How project managers impact organizations

You have learned that project managers can prioritize, delegate, and effectively communicate to deliver value to their projects. This reading will focus on the main ways that project managers can add value to projects and impact organizations, which include:

- Focusing on the customer
- Building a great team
- Fostering relationships and communication
- Managing the project
- Breaking down barriers

Focusing on the customer

Customers are always a key element to success in any business. There is no exception to that in the field of project management. In project management, the word "customer" refers to a person or an organization that defines the requirements of the project and sets important guidelines, such as budget and deadlines. In projects, customers can be internal or external. Internal customers are stakeholders within your organization, such as management, project team members, resource managers, and other organizational departments. External customers are customers outside of your organization, such as clients, contractors, suppliers, and consumers.

To successfully deliver a project, it has to meet the customer's standards. To meet the customer's standards, you have to make sure you clearly understand their expectations. The customer is at the center of a successful project. Project managers can add a lot of value to the project by building relationships with customers and taking the time to make sure the customer is heard and satisfied with the result.

Asking the customer questions

Let's discuss how you can focus on the customer in a project. First, sit with the customer and ask what problem they are trying to solve. You might ask if they have a specific vision of the final outcome they would like delivered. Sometimes, customers will lean on project managers to find the solution to their problem. It's your job to ask questions like:

- What is the problem you would like us to help solve? Example response: The customer wants help developing a new process that would allow their company to be more efficient.
- How is the problem impacting your organization? Example response: The customer states that they are losing clients because of their current inefficient processes since clients are sometimes receiving their orders late.
- What prompted you to ask for help now? Example response: The customer says that they may lose department funding if they do not improve efficiency.
- What is your hope for the outcome of this project? Example response: The customer states that their ultimate goal is to increase the speed at which they fill orders without sacrificing quality.

Taking the time to dig a little deeper into the "why" behind the project can help a project manager better support and understand the customer. The more you understand the customer's goals, the more likely you will be able to produce what the customer is seeking.

Building a great team

The team is a project's biggest asset. A successful project manager knows that and takes the time to understand each person's motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. Project managers add value to the project by identifying the right team for the project and enabling the team to be successful and make decisions.

When you work to build a great team, you have to consider the skills needed for the project, as well as the resources available. Understanding the customer's requirements helps shape the skills needed for your team. If you are working on a project that requires people with medical expertise and you hire people who do not have a medical background, no matter how hard that team works, they will not have the right skill set to complete the project. As project manager, you should bring on people with the right skills and ensure the team knows that each individual is valued, trusted, and

appreciated. You can demonstrate how you feel about the team's value by allowing them to have input and ask questions, and by addressing their needs as soon as possible.

Fostering relationships and communication

Maintaining customer satisfaction and building a great team are two ways that you, as a project manager, can add value to a project. Both of these skills are built on the foundation of relationships and communication. The project managers who add the most value are the ones who take the time to build relationships, communicate, and treat others with consideration and respect.

Project managers can set the tone for a project and build relationships within their teams and with stakeholders. Taking the time to check in daily with your team, see how they're doing, and ask if there is anything they need help with can go a long way towards making them feel valued and heard.

Managing the project

When you build teams, each person is generally assigned specific project tasks. Once each task is done, the person responsible for that task hands that part of the project over to the next person. Your team members don't always see the whole picture and how they impact others in a project. A successful project manager sees the impacts of each process within the project and communicates those impacts to the team. This ensures that everyone working on the project understands their task goal as well as the big picture goal for the finished product. For example, if a graphic designer working on marketing materials for your project doesn't understand the customer's overall goal to appeal to educators, they may not be able to fully capture the vision for the campaign. Helping this team member understand the big picture allows them to tailor their tasks to meet the needs of the project end goal.

Managing a project can be busy, but if you take the time to build relationships and maintain open lines of communication, you will increase the chances of the project's success as well as the customer's and your team members' satisfaction.

Breaking down barriers

Sometimes, when you ask why something is being done a certain way, the response you get is, "Because we've always done it this way." A project manager adds value to a project when they break down barriers, allow their team to innovate new ways to do things, and empower them to share ideas. As a project manager, you have to model ingenuity and collaboration, and encourage your team to do the same.

How can you break down barriers on a project? You can provide support for your team as they try new approaches to find solutions, and you can advocate for additional resources for your team. If your team is having a hard time getting an answer from another organization, you can reach out to the organization yourself in order to keep the team on track and on schedule.

Key takeaway

You have now learned some of the ways that project managers can add value to projects and impact organizations. By focusing on the customer, building a great project team, fostering relationships and communication, managing the project, and breaking down barriers, you can overcome obstacles and find solutions to succeed.