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## PM Culture and Customers

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**Developing and valuing its project management culture has paid dividends for ADP, forming the foundation for an improved customer relationship by establishing expectations, recognizing when things aren't going right and taking action to remedy problems.**

In project management, success is usually measured in terms of delivery on the triple constraints. However, achieving real customer satisfaction entails much more than merely delivering on time, within scope or budget. It also takes more than technical tricks and tools of the trade. Improving the customer experience and, ultimately, the bottom line, is directly related to the level of refinement and expertise with which projects are managed. Disciplined project management, best practices, PM skills and above all, leadership, when fostered in a strong project management culture, provide benefits throughout the project lifecycle that dramatically enhance project outcomes, and as a result, customer relationships.

Projects are initiated to either solve problems or capitalize on opportunities. But regardless of why they're initiated oftentimes we run into problems during execution. Our experience shows that even when we encounter problems, the client experience improves if those problems are confronted early and are well managed by the project team. Projects can be managed without using a disciplined approach, but, much like taking an exam the odds for success are better when you've taken the necessary steps to ensure the best possible outcome. Project management essentially focuses activity on the goal (passing the test), minimizing the negative uncertainties of a project (flubbing some answers, running out of time), and reducing risk so that the outcome meets the customer's expectations (getting a good grade).

Superior project management means the difference between getting a passing grade and passing the test with flying colors. It entails finding ways to capitalize on opportunities — positive risks — that may become available upon project implementation, building confidence in the project team, fostering better collaboration and increasing the chance of exceeding the project objectives, all of which contribute to greater customer satisfaction.

Through ADP's experience, we've seen firsthand that achieving improved customer satisfaction is due in large part to creating a superior PM environment, one that is recognized as valued within the organization. Establishing a disciplined structure of

project management training, encouraging project professionals to earn PMP certification, providing follow-up mentoring and coaching and other professional development best practices have created a culture of project management excellence that has contributed to ADP's exceeding customer expectations.

Building PM skills and leadership has enabled ADP to establish a project management methodology that:

- effectively drives building the foundation of the customer relationship
- sets expectations for project stages and outcomes
- recognizes when things aren't going right
- takes appropriate action to remedy problems.

ADP has found that establishing the PM/client relationship early minimizes the risks of not meeting project objectives, including cost overruns due to mistakes and rework, and costs associated with time delays. The point is to build the relationship at the project start so that a bond between the parties is formed and the foundation is in place for making the right decisions if things go wrong. This applies to the PM's relationship with his or her counterparts, the team, and the steering committee.

Managing expectations is a critical aspect of leadership to create customer satisfaction. From the outset of a project, communicating what the client can expect, the roles each party will play throughout the project phases and the project management methodology will build customer confidence in the solution implementation and increase the chance of project success. Good project management should also recognize the opportunity for new activity, such as increasing the scope where it makes sense, but manage it appropriately so it doesn't get out-of-hand and everyone stays focused on the tasks at hand.

Developing PMs who can recognize and maneuver in these situations has measureable impact. Establishing a project management culture has paid dividends for ADP in the form of higher client satisfaction survey scores and feedback as well as more projects completing successfully on time, creating value for both ADP and our clients.

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