



Get happy with marketing project management

When it comes to your marketing, are ‘best efforts’ good enough? We didn’t think so. Outsource Marketing’s project manager shows you how—and why—proper project management helps develop marketing best practices that create happy customers and employees—and a bottom line that will bring smiles to everyone in the organization.

By Victoria Ostrovskaya

I am a marketing project manager who was “strongly urged” to write this article. You see, I monitor tasks, track details and manage timelines. I don’t do articles. If you’re a business owner, manager or creative type, I’m guessing you might react toward project management the way I do toward feature writing. You’d rather be sitting in a dentist’s chair.

But since seamless execution is every bit as important as deep consumer insights or killer creative, at Outsource Marketing, we believe sound project management is an integral part of our secret sauce.

The majority of the struggles involved with daily workflow are tied directly to ineffective project structure and process. Project management provides a system that alleviates the pain of managing a marketing campaign (or your business, for that matter) and helps you reach what I like to call the “state of happy.”

Getting started: Defining a project

All organizations perform work, which involves operations and projects. But projects are defined as work done one time only to create a unique product or service. Unlike operations, however, projects have a defined beginning and a

defined end. For example, engineering a new motorcycle prototype is a project, whereas manufacturing that motorcycle is part of operations.

Within this definition, projects and project managers are everywhere. Lawyers, designers, math tutors, chefs, engineers and janitors are all faced with the challenges of managing projects.

“Project Management” may be the new business buzzword, but before 1990 project management courses were mostly found in engineering schools

The discipline’s newfound importance is measured by some recent statistics:

- Project management is now a required course in MBA programs
- A number of leading business schools offer advanced degrees in the discipline
- Nearly every Fortune 500 company has begun implementing a project management office (PMO) within the organization
- In the past 15 years, membership of the Project Management Institute has increased from 7,700 to more than 100,000 people, almost a 1200 percent increase.

The accelerated pace of change

Why such meteoric growth? Credit project management’s rising popularity to relentless business volatility. Technology, the poster child of rapid change, is the most visible evidence. New products and services are introduced at a phenomenal rate. Competitive pressures keep organizations racing to maintain quality, affordability and availability of their product and service portfolios. Can you see where this is going? Project management processes are helping keep R&D on track, but all these products and services need to be marketed—as efficiently as possible. To keep up, the same rigor needs to be applied to marketing as every other department in the company.

Can project management be learned?

As you might guess, the need for people in-house who have the skills to manage projects efficiently and successfully has skyrocketed. While a formal Project Management Professional certification is not required for most industries, a basic understanding of the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®) helps assure project success.

Experienced project managers serve as more than mere administrators. They are the central contact point with team members, vendors, customers and other constituents and often become the eyes, ears and mouth of the project.

Keep that in mind if you are looking to hire a project manager, or train someone internally. If you start with someone that has a high degree of

patience and well-developed attention to detail, supply the proper tools and training, you may be pleasantly surprised with the results.

Understanding project success

The three main project management success variables are cost, schedule and quality. Each piece is intricately interwoven with the other two, so a change in one results in a change to the others. For example, if the timeframe on a project is shortened, the likely result is an increase in cost or a reduction in the quality of the final product.

Of course, along with quality, a successfully managed project must conclude on time, on budget and deliver a product that is within client expectations.

The state of happy

Project management provides the template that helps drive projects toward successful completion, and with the right tools (see below), the process can be implemented relatively painlessly.

Here's the happy part: sound project management builds "lessons learned" into every project creating that all-important bridge to take your company's marketing (and other departments) from fuzzy 'best efforts' to solid 'best practices.' In turn, best practices creates a kaizen-like loop that improves product and service delivery, which helps bring more happy customers, referrals, repeat business and increased margins.

And results like that will make any business happy.

Victoria Ostrovskaya is a Project Manager at Outsource Marketing where she helps clients reach the state of happy by efficiently ushering projects to successful completion, on time and on budget.

Outsource Marketing, the Northwest-based marketing outsourcing pioneer that offers companies a marketing department if they don't have one, more strategic and creative horsepower if they do. Visit outsourcemarketing.com.

The Project Management Toolkit

The Project Management Institute

Professional association for project managers. Learn more at www.pmi.org.

Project Management Body of Knowledge Guide

The PMBOK® is published by the PMI. It serves as a reference about project management knowledge and practice in the project management profession and is the guide for testing on the PMP certification exam.

Project Management Professional credentials

To receive a PMP credential, candidates must meet minimum educational and on-the-job project management requirements, as well as pass the PMP exam.

Project Management Certificate programs

Numerous colleges and universities also offer project management certificate programs, many featuring evening classes. Most courses can be completed in less than a year.

Project Management Software

Many organizations, large and small, rely on Microsoft Project, a robust program that's made great usability strides in their last few releases. Learn more at www.office.microsoft.com/project.

Fortune 500-sized companies use Primavera (www.primavera.com), the world's leading project management software company.

Various online tools are accessible online by subscription. Simply search using the phrase "project management software."