

West Midlands Regional Event – 2nd October 2012: Principles of Project Management



If you have ever been responsible for organising an event or managing a team you will have had to draw on the principles of project management. However, how can you ensure your projects are successful? Remember: 'Nothing is constant, everything changes, and someone is always going to be given the task of overseeing that change!'

At our first West Midlands event we were delighted that James Turner, Instructus Chief Operating Officer, led an interactive training session about project management.

After networking (and a hot food platter), the training session launched a discussion on how a project can be defined. Any task that can seem to be too large or unfamiliar needs careful planning and could be approached as a project. The approach can be broken into four distinct phases:

1. Conception and Definition
2. Planning
3. Implementation and execution
4. Run-down and closure/project evaluation

These are usually referred to as stages within the 'Project Life Cycle'.

James then provided top tips to consider for each phase. For example, at the initial conceptual stage it is useful to define project requirements. This should include:

1. A stakeholder list
2. An outline of your objectives
3. Scope definition
4. Risk analysis

It is also important to include background information, stakeholder expectations, challenges you could encounter, as well as defined parameters of the work.

At this stage you must also consider standards, policies and procedural requirements. Once these are agreed you can move onto the planning phase.

Here you will need to check that everyone understands the project objectives. Job roles and requirements can be clearly defined and work can begin to be assigned. Most importantly, you can begin to piece together 'logical' elements of your work plan. These can be given specific titles like 'Marketing' or 'Administration'. Once all these elements have been agreed, you can then move onto the implementation phase before run-down and project closure.

James's key message was also to be aware of 'scope creep'. So make sure your milestones, deadlines and project finish date are clearly advertised to everyone involved. Also, once the project has ended make sure you evaluate its challenges and its success. Share it in a final report!

Alongside these tips James provided a number of useful worksheets and templates to help us better manage our future projects.

Feedback from the event included:

- ◆ 'Exactly what I had hoped for...'
- ◆ 'Brilliant! Practical, informative, to the point, great handouts'

Thanks to James for providing an excellent insight into the principles of project management.