Gathering Green Requirements

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.

Requirements

Requirements need to meet stakeholder expectations – including sponsor, customers, and other key stakeholders. They must capture all aspects of a project deliverable, including things such as the functional requirements, product requirements, and role-based requirements. The accumulation of these requirements then represents the stakeholder needs. These needs comprise the project deliverables, which ultimately meet the project objectives.

There is more to requirements gathering than meets the eye. Initially we may think we need to ask a few questions of a few people, accumulate the responses, and then conclude that we have a complete set of requirements. Without a process to understand who is involved in providing requirements, documenting and validating requirements, and understanding the priority of various requirements, there may be requirements that are overlooked. Since the requirements are a component of the overall project scope, a requirements document that is not specific and approved will make it more difficult to manage a well defined project scope.

Creating requirements should follow a formal process such as:

- Elicitation – Communication by asking the right questions and performing active listening

- Validation – Consolidating and rationalizing all requirements, and asking any follow-up questions

- Specification – Prioritizing and formally documenting all requirements

- Verification – Conducting final review and approval of the requirements

Green Requirements

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If you are gathering green requirements, your requirements process will include a discussion of environmental requirements and an understanding of the importance or priority of these requirements. Not every project or deliverable will have environmental requirements, but you may find some instances where this is applicable. Here is an example of how this may work.

- Elicitation – When preparing to gather requirements, you identify the stakeholders who will provide you with information (requirements). Does your organization have an environmental management group? Does your organization have an environmental policy? Are you aware of environment goals and objectives in your company and should the project and deliverables consider these? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you may want to spend some time understanding how your deliverable aligns to the organization's environmental approach.

  For example, if you are working on a marketing project to create branded give-aways at trade shows, are the give-aways aligned with the organization's environmental policy? If you were not practicing green project management, you may previously have provided brochures and CDs (an example) to anyone who came by your booth at the trade show. Did anyone consider whether the brochures were on recycled paper and how they may be disposed? Did anyone investigate what is used in manufacturing the CDs and cases? Are the cases manufactured with recycled plastic?

  If you are practicing green project management, in preparation for eliciting requirements you would understand your organization's environmental policy and environmental stakeholders. You may include questions that help you collect information in consideration of the environment. You could ask the stakeholders what the environment requirements are for the trade show give-aways and understand the priorities of these requirements. Perhaps your organization has defined recycling and the use of recyclable materials as an environmental priority. If we consider the brochure and CD as an example, perhaps they are valid give-aways as long as the brochure is on recyclable paper and the CD is packaged in recyclable plastic.

- Validation – With green project management, as you review and consolidate requirements, you may determine inconsistencies in information. For example, what if a key stakeholder wanted to continue with CD distribution at trade shows but the environment stakeholder disagreed due to the non-recyclable materials currently used? You may determine that you now have a requirement to distribute CDs but find a new manufacturer who uses recyclable plastic covers. Green project management could add a component to this validation step, to

validate that the requirements align with any organizational environmental policy that has been established.

- Specification – When prioritizing requirements, GreenPM practitioners include the organization's environmental policy in weighting and ranking requirements. If a CD manufacturer could not be found to manufacture the CD covers within the defined project budget, and if this environmental requirement was a top priority, it is possible that an alternative give-away would be identified and the CD will no longer be created. If GreenPM is not practiced or the environment requirement for the CD case is not a high priority, then the CD may still be used.

- Verification – With GreenPM, you may educate your Sponsor on the environmental considerations that were taken into account in defining the requirements. Perhaps you even have a section of a Business Requirements Report template that highlights these.

GreenPM is not suggesting that you create a new way to gather requirements. You may incorporate environmental considerations into your existing process. If there is no environmental impact on your project deliverables, then you continue gathering requirements similar to what you are doing today. If there is an environmental consideration in your project deliverable, then you can consider which environment-related stakeholders can provide information for your project to consider, the weight and ranking of the environment factors on your deliverables, and whether you need to adjust any requirements or your deliverables due to the environmental factors.

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