then hasn’t shown much improvement unless project management is used successfully throughout the duration of the project. Kitzmiller (2006) reported that 80% of healthcare projects fail, and one third of the projects that start are never completed. Table 1 displays a summary of Project Failure Statistics (ibid).

Projects fail for many reasons. Healthcare is very complex and most projects take a long time to complete. Data collection is complex, and often involves regulatory requirements that frequently change. Communication among leadership and staff is often complicated and not always timely. Many healthcare organizations are resistant to change. In addition, in most organizations, ‘projects’ only come out of the Information Services (IS) department, but impact many departments and lack clear clinical leadership. Using proven consistent project management tools can help to reduce project failures and overruns.

**Why You Need Project Management Skills**

Project Management skills can help you in any role, whether it’s educator, informatics nurse, manager or staff nurse. Project management skills help to contain the triple constraint of projects – time, scope and costs. Figure 1 displays the Project Management Triple Constraint. An increase in one of these constraints requires changes in one or both of the other constraints. For example, if you want to implement a project faster (time), you will either need to reduce the scope or increase the number of resources working on the project (cost).

Project management skills help you to better manage these constraints – both to plan for them in advance and therefore mitigate any risk, and to manage the changes needed in the most efficient way possible.

**Project Management Process**

The project-management process is a five step process that is very similar to the nursing process. In project-management these processes are called initiation, planning, execution, control, and closing (Table 2).

The initiation phase is when the project is selected and defined, and the business need, goals and objectives are defined. For example, this is where the stakeholders define the expected outcomes such as reducing errors, or increasing compliance. The initiation phase, however, is not where the project gets fully

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By Susan K. Newbold, PhD, RN-BC, FAAN FHIMSS

**CARING MEMBERSHIP PROFILE**

As of February 8th, 2009, there are 1573 members from 50 states and 32 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, England, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and the USA.

**Highest level of education**
- 59% Masters
- 26% Bachelors
- 8% PhD, EdD
- 3% Associates
- 4% other

**Employment Setting**
- 50% Hospital
- 13% Other
- 12% Vendor
- 12% Consultant
- 9% University or Student
- 2% Military
- 2% Recruiter

**Graduation – PhD**


**Graduation - BSN**


**Certification in Nursing Informatics from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC):**

Shane Hammock, Julian, WV, December 30, 2008

Carol Mensch, Exton, PA, renewed her NI certification for another 5 years, January 2009.

**Certification - CPHIMS:**

Debra L. Waddell, Pittsburgh, PA, 2008.

**Certification HIT:**

Yvette Roberts, Flossmore, IL, passed the HIT certification exam, December 30, 2008. www.healthitcertification.com

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scoped or planned. That phase of the project is called the planning phase, which is the most important phase of any project and will be described further in the next section. The execution phase follows the planning and it is where the project tasks are completed. Along with the execution phase, the controlling phase is where the project manager measures and tracks the project. This includes tools like status reports and managing issues logs. The last phase of a project is the closing phase where the project is shut down (completed) and the lessons learned are identified to help improve future projects.

Project Planning

Most project managers agree that the planning phase is the most important phase of the project. There is a well known saying amongst project managers that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail (unknown). It is during the planning phase that you prepare the workplan, risk and issues logs, quality documents and change control plans. It is also during this phase that you create all your contingency plans for the project. Planning for problems during the planning phase is one of the best ways to keep the project on-time and on-budget. Imagine, for example, that you are implementing a new electronic barcode medication administration system and need to change the planned live date. The stakeholders you need to talk to are not going to take the bad news well unless you have prepared them and communicated all along.

If you start the planning and communicating at the beginning of the project when everyone is excited about the project and really looking forward to positive outcomes, then it is easier to communicate with the stakeholders when issues occur. If you have to give bad news when people are unhappy or when the bad news comes as a surprise, then the stakeholders will not be as understanding. By planning for contingencies and communicating status and risks with mitigation strategies regularly, stakeholders will be more understanding when issues arise.

- Figure 2: Would you want to give this person bad news?
Many CARING members are presenting workshops, tutorials, oral papers, and posters during NI2009 in June-July, 2009.

