10) The project team

General remarks

The execution of most projects requires more than a project manager ("PM").
The expression "**Project team**" refers to the group of individuals working on a project.
The word "team" indicates that the individuals work in a collaborative manner with a **common goal: the successful completion of the project**.

For the duration of the project, the **PM** is the "**leader**" of the project team.

Project team members do not necessarily all work in a single location. They may be distributed over a number of locations, including homes for those individuals who "telecommute". Some locations may be "offshore".

By extension, the project team may include people working for **contractors** involved in the project. The PM is not expected to manage a contractor's human resources, but he may consider his primary contacts at the major contractor companies as part of the "**extended project team**" (so they will in particular receive information on a "need-to-know" basis and be involved in project team meetings whenever appropriate).

The **Human resources plan**, developed as part of the project planning process, includes a schedule for **staff acquisition and release**, corresponding to the needs identified for the various project tasks and to their estimated durations.

Team members may be "acquired", on a permanent or temporary basis, by various methods:

- an internal transfer within the company (from one department to another, from one project to another…);
- hiring from outside the company;
- employing independent (freelance) contractors (who may be fully integrated into the team);
- via a "staffing services" agency.

This chapter covers the **recruitment** and **integration** of team members, and the **organization** of the project team.

Recruitment

Recruiting qualified staff can be a **lengthy process**, all the more as suitable candidates may already have a job, so the hiring process should be undertaken as early as possible with respect to the date at which recruits are supposed to start working on the project.
On the other hand, people should not be hired too soon, in order to avoid unnecessary costs.

The PM is generally in charge of the **recruitment process**, in close cooperation with the Human Resources department, which should provide guidance and any other form of help (including interviewing candidates and drafting employment contracts).

Subproject managers who are already part of the project team should be involved in the process of interviewing, evaluating and finally selecting candidates for their respective subprojects, but the PM is generally responsible for the final decision.

The **job descriptions** written as part of the human resources plan may need to be rewritten in more detail for the purpose of advertising available positions.
Note that **no confidential information** concerning the project should be included in job ads!

Job advertising can be achieved through different channels:

- internal job posting (at practically no cost, obviously);
- websites (at a very moderate cost);
- newspapers and magazines (at a much higher cost);
- networking (at a low cost);
- recruitment agency (at a very high cost);
- staffing services agency (at a relatively high cost).

In-house recruitment has a cost benefit; it also has the advantage of targeting people familiar with the company culture and, more importantly, who may be really motivated by the prospect of a job evolution (which does not necessarily imply a better salary, at least in the short term…).

Another very effective method for finding candidates is **networking**. The PM should use his own professional and social networks to spread the information concerning available jobs, and, for maximum leverage, ask his contacts (including the project team members already on board) to do the same via their respective networks.

In some cases, it may be necessary to use the services of a **recruitment agency** ("head hunter"). Such services are usually (very) expensive but they are generally efficient. It is important to provide the agency with a clear and detailed description of the background, skills and other qualities required for each of the positions to be filled, so as to ensure an adequate pre-qualification process and to avoid wasting time with unsuitable candidates.

Finally, **staffing services agencies** are usually able to provide specialized staff with a relatively short lead time. Such services are generally expensive, but they may be a good solution if other recruitment methods have failed, as well as in cases where, in the course of a project, there is an unexpected need for additional resources and there is no time for a standard (lengthy) recruitment process.

In preparation for the **interviews**, the PM should prepare a **summary description of the project**, to be used as part of a "sales pitch", whose purpose is to make the project and the jobs appear **attractive** to candidates.
The sales pitch should however be reasonable, ie it should not include promises that cannot be kept (such as a permanent employment contract at the end of the project…).
No confidential information must be disclosed during the interviews (as for job ads)!

Selecting **the right person** for each position should be based on a range of **criteria**, including the following:

- background/education,
- work experience,
- skills,
- achievements,
- references,
- passion (for products, etc.)
- team spirit,
- personality,
- availability,
- cost.

Note that a person with adequate skills but a somewhat difficult character may present problems working in a team…

It is desirable to have each candidate interviewed by several people, including the relevant subproject managers, other senior team members, and at least one HR person (skilled in detecting character flaws).

