RED STAR **CONSULTING**

5 MOST COMMON PITFALLS OF MANAGING A PROJECT & HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. Beginning a project without clearly defined, highly specific desired outcomes

- KEY SIGNS:
  - Work begins but the goal or desired outcome is not clear. Often there is disagreement between participants on either a macro or micro scale, or both.
  - Communications between team members and leadership create more problems than progress due to the lack of congruent plans and messages between all those involved.
- ACTION STEPS:
  - If key parties disagree or are unclear as to the expected deliverables, the project should not begin.
  - The majority of time should be spent working to ensure scope and deliverables are well-defined before the project begins.
  - Continue to refine and elaborate scope and requirements until all parties are comfortable with what must be delivered, significantly improving likelihood for success.

2. Changing the scope or goals of your project once underway

- KEY SIGNS:
  - After the project begins, stakeholders are regularly changing their desired 'end state' of the project. These changes create the need for additional time, personnel, and/or dollars to complete the project.
  - Project Team members are regularly frustrated as the deliverables they produce are rejected by stakeholders, even though the deliverables meet the previously agreed upon specifications.
- ACTION STEPS:
  - If the goals/objectives have changed for sound business reasons, take the time to update the requirements so all members of the project are clear on what must be accomplished and the desired outcomes.
  - All changes are significant, regardless of how they may appear. Make sure any changes to goals are adequately reviewed and communicated before proceeding with your project.

3. Refusing to regularly communicate or provide a realistic status of the initiative

- KEY SIGNS:
  - Leaders are afraid or unwilling to provide a realistic status of how the project is progressing as they believe the status is a direct reflection of their ability to manage a project.
  - Communications surrounding an initiative are few and far between. When proactive communications regarding an initiative are not often seen, be concerned progress may not be going as expected.
  - When speaking with members of a project team regarding status, individuals will often avoid a direct answer with concrete information. Answers will more often be characterized as loose generalizations, devoid of specifics.
- ACTION STEPS:
  - Prepare yourself before and during an initiative - no project will ever go as planned. Those plans will change and change often. These changes will lead to problems and delays.
  - Communicate early and often. Establish a regular cadence of communicating the status of the initiative - daily, weekly, or even monthly. Reliable, repeatable communication is the cornerstone of success.
  - It is of utmost importance to report an accurate status of the project. Projects which are in trouble require help, but help cannot be provided if it is not indicated the project requires assistance.
  - Do not wait for the last minute to escalate issues. Rather, speak with leadership and stakeholders early on as soon as problems present themselves. Typically, it requires less effort to correct a problem when it is first discovered versus waiting until the last possible moment.

4. Competing projects within the same organization, vying for limited resources

- KEY SIGNS:
  - Owners and/or employees are unable to complete any one project as they are consistently pulled in multiple simultaneous directions.
  - Employees regularly express frustration as they feel there is too much concurrent change occurring within their organization at any given time.
  - Owners and employees alike regularly feel confused about the direction of the business.
- ACTION STEPS:
  - Start with the 'why'. Management should ask why they are taking on another new initiative before completing one already underway.
  - Ownership / Management should ensure no individual employee is carrying too heavy a load where their day-to-day work, coupled with project work, is a burden too significant to bear.
  - Establish a list of all initiatives the business would like to complete, assigning an estimated benefit and priority to each. On a periodic basis, no less than quarterly, the organization should review the list of all initiatives, make additions and removals based on need, and then evaluate all projects currently underway.

5. Failure to properly staff or delegate project work to the most effective resources

- KEY SIGNS:
  - When it comes to updating or improving their business, owners often have the mentality of "only I know my business" or "I can do this the best". This mindset prevents the owner from delegating some or all of an initiative to an employee who may be equally qualified to assist in driving the initiative forward.
  - Even if they acknowledge the value, often times business owners will default to the perspective of "it costs too much to bring in someone else". This perspective is preventative to making progress which will inevitably benefit their business.
- ACTION STEPS:
  - If the project is not a priority, meaning it will not positively impact your business, table the initiative. Do not use cycles on non-viable work.
  - If the project is a priority, leverage delegation to find time. Either give your current workload to employees so you can focus on the project, or, give the project work to your employees. Either way, if you have the ability to delegate, do so. Spread the workload over several versus being a burden for just one or two.
  - If you do not have adequate staff or the initiative is too big, consider consultants to help you deliver. Often times, consultants have the right expertise and the necessary time to complete a project faster and with greater odds of success. While consultants are additional capital expenditure, their services may help you deliver added value to your customers more expeditiously - driving increased sales and revenue. Those increases will help you recuperate your spend quickly and move back into profitability - proving a considerable ROI.

Red Star Consulting, LLC
info@redstarconsultingllc.com
405-625-3559
www.redstarconsultingllc.com