

Managing the Human Resource Project

By John T. Mooney

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We obtain strategic results by aligning HR mission, vision and values. The following overview highlights a macro approach to project management. Seeking a stretch assignment, such as ownership of a major corporate HR initiative, we lead our organization by example. Strategic project management affords an exciting and challenging opportunity to direct our futures and show case our talents.

The VP of HR announces to the team that we must transition from a decentralized function to a centralized function within six months placing you in charge. The set timeframe required to realize budget improvement for immediate bottom line results. The cost savings will be unprecedented for the dozens of locations countrywide. Senior management set the expectation, on time – on budget, ensuring precise project implementation.

You take pride in your ability as an accomplished HR generalist to deliver results and get projects done. Success comes, in part, from your tactical / transactional ability to prioritize assignments and communicate the necessary timeline to managers.

By the execution of project leadership skills, you will add measurable strategic value to your organization and your own skill-set. A project assignment budgeted in the five, six or seven-figure range will require skills and HR competencies including:

- communications
- documentation
- execution and accountability
- formal controls

Strategic HR leadership necessitates project management skills that require you see the big picture. Your approach may be similar to the strategic creation of your HR mission, vision and values. Likewise, the values of a project assignment become the blueprint upon which you make project planning decisions.

HR Influence

Your scope of influence requires proficient skills in project plan and design. This may include a draft plan to senior management detailing how you will accomplish this task. In addition, you may

be required to design assessment tools where they may not exist, or evaluate and communicate risk up line to your organization. Measurements including corporate resources, budget assumptions, timeline and accountability are typically established. These metrics develop into key result areas as they relate to time, cost and objective.

Your span of influence will require you to work effectively across department lines. You may be asked to understand and effectively operate with “politics” and “organizational constraints” from project start to completion. How well you manage these variables will determine your project success.

Your ability to influence and lead the project assignment may grow in stages. The personality type you display, cool and confident or nervous and frazzled, will set the project tone. Your mentoring and motivating team members will determine how this project approaches its potential. Rapport building will lead to trust, ultimately enabling a broad reach and results across department lines as needed.

Your HR project influence then goes beyond mentoring to enable empowerment of team members to accomplish their mission. Corporations without a team-based environment may experience more “forming and storming” before getting the project off the ground. Sponsoring senior management demonstrates its vision by the appropriate modeling of leadership. This then becomes a subset of project delegation. False starts and difficulty meeting preliminary deadlines may indicate early lack of alignment.

While complex, often intimidating and frequently overwhelming in the earliest stages, HR professionals who build a step-by-step plan in collaboration with internal and external resources can demonstrate project management as a tool for internal consulting at the highest level of their organization.

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