Daya K Wimalasuriya

PMP, DTM, CSM, M.A. (Econ.), B.Sc (Eng.), Senior Project and Portfolio Manager (Finance, ByLaws and Service Management) – City of Surrey, BC, Canada

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT

What is Project Management?

Before analysis on how human resource management can be pertinent to project management, it is useful to understand the definition of a project and project management via the universally accepted PMBOK (Project Management Body Of Knowledge) published by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and other associations that regulate the discipline of Project Management.

A "Project" can be defined as a unique endeavour to deliver a product/service/result which requires a series of related action items to
be completed using capital and human resources with a definite start and end date subject to constraints on the cost and other resources.
The keyword here is "unique" as no two projects can be identical.

Project Team Evolution Lifecycle

Project Management can be defined as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques with the given resources to meet the objectives of the project.
Unlike organizational team management, a project manager has to assemble a team where team members may or

> ## WHY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

While project management as a discipline has several key domain areas mostly technical such as scope management, schedule management, cost management, quality management and risk management, the domain of human resource management stands out as one key area of the success of a project because,
In real life, no matter how much capital resources are available, a project is never delivered in a vacuum; every project requires people (human resources) to ensure the delivery of the objectives
In most cases, project managers must work with project team members who usually do not report to them in the organization; making is an essential skill for a project manager to motivate and manage members of the project team, without the power of being their reporting manager.

may not have worked together before and make them work together and reach peak performance soon to deliver the project and then dissolve the project team once the project is done. An experienced project manager may concurrently manage multiple projects at the same time, with each project in various stages of delivery – from initiation to commence work to closeout after results are delivered.

The typical evolution of a project lifecycle has 5 main stages from team management and by extension human resource management point of view.

Those 5 stages are known as,
- FORMING: A new team is formed.
- STORMING: The team's operational rules are defined as well as the roles and responsibilities.
- NORMING: The team starts to operate as per the understood operational rules.
- PERFORMING: The team reaches peak performance to add get deliverables completed.
- ADJOURNING: The team is dissolved after the project objectives are realised.

The role of a project manager from a human resource management standpoint tends to evolve and change as the project team goes through these stages and a proper understanding of the changing behaviour of project management is essential to the success of any project, big or small.

Human Resource Management implications during a Project Lifecycle
Human Resource Management during Forming
Forming is the stage that the project manager must take lead and take initiative.

It could be a time of great confusion, ambiguity and sometimes mistrust among the members of the newly assembled project team, as by design it was the creation of a brand-new project team, and the team members were not much aware of the work to do other than they are told they have to work on the project.

It becomes the responsibility of the project manager to spend all the necessary time and resources to be hands-on with the team, intervene in conversations and build the team into a working group.

Even if the project manager is not a natural extrovert, this is a time the project manager must put on an extrovert hat to break the ice and introduce team members to each other to create a welcoming environment for future project work to be done and team members to collaborate.

On the other hand, this is the time a project manager will establish team norms and ground rules that will set the tone and establish the mode of operation of the project team for the entire duration of the project.

In other words, the Forming state is the foundation on which the project team will be built.

Human Resource Management during Storming
Once the initial get-to-know time has passed, the project team enters the Storming stage.

Any organization will have different departments and functional teams, which have deep-rooted internal processes and procedures to ensure smooth functioning. When team members from different teams get together to deliver something new – a change to the "status quo" – it often results in a clash of ideologies and process norms of different teams.

While these disagreements are a welcome feature in a team (since it indicates that the initial stage has passed and team members are willing to exchange ideas and discuss what to do), they can also easily spiral into a confrontation that is detrimental to the team's cohesiveness to work as one unit.

Again, it is the role of the project manager to be hands-on and intervene and make sure that any disagreements can be sorted out as per the agreed ground rules, team norms and project objectives. Also, if any discussion needs to happen with anyone outside the project team, the project manager must take lead and ownership of that correspondence to ensure a unified message comes out of the project team.

Human Resource Management during Norming

Once team ground rules are understood and the team knows each other, and differences of opinion are sorted out, the project team members start to fall into their roles, understand their responsibilities and look for the way to do their work.

As a result, the need will be less for the project manager to be hands-on to address each communication line among team members or to be part of each task-level collaboration among team members. It is time for the project manager to not become a micromanager and empower the team members to start work and take ownership of their work.

However, in an environment like this, the project manager must invest some time to understand how to incentivise good behaviour and work done above the call of duty. To do this, a project manager needs to talk to project team members, observe their work and behaviour patterns and figure out the types of incentives for each team member. As all humans are unique, everyone has a unique type of incentive, and it is the skill of a project manager to identify the types of incentives to be provided to each team member, should be need arise to recognize good performance or give added motivation. A simple cookie-cutter approach to financial incentives will be a wrong approach and may even run off being a disincentive if applied to some team members.

Knowing the team very well is key for a project manager to be successful in determining the incentives.

