



Managing Issues the Green Way

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 not 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 Issues

Issues are problems, but they are specific kinds of projects. They have three characteristics.

- They are formally defined, which means that you can write them down. If you cannot describe a problem you are not going to be able to solve it. You also need to document the nature of a problem so that others can help you resolve it.
- They impede the progress of the project. If the problem is not impeding your project it is not a formal issue.
- The resolution is outside of your control. There are many problems that arise that are within the control of the project team to resolve. These are “normal” problems and do not arise to the level of an issue. A problem is elevated to the level of an issue if it is not totally within the control of the project team to resolve.

Green Issues Management

When we are talking about green issues management we are not talking necessarily about problems that are directly related to environmental or sustainability matters. If this was the case, then green issues management would have very little applicability on most projects. Instead, we are integrating greenthink™ into the basic issues management process. In this way we can try to apply green thinking into every issues management scenario. Let’s look at an issues management process and see where we can apply greenthink.

1. **Identify the problem and document on the Issues Form.** Solicit potential issues from any project stakeholders, including the project team, clients,



sponsors, etc. The issue can be surfaced through verbal or written means, but it must be formally documented using an Issues Form.

GreenPM. Add a section on the Issues Form to document any environmental aspects to the problem. In most cases there will not be any obvious implications but sometimes there will be. Any environmental aspects to a problem should be documented so that others can understand them as well.

2. **Determine if the problem is really an issue.** The project manager determines whether the problem can be resolved by the project team or whether it should be elevated to the level of an issue.

3. **Enter the issue into the Issues Log.** If it is an issue, the project manager enters the issue into the Issues Log.

GreenPM. The Issues Log should also have a column for noting any environmental impact. If there is a corresponding Issues Form, this might just be a Yes or No indicator. If there is no corresponding Issues Form, a short description of the environmental impact should be noted.

4. **Determine who needs to be involved in resolving the issue.** The project manager determines who needs to be involved in resolving the issue.

GreenPM. This is not meant to be extra overhead, but your organization may request that environmental specialists be available to help resolve problems with environmental impact.

5. **Assign to team member for analysis and alternatives.** The project manager assigns the issue to a project team member for investigation (the project manager could assign it to himself or herself). The team member will investigate options that are available to resolve the issue.

GreenPM. For each alternative, there should be consideration given to any environmental impact. If there are no impacts then nothing extra is required.

6. **Gain agreement on resolution.** The project manager should take the issue, alternatives and project impact to the appropriate stakeholders for discussion and resolution. The project manager may want to make a recommendation from among the alternatives as well.

GreenPM. The decision makers decide on the best resolution to the issue. They can now also consider any environmental impacts in the decision making process. Remember that this does not mean that decisions are automatically made that always favor the environment. Ultimately decisions are still made that make the most business sense. However if the environmental impacts and considerations are known it is possible that alternatives will be chosen that are good for the business and good for the environment.



7. Close the Issues Form and Issues Log. The project manager documents the resolution and course of action on the Issues Form and Issues Log.

GreenPM. The environmental impact of the recommendation is noted on these forms.

At some point in the project you will probably want to report on the results of green project management. This might be at the end of the project or perhaps it is done at each phase gate review. It might be important not only that you are making decisions that take the environment into account, but also that you communicate when you have made favorable decisions that you would not have made otherwise. The circulation of these success stories will encourage others to do the same. It is also likely that if your company is implementing Green Project Management, you will want to be highlighting these types of decisions to get a sense for the total environmental impact of Green Project Management in your organization

Save the World – Use Green Project Management™

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