Integration

Integration of new recruits should be **as smooth as possible**, in order to make them feel comfortable in their new environment and at ease with the other team members, as well as to **facilitate** their **getting up to speed and becoming productive**.

New recruits should be introduced to the other team members on an individual basis and/or on the occasion of a team meeting. They should be welcomed as additional **valuable assets to the project**.

Prior to the arrival of new recruits, the PM should make sure that their **workstations** are **complete** (desk, computer, software, phone, Internet connection, intranet account, e-mail, etc.) and **in working order**.

New recruits must be given **adequate information** about the project, its context and purpose, the challenges it represents, its work breakdown structure (WBS), its organization, its schedule and, obviously, the tasks they will be involved in, as well as related objectives (duration, quality, etc.).

Ideally, the **information package** should be provided in written form and verbally explained by the PM or the appropriate subproject manager, who should make sure that the information is clearly understood.

Any **documentation** that new recruits may need to consult must be made accessible to them in a timely fashion (possibly in the form of direct links to documents on the intranet).

If any form of **training** is required for new recruits, for example on specific tools to be used, such training should be delivered as soon as possible.

It is also useful to give new hires the names of other team members who will provide **help**, if required. Of course, the people who have been designated to provide help should have been informed of this particular role they are expected to play, and they should have accepted it!

During the integration phase of new team members, the PM and/or the subproject managers should regularly check whether there are any **problems to be solved**, and they should take **appropriate action** when necessary.

Organization

The organization of the project team should be adapted to its size. It should be configured for **maximum efficiency**, avoiding unnecessary hierarchical levels.
It should be **optimized for getting the work done**, not for the beauty of the organization chart! It should also **facilitate communication and problem-solving**.

Responsibilities and levels of authority should be **well defined**. "Fuzziness" generally involves unnecessary overhead and leads to inefficiency.

The organization should reflect the project's **work breakdown structure**.
If subprojects are clearly identified, it may be useful or even necessary to appoint a manager for each of them. Ideally, a **subproject manager** should not only have good project and people management skills, but also be a specialist in the field which the subproject relates to, so that he can provide **expert guidance** to his team.

The PM will use the subproject managers as intermediaries for **relaying information and instructions** to subproject team members, as well as for **reporting information** on work progress, and for **escalating issues and problems** that cannot be handled at subproject level and therefore need to be resolved by the PM.

Ideally, the subproject managers should have **direct hierarchical authority** over their team members. Likewise, the PM should have direct hierarchical authority over the subproject managers.

The PM and the various subproject managers form the "**Project management team**".

In some organizations, relationships between the PM and subproject managers and/or between subproject managers and their team members are not hierarchical but **functional**, which can make the project more difficult to manage. In this case, **lines of authority** should nevertheless be clearly defined, accepted by all people involved and supported by the PM's manager.

> *At Hachette, I was in charge of a Products division. Among other assignments, I had full responsibility for the EHM project as Project Director. During the years when the EHM was produced in-house, I had several direct reports, including the Editorial director (who played the role of Content subproject manager), the director of Data engineering and tools (who played the role of Data engineering and tools subproject manager), the director of Software development (who played the role of Software development subproject manager), and a Project manager (who played the role of User Interface design subproject manager).*
> *The subproject managers had direct hierarchical authority over their respective team members.*
> *In addition to the above-mentioned subproject managers, I had an administrative assistant as direct report who took care of budget control, invoices and payments, as well as contracts (with support from the Finance and HR departments).*
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> *The PM for another smaller-scale project at Hachette was one of my direct reports. Because of constraints imposed by the existing organization, the PM had no hierarchical authority over the other three project team members (an editor, a graphic designer and a website developer). The relationship between the PM and the project team members was purely functional. Due to the PM's character and lack of diplomacy, I had to get involved on many occasions to resolve personal conflicts and other issues that appeared in the course of the project.*

Here is an **example of a project team organization chart** (for the EHM project, at the time when software development was done in-house).

The dotted lines in the above chart represent the close cooperation that was required (and achieved) between the various subproject managers (and teams) for the success of the EHM project.