

# *Project Management in Non-Profit Organizations*

A N O V E R V I E W

Charlie Carney, PMP

April 14, 2011



# *Where We're Going*

- Two approaches to the topic
  - Workshop—how to manage projects
  - PM meeting—what's different about non-profits
    - Overview only
    - Lots of diversity among non-profits
    - No such thing as one-size-fits-all project management
- Our agenda for tonight
  - About non-profits
  - The project management challenge in non-profits
  - Some specific suggestions

# About Non-Profits

- Serve a specific purpose
- May or may not have strong business practices in place
- Depend on contributions and grants
- Highly sensitive to economic downturns
- Much of the work is done by volunteers



# *About Non-Profits*

The non-profit organization is an interesting entity, as it is often still a “business” from a functionality standpoint but it exists for a distinctly different philosophical purpose. Some non-profit organizations struggle because they run with too much of a business focus, and subsequently they forget that they have a “higher” calling than just making budget. Other non-profits have difficulties because they are so focused on their mission and vision that they forget to perform necessary organizational steps, which include issues of personnel, funding, logistics, and management.

—*Todd Pheifer*



# *What's Not Different—the Fundamentals*

- Projects exist
  - Definite start and finish, unique outcome
- The fundamentals apply
  - Scope
  - Budget
  - Schedule
  - Resources
  - Assumptions, risks, constraints
- Project management is scalable and flexible

# What Is Different

- Organizational process assets
  - Processes, procedures, and policies
  - Templates
  - Communication requirements
  - Financial controls
  - Problem identifying and solving process
  - Change/Risk controls
  - Project files
  - Historical information & lessons learned

*Potential challenges?*

# What Is Different

- Enterprise environmental factors
  - Organizational culture, structure, processes
    - Less formality
    - Low tolerance for “administrivia”
    - One-to-one relationships are important
  - Facilities and equipment
  - Existing human resources
  - Stakeholder tolerances
  - Political climate
  - Organization’s communications channels

*Potential challenges?*



# *The Conundrums*



Projects exist, but might not be recognized as such

Enterprise environmental factors and organizational processes assets exist, but might not be oriented toward project management requirements





# *The Project Management Challenge in Non-Profit Organizations*

# *The Project Management Challenge*

1. Realize that a project exists and identify the PM
  - An organizational function ... with help
2. Understand the project and enterprise environmental factors
  - How much project management is *necessary*?
  - How much project management is *acceptable*?
3. Understand the organizational process assets and gather the resources
  - Either use the existing organizational process assets or bring new tools to the endeavor

# Challenge 1: First Things First

- Is it really a project?
  - Temporary; new product, service, or result
- Who's *going* to manage it?
  - Who are the likely suspects?
- Who *should* manage it?
  - Preparation—Understands and is willing to apply PM fundamentals
  - Commitment—Willing to serve through the entire project
  - Availability—Has the time
  - Trust—Has the organization's confidence

*Potential challenges?*

## Challenge 2: Understand the Project & Environment

- How much project management is *necessary* . . .
  - Scope, budget, schedule, resources
- How much project management is *acceptable* . . .
  - Organizational culture, structure, and processes
  - Tolerance for formalized project management
- Project management often must be transparent



*Potential challenges?*

# Challenge 3: Gather the Resources

- Organization culture, structure, processes
- Organization standards
- Facilities and equipment
- Communication channels and requirements
- Project management information systems
- Corporate knowledge base (project files, lessons learned, historical information)



*Potential challenges?*

# *Challenge 3: Gather the Resources*

- Human resources
  - What's the labor pool?
  - How will the project team be selected?
  - How will you replace them if necessary?
  - What happens if the skills you need aren't available?





