

Stakeholder communication improvements in a software delivery project

Project type: IT

Location: Global

RICS/APM stakeholder principles: Communicate; Consult early, and often; Relationships are key; Simple, but not easy; Take responsibility

Stakeholder terms: Stakeholder expectations, communication

Abstract

A case study on improvements in communication with stakeholders leading to improved project outcomes.

Background

A large software company had, over the years, increasingly recognised that while they are technically very competent, most of the problems encountered boil down to communication failures or 'soft' issues. They recently conducted a series of 'after action reviews' that examined a number of important client engagements. One of the most revealing conclusions from these reviews was that the most commonly cited reason for project failure was that the client had not really been asked what they wanted.

The issues

It was recognised that it would not be realistic to expect a transformation in project staff overnight; simply telling them to be 'better communicators' would not have any focus. However, steps were taken to instil a better approach; for example, by investing in a stakeholder analysis tool that helped the account managers share information about the key contacts in the client organisations with the project delivery teams.

The challenges

The challenges are summarised under 'The issues'.

The solution

A real difference was evident by the example set by a few of the most effective project managers. It became increasingly clear that the technical challenges the projects encountered were much more easily resolved with clients where there was an open and structured communication approach (e.g. regularly scheduled progress/review meetings). Some of the project managers became highly focused on this aspect.

The benefits

The result of this shift in culture was that the projects run by managers taking this approach were invariably regarded as the most successful, i.e. projects that could be referenced as client success stories, even if they had encountered all the usual technical challenges. Accordingly, it is recommended that stakeholder consultation and the development of corresponding stakeholder analyses should be an ongoing activity.

The learning points

Accordingly, it is recommended that stakeholder consultation and the development of corresponding stakeholder analyses should be an ongoing activity.

This case study was written by the APM Stakeholder Engagement Focus Group.

- For more information on the group or stakeholder engagement, [click here](#).