Green Project Management

Integrating GreenThink into Project Status Reports and Meetings

Recap of Green Project Management:

Green Project Management (GreenPM) integrates environmental thinking into all of the project management decisions. It is a way to ingrain "greenthink" into every project management process.

The point about green project management is <u>not</u> that you make every decision in favor of the one that is most environmentally friendly. The point is that you start to take the environment into account during the decision-making process. You might make most decisions the same as you do today. But there might be some decisions you would make differently.

Project Communication

Many people believe that managing communication is the most important of the project management processes. Studies have consistently shown that project managers spend at least 50%, or often up to 80%, of their time in some aspect of communication. This includes communication that is verbal and written, formal and informal. Many of the other project management processes require proactive communication to be successful.

Let's Start With Paper

The first place you would think about being green in your communication process is the reduction of paper reports. In spite of the paperless office that we have heard about for decades, paper is still an important communication medium. It may not be possible to fully eliminate paper on your project, but it would be good to reduce the need for paper deliverables whenever possible.

I remember when I started in the Information Technology field the developers used punched hole cards for almost all aspects of our job – in spite of the constant predictions that these card decks were a dying industry. One of my colleagues liked to joke that punched hole cards were the "fastest growing dying industry in the world".

Of course, technology finally made punched cards a source of generational pride ("I remember when I started in the IT field…") and a historical oddity for younger workers in the field.

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Maybe we will see a day when office paper is also a historical oddity that today's younger workers can tell their grandchildren about. In the meantime, we can try to minimize and marginalize the need for paper on our projects.

Integrate GreenThink into Project Status

Green communication is much broader than trying to reduce paper on your project. GreenThink means that we are considering green concepts in all aspects of communication, including status reporting and status meetings. Your status report should include a new section describing anything that your project encounters that is related to the environment. For example, describe any issues or risks that have an environmental impact. You could also report on how your project is aligning to your company's Environmental Management System (EMS). This status report section is also the place to brag about things you are doing that result in positive impact to the environment.

Providing status also includes status meetings. Incorporating GreenThink would mean that each status meeting should have an agenda topic to discuss recent or upcoming items that have environmental implications. Being aware of these items might allow you to make environmentally friendlier decisions.

Cost and Time Implications

Are you worried about the costs and time of all of this extra reporting? Don't be. First of all, most projects have no environmental considerations that need to be reported on any status report or status meeting. So, the incremental costs for GreenThink in these cases would be zero. If you do have something to report that has some environmental impact (good or bad) you will find that the time and cost to report or discuss it is minimal. If the environmental implication was complicated, then it is probably an area that requires extra scrutiny anyway.

The purpose of green project management is to consider the environment in our project decisions. Remember that you are probably not going to implement Green Project Management on your project unless your organization also has this interest in this concept. Therefore if your project makes any decisions that impact the environment you naturally should want to report them in your status reporting process so that your managers and sponsor understand the implications as well.

Status reporting and status meetings are the minimum expectations of project managers. Many projects require a broader and more sophisticated approach to communicating. This is the purpose of a Communication Plan. The "Green Communication Plan" is the subject of another column.

Save the World – Use Green Project Management™

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