



White Paper 2017-07

How to Check the Project Team Health And Why the Role of the Project Control Manager is Essential in that Respect

The key success factor in any Large and Complex Project lies in the health of the Project Team. The ability to really work effectively as a team is essential, as well as the ability to avoid blame – in particular when things do not develop as expected. The Project Control Manager is often the key person to implement a Project Team Health monitoring. In this White Paper we give a framework to check the Project Team Health.

Should a significant issue arise in the area of team health, the Project Manager must be able to intervene to raise the issue and setup the necessary solution, which can be either a workshop or other ad-hoc interventions that aim at re-establishing alignment and commitment within the Project team.

Beyond establishing formal communication interfaces and designing the overall Project data structure breakdown, the Project Control Manager must monitor the health of communication within the Project Team. A clear indicator will be discrepancies in reports and expectations.

Checking the Project Team Health

Successful Projects always have a very close-bound team that works in an effective and performing manner. Blame is forbidden inside the Project (even if events do not unfold as expected) and everyone works in the same direction. It is essential to understand what the actual development stage of the Team is. The Tuckman team stages framework (Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing) can be used as guide to understand the performance capability of the team. If the development stage is unsatisfactory at this stage of the Project, action must be taken immediately.

The Project Control Manager is in an ideal situation to help the Project Manager monitor the health of the Project Management Team as an effective team:

- By maintaining essential coordination tools, in particular the Integrated Project Schedule, and detecting discrepancies in priorities,
- By participating or having delegates participate to many regular meetings internal to the Project team and with major stakeholders (Client, Senior Management),
- By identifying inconsistencies between the plans of the different functions, which reflect a lack of coordination and communication,
- Being almost permanently in the office, the Project Control Manager is well placed to foster bottom-up informal communication of problems or concerns and relay this information to the Project Manager. The best is to identify those empathic persons who people confide in naturally and encourage upward feedback through active listening and appropriate early and decisive actions. This will further encourage upward communication.

**Always remember that a
Project is a Human Adventure!**

Signs of a Healthy Project Team

Each of the points below is a significant mark of Project Team Health. Indication of opposite behaviour must be treated immediately in a powerful and non-equivocal manner.

- Real commitment to Safety and Quality,
- Adherence to Constructive Conflict prior to decision-making,
- Conflicts (work or individual-related) are addressed professionally, non-emotionally and quickly,
- Full commitment and unequivocal alignment after a decision has been taken,
- Full accountability and acknowledgment of areas of responsibility,
- Presence of Trust, and absence of Blame between segments of the Project Team (in particular in difficult times),
- Respect for other team-members' point of view,
- Adequate integration and recognition of local contributors / cultural differences between team members (international Projects),
- Project interest is recognized to be above individual's interest, in particular in relationships and communications outside the Project,
- Acceptance that sacrifices might have to be done in one's area for the overall Project's sake,
- Team members support each other, and help compensate each other's weaknesses; team members are ready to work beyond their normal remit or go the extra mile to help the Project / other team members.

Treatments of unhealthy signs can vary depending on the circumstances. They will rely on the leadership capabilities of the Project Manager. Solutions can include:

- Clarification workshops,
- Teambuilding (all or part of Project Team),
- One-to-one or one-to-team conversations,
- Removal of divas/ trouble-makers that don't play the team game,
- Etc.

Essential healthy team capabilities

The success of Project execution is very much related to the health of the Project Management Team as a team. Essentials include:

- The effectiveness of the team in coordinating their priorities and efforts (including meetings).
- The capability for team members to compensate the weaknesses of others and go out of their way to support the Project in critical moments,
- The capability for open debate before decision-making, and a clear execution discipline after decision-making,
- Consistent behaviour on important values such as quality and safety,
- A strict no-blame structure even when things do not work out as expected,
- At the same time, the capability to take immediately action directly and to the point, without blame, when people do deviate from the expected norm of behaviour or from the established values. This will reinforce progressively values and behavioural norms.

Half-way between the effectiveness of the team and the effectiveness of the processes are meetings. Too often, long meetings are the bane of Project Management Team. Meeting effectiveness is also a major parameter that needs to be monitored. Of course meetings are needed for coordination; still some basic rules need to be followed for effectiveness. In a Project where people are busy and subject to the pressure of operational issues they will quickly vote with their feet whether meetings are useful or not. As a rule, regular coordination meetings should be few, focused, and limited in time and attendance, except the main Project coordination meeting.

In case of dysfunction, the Project Control Manager should immediately raise the alarm and support the Project Manager in finding an adequate solution to the situation. In a number of instances, the Project Control Manager might detect a situation before it becomes visible to the Project Manager.

Remedies need to be decided by the Project Manager, and may include specific workshops and other communication methods; or even, the removal of a member of the team if that appears to be the most effective way of re-establishing effectiveness.

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Conclusion: Always Remember that a Project is a Human Adventure!

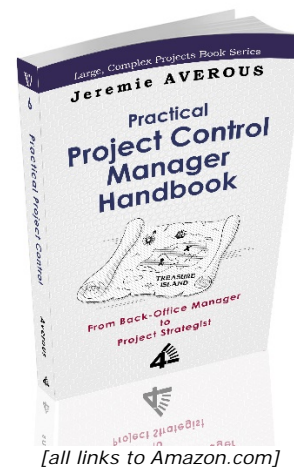
Because at the end of the day, a Project is a human adventure (refer to our [White Paper 2013-01](#)

[Projects are First of All a Human Adventure: Why You Can't Manufacture Projects on a Standardized Assembly Line](#)), it is on the team health aspect that a Project will or not be successful. For a Project Control Manager, being a 'trusted advisor' to the Project Manager also requires to be able to seize the subtleties of Soft Power and help shape a winning Project team.

Apprehension of the cultural issues at stake, the ability to conduct effective workshops, monitoring the Project team's health and acting in case of an issue, are essential capabilities of the successful Project Control Manager.

Find all these principles of Project Control Management exposed in a comprehensive manner in our new Handbook,
[Practical Project Control Manager Handbook](#)

(now published, available in [Paperback](#) and [Kindle](#) versions!)



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