**UPCOMING CONFERENCES:**

March 6, 2009, Northern California HIMSS. San Francisco, CA. www.nocalhimss.org


**AWARDS & HONORS:**

Willa Fields, Rancho Santa Fe, CA, was elected to the HIMSS Board for a three year term starting July 1, 2009.

Robin Raiford, Coppell, TN, was elected to the HIMSS Nominating Committee for a two-year term, which commences July 1, 2009. She was also selected to receive the HIMSS Distinguished Fellows Service Award, which will be presented April 4, 2009 in Chicago.

**BYTES OF INTEREST:**

Heather J. Sobko, Crane Hill, AL, and James W. Scharf were married October 18, 2008.

Wanda Y. Govan-Jenkins, Upper Marlboro, MD, had a baby 2009.

Daniel P. Gracie, Charleston, SC, created a Facebook page for CARING.

Please send items for future newsletters to: Susan K. Newbold, susan.newbold@vanderbilt.edu

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**Change Management**

During the planning phase, the project manager works with stakeholders to document a change management process. This process defines how changes will be managed from identification to completion. Using the change management process will help prevent stakeholders from what I call the ‘Nike Method’ of project management. Nike uses ‘Just Do It’ as their motto and it’s a great motto for what they are selling. It is, however, not a great motto for project management. Often stakeholders see the changes requested as good ideas, but do not know the impact to the project of implementing these changes, so they just approve the changes. Approving changes without analyzing the impact of the changes, however, often reduces the chances of an on-time, on-budget project. For example, if additional data is identified during testing, a clinical documentation form may need to be created to capture the information. To prevent this change from adversely impacting the project, requestors of the change should document the business case – why the change is needed and what would happen if the change is not implemented. The project manager then reviews the time and resources needed to implement the change and the impact to the project timeline and deliverables. This document is then discussed with the stakeholders to determine whether or not the change will be implemented. The stakeholders make the decision while understanding any needed changes to the project timeline, scope or costs. This way, all changes are assessed for importance against timeline and resources (cost) so that everyone involved knows the risk of either doing the change or not doing the change. The decision is documented and any changes to the timeline are made.

Sometimes, stakeholders have a hard time determining the best course of action a change will have on the whole project. One of the ways you can help is to use a decision document. A decision document is a way to detail all the options along with the pros and cons of each option from the stakeholders’ points of view. These documents are written in terms that the stakeholders will understand, not just from the project manager’s point of view. Examples of stakeholder terms

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include: 4 more trainers will be needed; there will be a 2-month delay of the live date; nurses will need additional hardware, etc.

The decision document should also include a recommendation for which option is best for the overall project. The recommendation should include why you are recommending this particular option. The decision document is then discussed in detail with the stakeholders so they can make the decisions. By presenting the pros and cons in terms that impact them, they are better prepared to make, and help improve buy-in to, the final decision.

Summary

Project management skills can help you whether your project is a system selection project; an implementation project; an education project; writing an article; creating a presentation or much more. Successful project managers take the time to plan and document what has been planned. In addition, successful project managers follow a communication plan that is adapted to the stakeholder type, so there are no surprises. Successful project managers control changes by analyzing the impact of any changes on the timeline, scope and cost. Remember though, controlling changes doesn’t mean that changes don’t take place; it means that stakeholders make informed decisions when changes are requested. Successful project managers don’t always need formal project management training, but do need to follow a standard methodology (plan) for the duration of the project.

References


Author Information:

Lisa Anne Bove is a Senior Manager with Accenture, LLC, and manages a variety of clinical implementation and workflow and process redesign projects across the country. She is currently a member of the HIMSS NI Task Force and on the Board of Directors with the American Nursing Informatics Association. She has published on both nursing and informatics topics and speaks frequently at nursing conferences both locally and internationally. Her first book Project Management for Healthcare Informatics, co-authored with Susan Houston, was published in 2007.

Editor's Note

A book review on Lisa A. Bove's book entitled, Project Management for Healthcare Informatics can be seen in the CARING Newsletter, Volume 23, No. 3. 2008. It is available on Amazon.com and can be purchased in Kindle platform.
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