

**PMEducation**

**WHY, OBJECTIVES, and GOALS**

What is a Project Objective?

* Project Objective: Something toward which work is to be directed, a strategic position is to be attained, a purpose is to be achieved, a result is to be obtained, a product is to be produced, or a service is to be performed. The project objective is the desirable outcome of the project. It is the solution to the problem, the answer to the question, or the outcome of the seized opportunity.

As a Project Manager you will often be handed a project and told to “Get it done!”. It is important to understand WHY your project exists so you can make, and participate in, informed decisions. As you ask, “Why does my project exist?” you want to remember that every project is created to solve a problem, answer a question, or seize (respond to) an opportunity. In other words your project is to provide:

1. a solution, or
2. an answer, or
3. a response.

Here are some examples.

1. The problem is: Our storage area is too small. We want sufficient space. This is WHY your project exists.

The solution is: Provide more, useable, storage space. This is the Project Objective.

The project is: Build a new storage area. It is expected that this project will provide the solution.

The goal is: to build the new storage area within budget and time available with suitable building materials (etc). Plan the goal and make the goal SMARTWAM.

1. The question is: How much does coffee brand affect buyer consumption? We want to know X and Y. This is WHY your project exists.

The answer is: Brand affects consumption X out of Y times. This is the Project Objective.

The project is: Do a controlled experiment using various brands of coffee, to find X and Y. It is expected that this project will provide the answer.

The goal is: to complete the experiment using at least 10 brands, within 12 months, in 2 major geographic centers (etc). Plan the goal and make the goal SMARTWAM.

1. The opportunity is: We have customers ready to buy our product. We want to sell more product. This is WHY your project exists.

The response is: Increase our manufacturing capacity to meet sales forecast. This is the Project Objective.

The project is: Replace old equipment with new, high-speed production equipment. It is expected that this project will seize the opportunity.

The goal is: to add new high-speed equipment to the manufacturing plant before Summertime, within the approved budget, with no lost-time accidents during construction (etc). Plan the goal and make the goal SMARTWAM.

Often you are handed a project and the solution, answer, or response is already decided.

It is important to note that the success of your project will be evaluated by 2 different criteria: by how well you meet the project goals, and by how well the project meets the Project Objective.

Meeting project goals is where we usually focus. We work hard to get the project done on time, on budget, with good quality, risk well managed and so on. But it is possible with all those successes your project might not meet the Project Objective. Let’s look again at the 3 examples given, above.

1. The storage area was built on budget, on time, and with suitable materials but a change in marketing strategy means we need less total storage space. We cannot fully use the new space, and the old space is now adequate most of the time.
2. The experiment covered 10 brands, in 12 months, in 2 geographic centers, but a new foreign tax caused 2 brands to significantly raise their prices. Sales were down on those 2 brands so we are still uncertain about the affect brand has on consumption.
3. The new equipment was up and running before Summertime, within budget, and with no accidents, but our competitor launched a new product that scooped our market. The new equipment only runs part-time and makes a soon-to-be obsolete product. We have not significantly increased sales volume.

**Iteration during planning will help ensure your Project Objective is still the right solution, answer, or response.**

Understanding the WHY of your project allows you to make, and participate in, informed decisions.

Additional Thoughts:

The project objective describes your project’s (hoped for) outcomes, meaning the intended and direct, short- and medium-term results that completion of the project is supposed to provide. To validate project success, we must be able to directly attribute the results found, to the project; not to some other cause or simply to good fortune.