Want to improve your project success? Most Project Managers will tell you that the best way to ensure success is to define your project clearly from the outset. That way, all of your team members, stakeholders and customers will have a single view of what the project needs to achieve. So the best way to define you project clearly is to:

Create a Project Charter

A Project Charter is a document that is completed at the very start of the project life cycle. It sets out the project vision, objectives and scope, so that you can gain a clear picture of what it is that the project must achieve.

It also describes the deliverables, the people involved in producing them and the timeframes for delivery.

To create a Charter for your project, take these 5 steps:

Step 1: Set the Vision

Every team needs a "Vision". By clarifying the vision for the project and the goals that must be met, your team will gain a single collective understanding of what it is expected of them. When setting out your vision, make sure that you:

- Gain agreement from the Sponsor first
- Write it using clear, meaningful words
- Communicate it to all team members

Don't email the vision out to your team. Instead, present it personally, so that they have a first hand understanding of what it is, why it's important and what it should mean to them.

Step 2: Define the Scope

With a clear vision, the next most important step is to define the project scope. The scope lists the activities and deliverables that must be completed, in order to achieve the vision.

Having a detailed scope helps you to plan your project effectively. It also helps you to prevent "scope creep" which is when unplanned deliverables and activities are added to your To Do list by your customer.

Project Management Life Cycle

Which steps do you take to complete a project? We've listed and described them here...

Project Initiation

1. Create a *Business Case* to define the costs and benefits involved in completing your project

2. Undertake a *Feasibility Study* to identify how feasible your project is.

3. Define the *Project Charter* to set out the project vision, scope and deliverables

4. Define the roles and create a *Project Office*

5. Complete an end of phase review More Info

Project Planning

1. Create a Project Plan listing the tasks, resources and finance needed to complete the project

2. Create plans to manage risks, procurement and communications

Only by clarifying the project scope at the outset, can you manage your customers needs, by telling them for instance that a request is "out of scope" and therefore requires additional time or money to complete it.

Step 3: Structure the Project Team

So you know your end target (i.e. your vision) and deliverables to be produced (i.e. your scope), you now need to identify the people who are going to do the work.

Create a Project Organizational Structure chart which show all of the customers, stakeholders, team members and other people involved with your project. Depict the reporting lines between each, and where possible, add lines of communication as well.

Documenting the organization structure is important, as it clarifies the number of people needed to complete your project and the responsibilities of each member in your team. It also helps you to create Job Descriptions for each member of your team.

Step 4: Create a Roadmap

Then create a project roadmap. This is a high level project plan that lists the phases, activities and tasks that your project will pass through, to complete the entire project management life cycle.

As well as setting out the activities needed to complete the project from start to finish, you need to identify the resources needed for each project phase. And finally, identify the overall budget required to complete the project, so that you gain financial approval to undertake the project, as early as possible in the project life cycle.

Step 5: Identify Risks and Issues

The last step to take when creating a Project Charter is to list the risks and issues that are currently apparent. By listing these items, you can make your Project Sponsor aware of the overall level of risk of the project and enlist their support to resolve them early.

By taking these 5 steps, you're ready to create a Project Charter to initiate projects more successfully. If you would to implement these 5 steps for your projects, then get the Project Charter template now.

Want to boost your project management success? Check out these 2 great project management solutions...

- Project Management Templates
- Project Management Methodology

3. Appoint external suppliers if needed
4. Complete an end of phase review More Info

Project Execution
1. Build the deliverables for the customer. This will be the most time consuming activity in the project, and it will also consume the most resource, materials and funds
2. Monitor and Control the project, by performing managing:
   - Time
   - Cost
   - Quality
   - Change
   - Risks
   - Issues
3. Complete an end of phase review. More Info

Project Closure
1. Prepare a project closure report and implement close actions.
2. Perform a post implementation review to measure the project success.

Download the complete set of Project Management templates for managing projects now.
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