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Commitment
Task


Timing

Getting the Job Done

How Commitment Impacts the Project Lifecycle

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Getting the Job Done

How many times have you either heard or said this...

I can't stand it anymore! If I go to one more project status meeting where nothing has been done again, I'll go crazy! I just don't understand it. Each week our project team meets to review progress and to outline new work to be done. More often than not, nothing has happened since the last time we met. It's not that we don't care—we do. Something is missing. All I know is that we've got to figure this out or we're all in trouble!

Why are some teams extremely productive and others floundering? Sometimes it is a matter of putting the right people with the right skills on the right team. Other times it means resolving a personality clash that keeps the team from making progress. However, most of the time the difference between a productive and floundering team boils down to commitment.

We all understand that commitment is fundamental to getting work accomplished. Yet in team or work group environments commitment is often missing. To understand the reason why, let's examine what it takes for a team member to be committed.

Commitment can be illustrated as follows:



Commitment = Task + Responsibility + Timing

This simple formula highlights the three important components needed for a group or a person to own or commit to a job.

1. Tasks must be meaningful and well defined. In other words, the person assigned to the job must understand it.
2. Team members must be assigned to each task. Ideally this person should voluntarily accept the responsibility directly. If assigned through someone else, the assigning person must be empowered to make the assignment.
3. Completion timings need to be assigned for each task. Timings must be realistic and the task owner should set them. In all cases the task owner owns the timing.

Simple, right? Apparently not, because one of these elements is often skipped in many project assignments. To understand the importance of each element in the Commitment formula let's look at what happens if one is left off.



Task. Obviously, a task must exist in order to have a commitment. So far, so good. But, often we accept tasks without clear understanding of what is needed. Task clarity is paramount if there is any hope of getting the job done in a reasonable time. Without task clarity, the risk of failure increases significantly.



Responsibility. How many times have you been in a group meeting where tasks have been identified, timings established, but no one is assigned? It sounds obvious but it isn't. Assigning tasks to peers is difficult—especially when it is a team of peers. However, there is little hope for a task getting done unless someone agrees to take the responsibility.



Timings. Completion timings provide the yardstick for determining value and relevance. There is a familiar old saying "Time is money." It is true! Deadlines motivate us! Tasks without deadlines are mañana jobs. Mañana jobs never quite seem to get done.

Now that we've seen what can go wrong, let's focus on doing it right.

1. Do not accept a task unless you completely understand it. More importantly, make sure all team members have a clear picture of their respective assignments. It is better to take the time up front than to clarify later.
2. Double check that every task has an owner. Remember, tasks without owners never get done. Set ground rules for assigning tasks to peers. It solves the issue of assigning work to a peer and it keeps one person from being overloaded.
3. Timing is everything. Be sure everyone knows and accepts task milestones and completion dates.

Now, let's revisit the status meeting again.

The project status meeting is Friday. It's one of the few meetings around here where I feel like something happens. Each week our team meets to report project status and to outline the new work to be done. More often than not there is forward motion. It feels good to be part of a winning team. Rumor has it that everyone is getting a bonus after this project is complete!

Productive teams are decisive and respected. They have a reputation of “getting things done.” They know how to cut through work; and consequently, they are influential. In other words, they are Committed. It is your choice!