Chapter 51
Project Manager as a Pivot Point for Implementing Sustainability in an Enterprise

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors provide a rationale for asserting a special importance of the project manager with respect to implementing sustainability at their enterprise, due to their being at a key "pivot point." This does not come without challenges, and here the authors convey those specific challenges for project managers. They show that one of these challenges is adopting a sustainability thinking mindset, a mindset that has its roots in the "larger scheme of things, and the long-haul," even though project managers are often (necessarily) focused on their immediate scope, and short-term deliverables for demanding stakeholders. Finally, the authors advise project managers with some specific techniques to overcome the prior challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Project managers may not see themselves this way, but they are at a significant advantage when it comes to bringing about sustainability integration for their enterprises. Project Managers, after all, are change agents. Projects themselves are all about change – we would never initiate a project to keep things exactly the same; and each project, by definition, is unique. So for starters, Project Managers are indeed agents of change. In this chapter, we will address the ways in which the project manager can invoke this role as change agent on their projects and within their enterprise.

BACKGROUND

Stanford University and IPS have created the Stanford Execution Framework which shows how projects, programs and portfolios 'connect' with the remainder of the enterprise. Recent case

studies (Herazo et al., 2012) affirm that project managers can help align strategic and tactical management. Further, major project attributes such as risk management are heavily influenced by the interaction of the project manager and the project owner (Krane et al., 2012). Advice for how project managers can take on this role more effectively can be found in *Green Project Management* (Maltzman and Shirley, 2011). Despite the level of academic and theoretical support, however, project managers do not always recognize that they have the role, or, recognizing it, sometimes fail to *fully embrace* this role for a number of reasons which we'll discuss.

PROJECT MANAGER AS A PIVOT POINT FOR IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY IN AN ENTERPRISE

Your Project's Context

Why put this kind of pressure on a project manager? Don't project managers already have too much to do to bring their projects in on or under budget, meeting or exceeding customer expectations and on time or even earlier than promised? Isn't it bad enough that there is a beginning and an end to the temporary endeavor called *a project*? Why expand their role and give them the extra responsibilities to implement sustainability in an organization and even beyond their normal *project zone*? The simple answer is *because project managers are the best suited for the job*.

That begs the question as to why project managers are the best suited for the job and that requires a more complex answer. Project managers have been and always will be *change agents*. It is just what they do. A project by definition is something "unique" and in addition is chartered to *change* something, whether it is process, procedure or product. This is what distinguishes project managers from operations managers, after all. Therefore it can be inferred that project managers are *change agents*. They plan, execute and then control the execution of a change. In addition, project managers are not only able to provide the mechanics for successful execution of a change, but can – or at least should - also see the "big picture." "Project Managers are traditionally recognized for providing the expertise to guide a company's endeavor to completion; on-time and on-budget; this is "PM 101." However for many organizations the PM is a *solution enabler; a process re-engineer; a project team facilitator*. To be an effective change agent, a well-seasoned PM should be part of the project team as a leader. Solving business problems often requires the cooperation and collaboration of multiple silos. The PM is in a unique position to span all the silos and lead the project to conclusion" (http://www.think-ebiz.com/2005/03/project_manager.html, emphasis provided by the authors).

That ability, to "span all silos," can also be related to one of the other important attributes of a project manager, the ability to see the "big picture." Because of that global view project managers are better able connect to the foundational aspects of sustainability, the Triple Bottom Line, people, planet and profits. Add to that projects and you have the quadruple bottom line or 4Ps of sustainability (people, planet, profits and projects). Projects are conducted in a larger, enterprise role; to make money, to gain an advantage over a competitor or for the greater good as examples. Project managers have an appreciation for that large role because they are stakeholders in their individual projects as well as the enterprise. It the project does well, it follows that the enterprise will do well and the employees share in that success. They can also see how the project fits into the overall business strategy. Few in the organization have that same impact or same appreciation. That appreciation also includes what everyone else in the organization should have; to further the business

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