

Work Principles and Challenges

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Kevin's Project Management Principles

1. Provide a clear path for the team to focus upon work and deliverables
2. Provide systems, processes, structures, and/or methods to maximize clarity and agreement on work to be done
3. Put in place systems and processes that provide simple and easy visibility for any stakeholders
4. Ensure in-line and in-work-process communication rather than meetings, chat, or emails
5. Eliminate systems barrier with maximum user simplicity
6. Weigh process integration, process optimization and timing to align to change tolerances
7. Leverage tools constantly and especially with others to reinforce their importance and utility

Top 20 Typical Task and Work Management Challenges

1. Time estimating & Task breakdown – this is the base of most issues. Identification of repeated efforts and then breaking work into component elements. Once this is done then time estimates can be developed and leveraged as pieces of overall work efforts. In addition, codifying the work makes it easier to hand off/delegate and hire for.
2. Meeting discipline – without structural approaches to meetings they can become less useful. Often meetings are too large and include individuals that are not directly working on deliverability. That can stifle direct communication and impinge upon progress. Having meeting objectives is a minimum so that when everyone leaves they can feel good about accomplishing the meeting goal.
3. Resource planning & Allocation – this applies to arranging for resources to be available when needed (often referred to as scheduling).
4. Prioritization alignment – how does everything fit together? Who determines priorities and are they based upon available resources and properly coordinated?
5. Budgeting – funds for work to achieve objectives needs to be thought thru (even if there is no budget). Part of this is addressing budget timing, research, selection, approval, logistics, integration, management, and actual expenditure implementation.
6. Capabilities assessment – can the resources actually deliver the work to the quality and timing needed?
7. Clear deliverables & Clarity of work – make objectives clear (SMART – Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Realistic; Timebound). This may not be in place, but it must be integrated into the process in a timely fashion. Weakness here makes for a poor foundation.
8. Efficient hand-offs & Transitions – timing, clarity, completeness, accuracy, deliverable, and communications are essential to team efforts.

9. Work timing & Coordination – this considers adjustments and orchestration of work based upon resources. What items can be worked in parallel? How long will items take and what is optimal path to moving work forward. This includes adjusting for dependencies and sequencing work.
10. Workflow – applying the correct sequencing of tasks and who should do what during each step. Finding systems that help with communication, processes and automation is also part of workflow.
11. Work reviews & Approvals – scheduling, planning, and considering approvals (internal/external) and potential rework needs to be accounted for due to the impact upon dependencies and the overall progress.
12. Status awareness – communicating clear messaging, at the right time, in an acceptable format (e.g. Flash, doc, meeting, etc.) to the right individuals. Appropriate levels of detail and forewarnings in communication to managers, leadership, and/or stakeholders.
13. EI (emotional intelligence) – this applies primarily to sounding alarms. When should one sound alarms, who should know, and how much needs to be said? EI also applies to building alliances and working collaboratively.
14. Swim lanes – everyone should know their role and focus on their own deliveries and responsibilities.
15. Informal & Formal problem solving – this pertains to working together to solve issues and 80% of problem solving should be informal. If the informal paths need help or aren't producing results then formal methods should be sought. Even upon escalation it is recommended that informal approaches supersede formal ones. This can be hard for management to swallow but this leans into results over confrontation. Informal processes place the project over the process and success over identifying weak links.
16. Escalation and intervention – determination of who can unblock and assist in moving items forward. Consideration should be placed upon properly timing of information and the regulation of message volume for proper engagement and results.
17. Distractions, interruptions, noise, priorities, and confusion – if work is a priority then everyone should be on the same page. Managers and individuals need to be empowered to reduce distractors.
18. Task identification and preparation – defining work and ensuring that prerequisites are in place is critical to assuring work proceed forward and doesn't get derailed or delayed. This includes proper assignment or reassignment of work as needed.
19. Accurate work deliverable estimates – the difference between time on work and work hours can be vastly different. Work breakdowns help with accurate estimates. Throwing work into a pool and assigning it isn't a formula for success. People take vacations, crises arise, and project and task collisions happen (two or more items must be done within the same time period). These items need to be factored into any complicated work deliverable.
20. Post mortem – like any other part of an effort, time needs to be allocated for review and wrap up. Having this built into expectations ensures no one rushes off to the next effort. In addition, this stage allows for learnings, process changes, documentation, etc. Part of the post mortem is actually implementing changes or creating a separate effort to accomplish that, as needed.