

CASE STUDY

NEW DRUG ROLLOUT – Facilitated Workshop

COMPANY PROFILE

Our customer was a Chicago-based international pharmaceutical company. Their project was a multi-year effort in which they would roll out a new life-saving drug. Historically, they had performed scheduling by first having individual brainstorming sessions at far-flung locations around the world. The information gathered from that would then be sent to a project manager in Chicago who would then create a schedule.

BUSINESS SITUATION

As projects scaled up, it became increasingly difficult not only to gather all needed information, but to execute on-time and on-schedule. The company knew that it needed a better methodology to create timelines and get everyone on the same page at the same time. In addition, some of the project managers assigned to the projects were not well-versed in best practices and hence, did not have the skills to either kick the project off or bring it to the next phase.

JPS SOLUTION

We hosted a two-day planning session. Stakeholders from functional areas around the world were brought to Chicago to meet and discuss the project. While all of them had been involved in projects for years, many had never worked together physically in one place. The morning of the first day was used to allow each function to provide a status of their particular area. This helped flesh out trouble areas and allowed us to create a 'parking lot' for discussion.

After initial discussions, we demonstrated the concept of a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), a hierarchical visual document using Post-it notes. In this way, each function could understand the actual work that was needed from each of them to create a master schedule. On the morning of the second day, we had sufficient information to sequence the activities and display a rough, first draft of the schedule in Microsoft Project. Much of that day was focused on working with individual functions (regulatory, manufacturing, marketing, etc.) to fine-tune the sequencing, duration and resource information for each activity.

In the last half of the second day we introduced the concept of a risk register and required each function to identify its major risks. Each team also provided probability and impact for each risk so that we could prioritize which ones needed the most initial focus and know where to focus our mitigations. During this facilitated workshop there was also an ongoing mentoring of the in-house project manager who needed to better understand not only how to facilitate a meeting but also to pull together all the pieces of the puzzle.

RESULTS

By the end of the session - and after some initial follow-up work - the customer had a schedule and risk register that would give them some confidence to move forward. And they also had not only a repeatable process in place, but also a well-trained project manager who could move forward with confidence. As my co-facilitator said, "As a project manager, Jim emphasizes predictability and helps others learn how to make their project schedules more predictable and manage to them despite the "unknown" factors inherent in any environment."



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