

FACILITATORsm

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Hundreds of Things

Project motivation/ recognition without dollars

By Shirley Lee, VP Communications
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Have you ever had a special project where you needed to motivate people to participate, but did not have a budget or plan for recognition purposes? We realize it is important to include recognition and rewards in any project at various points to insure team motivation and continued excitement regarding the project — so how can we do this if there is little or no budget allotted to the project for it? And how often should we plan to offer these rewards and/or recognition during the project?

Typically, recognition on projects is done at the completion of a major milestone* or at other specified points in a project cycle. Other significant points may be after completion of a project phase** or after a certain time period has passed.

Using a simple problem-solving process for determining where a recognition program might help, we can follow 4 steps keeping in mind the reason for the recognition. An example of this is a project recognition program I helped initiate, when working on an Information Technology intranet project, called “Hundreds of Things”.

The particular project was a transition of call center data onto the company intranet, in order to allow customers to try to help themselves before phoning the call center. The primary thrust of the project had a short life cycle for major tasks. If successful, the project might be followed by a few more months for addition of

other systems. The project team membership consisted of one or two representatives from each of the eight system support teams and a project manager.

1. Open Problem

In the first few meetings, as a team we agreed to team guidelines and meeting procedures along with a minute-taking format. We also began immediate work on the project by defining the systems to start with, outlining the major tasks involved for each system to go on the project plan, and finally getting volunteers for immediate tasks.

Everyone on the team was very excited and reported back to their system support teams what we were planning and when major items involving their participation were due.

The excitement was high for the first months of the project and much of the larger time-consuming tasks were accomplished.

However as time went by, people were beginning to let actions on the project slip, since it was not seen as important as their “real job”. The project manager and a few team members felt an added motivation factor of recognition for assignments completed and project contributions would help in this area.

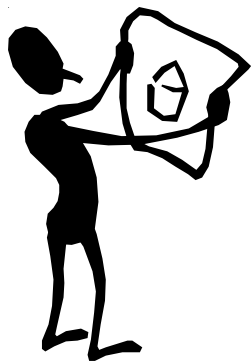


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2. Plan Resolution

A recognition sub-team was formed and approved by the department manager.



However, no additional budget was given for this recognition. I was part of this recognition sub-team and our task was to develop a recognition program that would include recognizing individual team members, including how often the recognition would be done

and what could be done without budget.

Since the project had what could be viewed as multiple milestones, at least one for each of the top call-getting systems, milestones were not selected as the point of recognition. One project phase was already completed and other project phases overlapped, therefore phases were also eliminated as the best points for recognition efforts.

The recognition team decided that a recognition event including celebration needed to happen every few months with the first one being as soon as possible to re-motivate the team. Therefore, the idea of counting project items accomplished and celebrating often was born. These project items included both small temporary assignments from meetings as well as completion of tasks from the project plan.

Once the decision of what to recognize based on completion of multiple items was made, the team decided on a recognition process. The process would include recognizing the individuals by calling out system accomplishments made during the measured time period. This ensured that at least one mention would be made related to each system team represented. The recognition ceremony

would occur during a ten-minute segment of a project team meeting where the department manager would also give a short speech of her appreciation of the contributions to that point. This would be followed by refreshments brought by members of the recognition sub-team. This program idea was readily agreed to by the department manager and project manager.

3. Implement Solution

The first recognition ceremony was held two weeks after the program was implemented to cover the over one hundred items the team had already completed. Many of these hundred items related to time-consuming efforts on the project plan. It was the first item

on that meeting agenda and had a 10-minute time allotment. The initial part of the ceremony was covered with a Dr. Seuss-like story-telling poem



titled "100 Things Were

Done"*** naming the group's accomplishments to date. Then the department manager followed with a personal thank-you to the project team for their work and to the recognition sub-team for bringing refreshments to make the meeting more of a celebration. Everyone took a few minutes to grab some of the refreshments and then we went on with the business portion of the meeting.

4. End Results

This recognition program might not seem like much. However, it was a huge success. Not only were the project team members re-energized, their system support teams were more supportive of the project as well. Each project recognition meeting was talked about for a couple weeks afterwards by various department personnel, as well as the project team members.

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The “Hundred Things” story idea was very popular with everyone in the department and was carried through the entire project recognition with varying titles. Reviewing these recognition stories were looked forward to by the entire department. The stories were posted on a bulletin board in a common conference room, where each system team looked for their representative listing by the systems they supported.

This program didn’t cost the company anything other than a few minutes of meeting time, but it showed a little recognition can go a long way. œ

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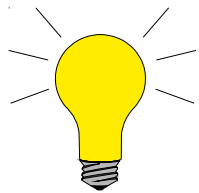
* A milestone is an important or significant task completion or item delivery during the project life cycle.

** A project phase is a category of work in a project’s life cycle, typically a grouping of related project activities or tasks.*

Project milestone and phase definitions, as well as O.P.I.E Process, are from the **Project Management Simplified** unit of the “*Wizard of When - a Series on Planning*”. Copyright © 2003 by Shirley Lee, All Rights Reserved.

***Copy of “Hundred Things” stories in poem format may be viewed at: http://www.geocities.com/slee_rightfit/TeamPics/3Poems_ThingsWereDone.htm.

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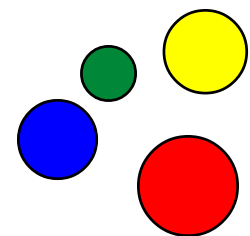
From participants at the recent North American IAF Conference

from Susan Nurre

(snurre@TheFacilitator.com)

Dots

Instead of weighting items using different colored dots or using a multiple number of dots, he passes out 5 dots to each participant — each dot has a number, 1 through 5, on it (or the participants can be instructed to write the numbers on the dots).



When they place their dots next to an item, participants are assigning more of a “true” ranking, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest.

Add up the dots and the lowest score (other than 0) is the highest ranking idea. œ

Rough start

Concerned that your participants will have a rough start on brainstorming individually aloud to the group? When you start the brainstorming, ask for a few participants to give answers verbally so the group can get a “feel” for what type of information to consider.

Then return to individual brainstorming. œ