

Module 7: Final Paper

Jocelyn South

Department of Integrative Sciences and Arts, Arizona State University

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Professor Wisehart

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I have gained quite a bit of knowledge and skills throughout this course to amplify my project leadership and project management skills. I now know there should be a solid understanding of the project's goals and how various elements fit together in order for the project to be successful. Communicating with my team is essential before the project starts. Through working in the Harvard Simulation scenarios, ensuring my team's morale is high should always be a top priority. It impacts so many other aspects of the project such as the overall productivity and quality of the tasks. I will continue to make listening to my team a priority as much as possible to navigate through projects in the future. By listening to them, I can adjust meetings and working additional hours for overtime. Some would assume the staff would not want to meet for one-on-one meetings, stand-up meetings or status reviews. Depending on the situation in the simulation, my team did want more meetings to get a better grasp of the work they needed to get done. Sometimes they wanted to work overtime and have less meetings so they could finish the project on time. It was interesting how listening to the feedback of my staff directly impacted my scores. This is also true in real life and not just through simulations. If we had more project managers communicate more effectively with their team, there may also be more successful outcomes of projects.

My personal approach to project leadership would be to treat my team members as people and not just as employees. I want them to feel that I really care about them and their well being. I wasn't paying much attention to the morale of my team when I first started the scenarios. After week 1, I realized their feedback would have given me the information I needed to complete the project on time and within budget. I was keeping their overtime at a minimum because I thought they wouldn't want to work more

hours. Once I started viewing their communication, I saw they were telling me they wanted more time to complete the tasks. That meant to encourage overtime if they felt it was necessary. The trade-off I was willing to make was to finish a couple weeks over the target time. I also was willing to go over budget by hiring a bigger and more experienced staff. I tried to pay as much attention to morale as possible because that's what matters to me the most when leading a project.

I am aspiring to be a student government teacher after I graduate with my bachelors in Organizational Leadership. I'm currently the Associated Student Body (student government class in California) Accounting Technician for a high school in Carlsbad, California. I've been in finance for nearly fifteen years. Until recently, I thought I would retire doing what I do now. Since working for a school and working very closely with ASB, I decided I wanted to teach and work with students in a different capacity. I always struggled with the idea of going back to college because the classes never interested me when choosing finance or business administration as my major. I love working with our student leaders and being a mentor for them which is also why I chose OGL as my major. As a future teacher, the part of working through the simulations and understanding of project management that was a key takeaway for me is to always stay connected with my stakeholders. That may mean to listen to my students so I can adjust the expectations of events for our school. I also may have to reassign tasks to different students once I learn their strengths versus areas they need more assistance in. As the ASB Advisor, I will also need to listen to the staff. ASB is seen as the voice of the school. I will need to hone in on my listening and communication skills in order to do the job well when the results impact the entire community. I have had two ASB Advisors

that have different leadership styles. Our first Advisor was a “fun” person who was intelligent but who needed a lot of assistance to get the business side of the job done. He was also a collegiate athlete who coached our track team. He connected well with athletes but didn’t with academic minded leaders. He constantly struggled meeting the expectations of the community because he wasn’t listening to what their needs were. The students would constantly ask him to make adjustments in class to no avail. Our Principal saw his strengths but decided he needed to take a different role at our school. We collaboratively hired another ASB Advisor who had a more business mindset. She has been successful in listening to her audience. She adjusts her curriculum in class often to ensure it’s what she expects while also listening to the student’s feedback. She also meets often with Administrators, our PTA and other on-site departments to ensure she is implementing their ideas for school events or community outreach opportunities. Again, listening to your team, no matter the organization, is vital for the success of the project.

In order to manage the three most visible levers of project management (scope, resources, and schedule) I would suggest doing your research before starting the simulation. There are several tabs I found useful when making decisions in order to increase my scores. Every scenario has a “project overview” and “dashboard”. The most valuable to me was the “team process” tab which gave up-to-date communication from my team. It would tell me what I needed to adjust according to the way my team felt. If we were running behind on schedule, my team would say they needed more time to finish their tasks. This meant I should reduce the amount of meetings and allow overtime so they could get more work done. If they said they felt like they knew what

they were doing and had things under control, I would then reduce the amount of outsourcing. I would also decrease the prototypes I was requiring to complete the project. Essentially, listening to the team became the best tactic I found to be useful to increase my overall scores throughout the simulation.

The critical trends and patterns I found in the scenarios is no matter the circumstance, changing the objectives according to your team's feedback will always help increase your score. There were scenarios with several unexpected challenges throughout the project. Every single time, the team would instinctively react with being overly stressed. As long as you change aspects of the simulation according to how they are feeling, your score will increase. Their morale can set you back in your budget and timeline because there is not enough productivity from an unhappy team. Listen to your team's feedback to increase your scores. Every year, ASB elects a different student to be our Treasurer. This student leader works with me in my office to assist with financial tasks for one period a day. What I found was a successful teaching tool for one student, didn't work with my last Treasurer. I had to sit this student down and ask what was really going on because the outcome of the tasks given were always lackluster. After meeting with her, I found she wasn't understanding the tasks completely. I had to adjust my communication style in order to receive the results I was expecting. This same concept applies to anyone no matter their age. Clear communication is key.

Projects have many stakeholders involved that are equally important as the other. My model of the causal relationships that exist within projects will include clear and concise communication from the beginning of the project to the very end with all stakeholders. It's important to keep your team in constant communication since they are

the ones doing the work to complete the project successfully. If they are not happy because they are confused, they want more time to finish their tasks or if they feel they need a bigger and more skilled team, then the project manager should make changes in order to appease the staff. Of course, the staff doesn't always know what's best because they are humans and we all have different feelings. It is the job of the project manager to look at the scope of the project to make the necessary changes. Listening to your team will directly impact how your team succeeds. This is the biggest takeaway I now understand from this course and the simulation.