# Challenge 3: Gather the Resources

- Volunteers' needs:
  - To contribute to the organization's purposes
  - To do meaningful work
  - To clearly understand the project's goal and their roles
  - To be heard
  - To have their skills and schedules respected
  - To be recognized and thanked ... *profusely*
- Risks: Volunteers quit working
  - Burnout
  - Hurt feelings
  - Too much formality, "administrivia"

*Potential challenges?*



*Some Specific Suggestions for the  
Non-Profit Project Manager*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

- Get a clear, unequivocal project charter from the organization's leadership
  - Clear description of project outcome
  - Statement of project manager's authority
    - Authority to act
    - Limitations
  - Budget and time considerations
  - Any known assumptions, constraints, risks
- Build and nurture relationships with leadership

*Potential challenges?*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

## Analyze the project

- What's the end game—product, service, or result?
- What work must be done to make the project a success (high-level WBS)?
- What skills are available?
- Are there enough time, money, and resources to do the job right?
- If not, what can you do about it?

*Potential challenges?*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

- Assemble the team
  - Recommendations from organizational leadership
  - Inside volunteers/recruitment
  - Outside recruitment
  - How many are enough?
  - Establish a team identity (e.g., team name, t-shirts)
  - Most important: match skills to task requirements
- Build and nurture relationships with team members

*Potential challenges?*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

## Create a team charter

- Project name and staff sponsor
- Product, service, or result
- Exact work to be done—scope (as currently known)
- Review/approval/change process
- Project schedule
- Assumptions, constraints, and risks
- Team members—names and functions

*Potential challenges?*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

## Set up the project infrastructure

### □ Communication

- One-on-one conversations
- Team meetings
- Phone calls
- E-mail
- Facebook
- Twitter
- SkyDrive, Google Documents, etc.

### □ Reporting

*Potential challenges?*

# *Some Specific Suggestions*

In conjunction with the organization's management, establish financial/budgetary controls

- Reporting requirements
- Might already have a system in place; use it
- If no system in place, create one for your project
  - To establish total accountability for use of the organization's funds
  - To avoid any possible appearance of impropriety
  - Good project management practice requires it

*Potential challenges?*



# *Some Specific Suggestions*

## Manage the volunteers

- Tell them how the project benefits the organization
- Explain exactly what each volunteer is to do (job description)
- Give them work that takes advantage of their skills and desires
- Don't relegate them to "grunt work" ... unless they want it
- Seek out their input; listen to them
- To the extent possible, plan project tasks around each volunteer's schedule
- Watch for signs of burnout or frustration and take appropriate action
- Motivate them ... encourage them ... thank them

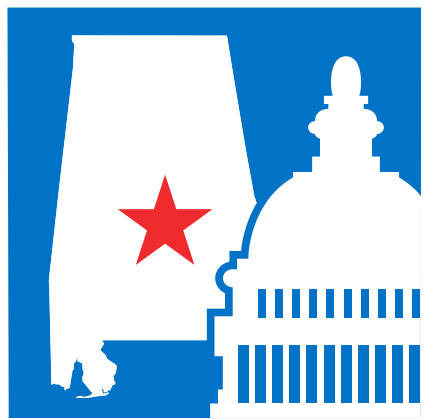
# Key Points

- Build and nurture relationships
- Keep the project management process as transparent as possible
  - Weave the project management effort into the fabric of the organization
- Non-profits are acutely concerned about public perceptions
- We work for *them*, and not vice versa

# *Non-Profit Work Ain't for Sissies*

- Lots of diversity among non-profits
  - Some similarities to business; some important differences
  - No one-size-fits-all project management methodologies
- The challenges
  - Realize that a project exists
  - Understand the project and environment
  - Gather the resources

- Specific suggestions
  - Get a clear project charter from the organization's leadership
  - Analyze the project
  - Assemble the team
  - Create a team charter
  - Set up the project infrastructure
  - Establish controls and reporting procedures
  - Manage the volunteers



**M O N T**

**P**

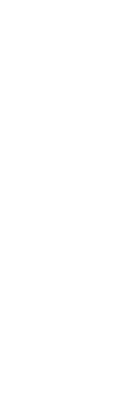
**T G**



**O**



**M**



**E**



**R Y**

