

Leveraging the Role of Your Project Sponsors and Steering Committee

Roles and responsibilities of the project steering committee, executive and working sponsors should be well defined at the start of a project. If the political and business climate of the project warrants such, the roles of the project executive sponsor and working sponsor can be tailored so as to leverage the greatest degree of accountability where it's required most.

Composition of a Steering Committee

The project steering committee should consist of individuals representative of the business(es) and who have a direct, vested interest in realizing the project's deliverables and objectives.

When Do We Define Roles and Responsibilities?

Ideally, roles and responsibilities should be defined at the start of the project when the project structure is established, and signed-off at the first steering committee meeting. This especially applies with highly political projects, joint-ventures or where stakeholders have different agendas and ownership for different deliverables.

Checklist of Typical Roles and Responsibilities

Steering Committee

- Attends steering committee meetings regularly
- Provides cross-functional support and decisions for the project
- Commits the necessary cross-functional resources to the project (inclusive of people, technology, and funding)
- Ensures project stays aligned with business and corporate strategy; advises project where changes to strategy might impact the project
- Signs the business case, scope of work, budget and plan
- Authorizes and accepts the project in order that it may commence
- Authorizes or declines scope change requests
- Signs acceptance of project deliverables (and voice expectations thereon)
- Champions project effort and monitors overall project progress
- Resolves issues outside of the responsibility and authority of the Project Manager
- Signs project completion certificate



leaders in project management

Project Executive Sponsor

- Provides the strategic context and direction for the project
- Reports and communicates formally to the Project Board on project status
- Quality assures, guides and monitors the Project Manager's decisions, processes and progress
- Resolves issues outside of the scope of the Working Sponsor or Project Manager i.e. resolve any interdepartmental issues or conflicts hampering progress
- Encourages line management to support and resource the project in conjunction with the Working Sponsor
- Accepts ultimate accountability for delivering the project's expected business benefits (as opposed to ongoing ownership of the project by the Working Sponsor)
- Signs the Scope of Work, budget and plan
- Authorizes and accepts the project in order that it may commence
- Authorizes or declines scope change requests
- Signs acceptance of project deliverables
- Monitors overall progress of the project
- Signs project completion certificate

Project Working Sponsor

- Assumes operational ownership of the project, the business processes and related systems being affected
- Actively participates in the Scope of Work workshops
- Assumes responsibility for the ongoing realization of the projected business benefits
- Makes the ultimate decisions in respect of necessary organizational change, change management, training, transition and implementation programs required.
- When needed, escalates issues to the Executive Sponsor
- Ensures clear, achievable specifications are actually delivered during the project
- Monitors project progress and accuracy during the project life-cycle
- Regular communication sessions with the Project Manager and Executive Sponsor
- Attends core Project Team meetings and Project Steering Committee meetings
- Signs the Scope of Work
- Authorizes or declines scope change requests
- Signs acceptance of project deliverables
- Signs project completion certificate

In Summary

When roles and responsibilities are well-defined at the start of a project, it enables better management of expectations of the steering committee's role toward overall success, not just individual success. In an age where performance scorecards are often linked to the success of specific projects, it's important to ensure the responsibilities of committee members are sufficiently 'collective' in nature. This helps ensure individuals do not drive project decisions in favor of their individual scorecards, to the detriment of the overall project outcomes.

PMO Practice Team

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