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We Make Our Living in the Projects

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If you're like most workers, your job consists primarily of projects. Sure, your job might have some transactional aspects where you need to deliver to your customers, but I am willing to wager that a good bulk of your work is project based. With this being the case, it is important that you are good at managing your projects. Here are three simple tips to make your projects easier to manage...

1. Take the time to develop a communications plan. Believe it or not, the most critical determinant of the final outcome of your project is the messaging that surrounds it. By properly identifying who are the key stakeholders and what they need to know about your project (i.e., how will it impact their operations and what's in it for them) will help you speak to them in their language, which will make them more likely to be a supporter rather than a detractors or saboteur.

2. Share the documentation duties. Being a project manager requires keeping track of everything going on with the project. And that tracking necessitates the need for good documentation. Doing the level of documentation necessary for even the small-budget (or no-budget) project can start to feel like a full-time job, when most PMs actually must also help do the work of completing project tasks. So, what's the solution? Engage the other team members in the documentation process at the task level by requesting that each member of the team regularly log their progress, challenges, and unresolved issues on a spreadsheet that is used by everyone on the team. The public nature of the updates will create a sense of accountability, which makes it more likely that updates will be made timely.

3. Keep in mind how your project fits into the larger scheme of things. Normally, no matter how vitally important your project is to the organization, it is unlikely to be the only important project being worked. And those other projects need resources too. Thus, it is important to know how your project supports the company's overall strategic plan and mission delivery. Additionally, maintaining the proper organizational perspective will help keep you grounded because no one likes a cocky PM. Being too much of prima donna could lead to you getting less genuine support for your work and smaller projects in the future.

Following these three little tips will help you make every project a ringing success. With success comes reward.

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