

It Takes a Team to Re-Align a Project: Lessons From Rescue Missions

**Presentation at the
PMI Global Congress North America, Orlando
Oct 10-13, 2009**

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Area of focus: New Trends in Project Management

We all dream of projects where objectives are clearly defined, mutually understood, where every team member knows which role to play, which responsibilities to fill, where constructive feedback is daily routine, lessons learned are shared across teams, and, last but not least, where teams deliver results, on time and in budget.

Way too often this stays a dream. The opposite may be the case: The scope is undefined, stakeholders expectations are not aligned, roles and responsibilities only vaguely defined but not agreed, antagonism and distrust widespread, isolated and insular work practices dominate actual team work, and deliverables are late and/or of poor quality.

The big question is how to get out of this mess, how to re-align the project. Regardless where and how you start this mission, it should be clear that a project manager alone cannot accomplish it. It takes a team to do so.

The lecture explains how the project manager can involve his team to re-align a project gone astray. The lecture starts out with a look at the PMBOK and its ideas and guidelines to re-align a project. Numerous other approaches exist, too, as the lecture will sketch. Alas, the author is skeptical of those approaches because they often lack the simplicity and practicality a team needs to re-align a project. He will propose a simple yet powerful and effective 4 step approach to project recovery. Following an outline he will present practical tools, methods, exercises for each of the steps which can help the recovery team to quickly gain ground.

The lecture concludes with a discussion of what we can learn from project re-alignments. The author will point out how and where to apply lessons learned from project recoveries in aligning projects right from project initiation to closure.

Preliminary Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Objectives of the Session. When the session is completed, the attendee will be able to ...
 - a. ... involve a team to re-align a project
 - b. ... use a simple yet powerful 4 step framework for re-aligning projects
 - c. ... transfer lessons learned from project rescues to aligning projects right from project initiation to closure
2. Projects in danger – what can go wrong. Examples
 - a. Scope undefined, no clear project objectives
 - b. Unclear roles and responsibilities

- c. Insular teams, isolated project work
 - d. Delivery delays, low quality
3. PMBOK and other frameworks help for project recovery
4. A 4-step framework of analysis: Vision, collaboration, learning, results
5. Involve the team. The 4 step framework in action. Possible exercises
 - a. Re-visit vision: Creating a Vision Document with the Team and Stakeholders
 - b. Review collaboration: Team norming workshop
 - c. Nurture learning: Lessons learned workshop and weekly feedback sessions with the team
 - d. Ensure delivery of results: rapid prototyping, celebrate success
6. Learning from project rescues. How and where to apply lessons learned from project rescue missions in setting up and managing projects
7. Closing
 - a. Review key points
 - b. References
 - c. Questions and contact information

Event guide description:

Project recovery missions are probably one of the most difficult challenges a project manager may face. Alone a project manager cannot handle such a situation. It takes a team to do so. The session will present practical tools, methods, exercises which can help the recovery team to quickly gain ground.

"When the session is completed, the attendee will be able to ...":

1. ... involve a team to re-align a project
2. ... use a simple yet powerful 4 step framework for re-aligning projects
3. ... transfer lessons learned from project rescues to aligning projects right from project initiation to closure

Audience level: Advanced

Presenter Biography: Thomas Juli, PhD, PMP®, is an experienced and results-driven manager with more than 10 years of progressive leadership and management experience in various functions including project and program management, strategy consulting, business analysis, professional training and academic teaching. He is managing director of Thomas Juli Empowerment Partners, a professional service organization for innovative empowerment, consulting and interim management. Prior to starting his own consulting business he worked for SAP and two leading management and IT consultancies, Sapient and Cambridge Technology Partners. He consulted for various companies in the telecommunications, banking, energy, and the public sector. He has spoken at conferences on project management and customer relationship management and has written articles on project management for professional journals.