

**PMEducation**

**THOUGHTS about PLANNING**

PLANNING: Outlining and defining a course of action to achieve an objective.

Creating a good project plan puts you and your project on the road to success. A good project plan includes consideration of all 10 Knowledge Areas, which are the management of:

* Integration
* Scope
* Time
* Cost
* Quality
* Human Resources
* Communications
* Risk
* Procurement
* Stakeholders

The purpose for planning is simple: To ensure satisfactory results. Of course Planning must be done in advance of the work. Why is Planning often overlooked or bypassed?

1. There is a tendency to believe that unless the project is in “a flurry of activity”, no work is going on.
2. Project Managers often believe that they already know “what needs to be done” so work can proceed without a formal plan in place.
3. Political pressures or tight deadlines can create such a strong sense of urgency that it overrides the common sense that comes with good Planning.
4. Plans are sometimes just put away in a drawer so there is little incentive to make them.
5. Planning is sometimes seen as clerical “keeping track of things” so does not get the attention it deserves.
6. Unique projects, especially research projects, are more difficult to plan because there is not much specific history.
7. Reliance on a consultant or vendor (“obviously they’ve done it before so they must know what they are doing”) can lead to a false sense of security.
8. A rapid start can lead to poor Planning being developed as it will not have been adequately thought through.

The results of improper Planning can be: missed Requirements, poor benefit achievements, cost overruns, poor moral, and so on.

Good project plans are able to withstand the pressures of scope changes, and scope creep and enable you to respond to unknown conditions and situation that arise. Professional Project Managers know a good plan allows them to:

* Manage Activities and Tasks, not be dominated by them
* Keep cool, not panic, not continuously fight fires
* Instill confidence in their Clients, Sponsors, and Team Members

Most people don’t like surprises. Good project plans allow you to clearly communicate to Stakeholders what the plan is. “No Surprises” is a good target to aim for.

With good project plans, you establish a guideline (benchmark, baseline) against which to measure you project as it unfolds. You also establish what the end result will look like so your success as a Project Manager can be accurately measured.

Finally, working through a good project plan helps you ensure that nothing has been left out.

Plan carefully!