In this module, you learned how project management skills are needed in today’s working environment, as workers find themselves increasingly involved in a variety of simultaneous projects. This module discussed how project management differs from traditional management, in purpose, structure, and operations.

What is a project?

It is a series of related jobs, usually directed toward some major output and requiring a significant period of time to perform.

What is project management?

It is planning, directing, and controlling resources (people, equipment, material, etc.) to meet the technical, cost, and time constraints of the project.

Why is project management important?

It is important because at the highest levels of an organization, management often involves juggling a portfolio of projects.

Project Structure

Pure Project is a self-contained team works full time on the project.

For Functional Project, responsibility for the project lies within one functional area of the firm. Employees from that area work on the project, usually only part time.

Matrix Project is a blend of pure and functional project structures – people from different functional areas work on the project, possibly only part time.

Pure Project Structure

Advantages: the project manager has full authority, team members report to one boss, shortened communication lines, and team pride, motivation, and commitment are high.

Disadvantages: duplication of resources, organizational goals and policies are ignored, lack of technology transfer, and team members have no functional area "home".

Functional Project Structure

Advantages: a team member can work on several projects, technical expertise maintained in functional area, functional area is “home” after project completed, and a critical mass of specialized knowledge.

Disadvantages: aspects of the project that are not directly related to the functional area get short-changed; motivations of team members are often weak; and needs of the client are secondary and are responded to slowly.

Matrix Project Structure

Advantages: better communications between functional areas, project manager held responsible for success, duplication of resources is minimized, functional “home” for team members, and policies of the parent organization are followed.

Disadvantages: too many bosses, depends on project manager’s negotiating skills, and potential for sub-optimization.

Defining the Project

Statement of Work is a written description of the objectives to be achieved.

Task is a further subdivision of a project – usually shorter than several months and performed by a single group or organization.

Work Package is a group of activities combined to be assignable to a single organizational unit.

Project Milestone is a specific event in the life of the project.

Work Breakdown Structure defines the hierarchy of project tasks, subtasks, and work packages.

Activities are pieces of work that consume time.

A work breakdown structure is a key component to any project manager’s plan. Each of you have a work breakdown structure already, it may be your daily to do list or your syllabus agenda of activities. It contains a listing of:

Activities  
The duration of the activity  
Precedessors (which activities are dependent upon one another)

Start and finish times  
Milestones

Milestones are often used by project managers to guage the status of a project. The problem with using milestones is that although they are good for planning, a project manager may not realize there is an issue until the milestone is reached. That’s why continuous monitoring is necessary.