A popular method used to determine types of incentives is the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs introduced by Abraham Maslow. It identifies 5 types of needs that would act as the main driver or incentive for a person, based on their personality.
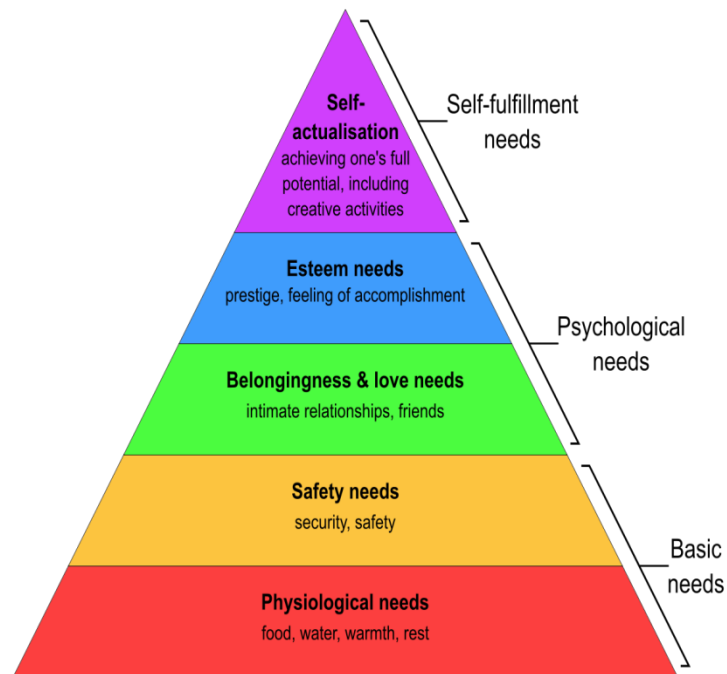
Physiological Needs: Basic needs that everyone needs as essentials.

Security Needs: The need to ensure survival.

Affiliation Needs: The need to be part of a community.

Esteem Needs: The need to be respected and liked.

Self-Actualisation Needs: The need to fulfil something beyond self-needs.

While the above 5 need types look more appropriate for regular organizational management, a project manager who works in tandem with team/functional managers can apply appropriate incentives for team members during project execution as well. For example,

An increase in salary or a bonus/lump sum financial offer will be an incentive for a project team member who is a new worker just out of school/university (Physiological Needs)

Commendation of work to a manager or recommend offering a permanent position to a project team member who is working for the organization on a contract or probationary position (Security Needs)

Acknowledge positive contribution to the project by an experienced member of the organization to the team member's manager to make it count for future promotion and career path development. (Affiliation Needs)

Assign a leadership role within the project to a team member who has shown interest to move into a leadership role in the organization. (Esteem Needs)

Recommend approving a requested vacation by a high-performing project team member who is spiritually inclined to go for a meditation retreat. (Self-Actualization Needs)

Human Resource Management during Performing

Once the project team knows what they must do after Forming, Storming and Norming, and the necessary incentives are also in place to detect and reward work, the project team starts performing like a well-oiled machine. The team members have self-awareness of their roles and are willing to collaborate with other team members and there is no ambiguity on the project goals and objectives. Occasionally. Even during this stage, conflicts can arise and when conflicts do arise, a project manager needs to adopt a conflict resolution technique that is appropriate for the project's success.

In general, a project manager has several conflict resolution techniques, but as in organizational management, only one of them is recommended to use unless in extreme circumstances.

Avoidance (avoid the conflict and move on): Win-Lose: Not a recommended approach.

Compromise (reach a middle ground by asking two sides to compromise): Lose-Lose: Not a recommended approach.

Problem-Solving (consider facts and determine a solution): Win-Win: A recommended approach.

Smoothing (ask to focus on positives): Win-Lose: Not a recommended approach.

Forcing (use power and dictate a solution): Win-Lose: Not a recommended approach.

While Problem-Solving is the recommended approach, it doesn't mean each team member in a conflict will be 100% happy. However, the key to this approach is consistency and a fair process in that team realises that a project manager takes the best decision based on available information.

Human Resource Management during Adjourning

Once a project is completed, the project manager must ensure that the project is brought to proper administrative closure and make all necessary steps to transfer the project team member to the original team.

This step, though seems not a major step, does play an important role in the reputation of a project manager or the project manager's brand.

Human Resource Management as a differentiator between a successful and an average project

As mentioned above, while a project may have a lot of other resources, in the end, require a team of people to work together collaboratively to successfully deliver a project.

A motivated team happy with the leadership of the project manager is likely to work as a more empowered team, taking responsibility for the work assigned to them. This motivation-driven productivity gain will, in most cases make a difference between a highly successful project and a project with average success.

Daya K Wimalasuriya

PMP, DTM, CSM, M.A. (Econ.), B.Sc (Eng.), Senior Project and Portfolio Manager (Finance, ByLaws and Service Management) – City of Surrey, BC, Canada