The Final Mile

So you have made it to the final mile, but will you make it to the finish line (my metaphor for the start of your busy season)? If you have been working on your year-long goals and objectives, you should be able to buckle down and get it done.

If you are like me, then you always want more than you can have, and your project list is always packed with must-haves, could-use and wish-list items. The must-haves should be falling into place, and the could-use projects need to be evaluated to see if they should be pushed into post-busy season deployment.

I say that the "must-haves" should be wrapping up, and if you are diligent in your preparation, this can be the case, but sometimes you have a last-minute project added to the group. So you may have to adjust your timelines or use a crashing technique to accomplish everything.

When I talk about crashing, I am not talking about chaotic running around like the sky is falling but rather determining if you need to authorize reserve spending or to add resources, such as internal, if available, or external consultants. If you are looking to add resources, it is also time to do a brief evaluation of the projects on the books and see if anything can be pushed off to make room without additional spending.

As a lean company, resources are a tight commodity; in my job position, I have commitments from other IT managers to use their personnel a certain percentage, and they have mine in trade to help with their groups. Getting that time can be tricky, and as a manager, you need to negotiate that time.

I have seen groups at other companies cry wolf, and they never seem to have working cross-functional teams. I pride myself on the fact of always setting up good relationships, so that when I have cross-functional teams, they work well together. This is not something that was just given; it is a long process that was earned. Taking the time to learn the big picture, knowing the company culture completely and understanding your coworkers' communication and leaning methods goes along way.

For instance, some people need to have an email sent after every casual conversation to see the details in writing, whereas others may need to see a white board overview to understand fully how they fit in the process. Either way, as a good project manager, you need to be flexible and know what training and learning methods you prefer and realize that others are different, and to reach maximum productivity, you need to be flexible and learn to utilize all methods or at least be able to transfer these into your needs and/or their needs.

My Personal Philosophy:

Don't ask for anything **you can do without**, and **always offer your time** so that when **you need their help** you can get the resources easily.

Now that you have the updated timelines and priorities set, you need to communicate your plan and make sure expectations are realistic. This communication should not be a shock to the team, since they should be in the loop throughout the year. I like to have people take ownership in projects, but I am very careful not to leave them out on an island.

Global SharePoint sites can be a great tool for projects. You can use them to keep all the timelines and supporting documents together. Recently, I was part of a project sponsored by our parent company where we were setting up some IT governances. We were physically spread all over the world, with each country having its own section with highlights in English. This was a very effective tool and had some benefits outside of collaboration. We had a team member leave the company and all of his work was up on the site, so we never missed a beat. I see lots of people write down notes or small bits of knowledge and store that somewhere so they will always have it. Years go by, and they cannot remember what they did with it. Sites like this prevent that problem. ■

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