Working With Your Project Sponsor - A Key to Success

Working with a project sponsor can often be the difference between success and failure in a project. This crucial role is responsible for providing the necessary support, guidance, and resources to ensure the project's objectives are met. In this article, we will explore the importance of a project sponsor and discuss various strategies to effectively collaborate with them.

Understanding the Role of a Project Sponsor

A project sponsor is an individual or a group that has authority over a project and is accountable for its success. They play a vital role in securing project funding, aligning the project with organizational goals, and establishing the project's overall direction.

Additionally, project sponsors act as the project's advocate, representing it to key stakeholders and providing the necessary support to overcome any obstacles. They have the power to make critical decisions and ensure the project remains on track to achieve its intended outcomes.

Working with Your Project Sponsor: How to build a great working relationship with your Project Sponsor, for the good of your project. (OnlinePMCourses: Project Management Book 15)

by Mike Clayton (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The Importance of Strong Communication

Effective communication is essential when working with a project sponsor. Clear and open communication channels enable both parties to understand each other's expectations, concerns, and priorities. By maintaining a regular and transparent dialogue, potential issues can be identified and mitigated early on.

Furthermore, keeping the project sponsor well-informed about the project's progress, milestones, and potential risks will build trust and confidence. Regular status updates, progress reports, and timely escalations of any critical issues will help foster a supportive and collaborative relationship with your sponsor.

Building a Trusting Relationship

Developing a trusting relationship with your project sponsor is crucial for success. Trust is built on reliability, accountability, and mutual respect. By consistently meeting commitments, delivering quality work, and taking ownership of the project's outcomes, you will earn the trust and confidence of your sponsor.

Invest time in understanding your project sponsor's priorities, goals, and expectations. Align the project's objectives with their broader strategic vision, and

demonstrate how it contributes to the organization's success. By showing that you understand their perspective and goals, you can gain their trust and support.

Achieving Effective Collaboration

Creating an environment of collaboration is key to working effectively with your project sponsor. Collaboration involves active engagement, listening to different viewpoints, and finding common ground. Here are some strategies to promote collaboration:

1. Regular Meetings and Check-Ins

Set up regular meetings and check-ins with your project sponsor to discuss progress, address any concerns, and gather feedback. These interactions provide an opportunity to align goals, clarify expectations, and build rapport.

During these meetings, prioritize active listening and seek clarification when needed. By genuinely understanding your project sponsor's perspective, you can tailor your approach to meet their requirements and preferences.

2. Shared Ownership and Decision-Making

Involve your project sponsor in critical decision-making processes. By providing them with the necessary information, options, and potential impacts, they can actively contribute to shaping the project's direction.

Shared ownership of the project fosters a sense of collaboration and ensures stakeholders are engaged. It also reduces the likelihood of any surprises or misalignment along the way, as decisions are made collectively.

3. Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Establish clear roles and responsibilities for both you and your project sponsor. Clarifying expectations early on avoids ambiguity and reduces any potential conflicts or misunderstandings.

Clearly defining decision-making authority, escalation processes, and communication protocols ensures a smooth working relationship. It allows everyone involved to understand their responsibilities and accountability within the project.

Overcoming Challenges

Working with a project sponsor may present challenges along the way. By acknowledging and addressing them proactively, you can maintain a positive working relationship and deliver successful outcomes. Here are some common challenges and strategies to overcome them:

1. Lack of Engagement or Availability

If your project sponsor seems disengaged or inaccessible, take the initiative to schedule meetings or find alternative ways to communicate. Clearly communicate the benefits of their active involvement and demonstrate how it positively impacts project success.

Additionally, involve any influential stakeholders who have a good rapport with the sponsor to help facilitate communication and engagement.

2. Changes in Leadership

In organizations, changes in leadership happen frequently. If your project sponsor is replaced or their level of involvement changes, take the time to establish a rapport with the new sponsor. Understand their priorities and adapt your approach accordingly.

Additionally, communicate openly and transparently about any impacts that these changes may have on the project. Seek their guidance and approval to ensure a smooth transition and continuity.

3. Communication and Expectation Misalignment

If there are misunderstandings or misalignments in communication or expectations, address them promptly. Schedule dedicated sessions to discuss and align project objectives, milestones, and success criteria.

Clear documentation and regular updates regarding changes or developments in the project help minimize misunderstandings. Remember to set realistic expectations and communicate any constraints or limitations early to manage expectations effectively.

Working with your project sponsor is an essential aspect of project management. By understanding their role, establishing strong lines of communication, building trust, and promoting collaboration, you can ensure successful project outcomes.

Remember that effective collaboration is a two-way process, and your actions as a project manager play a significant role in fostering a positive working relationship. Compromises, adaptability, and professionalism are key to building a successful partnership with your project sponsor.

By investing time and effort into working effectively with your project sponsor, you lay a solid foundation for project success, leverage their support and expertise, and foster a collaborative environment that benefits everyone involved.

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Your relationship with your project sponsor is one of the most important of your professional relationships. A lot depends on it.

Because, you sponsor has a lot of roles that are all important to you in carrying out your role as project manager. Not only do they have the project governance roles of:

•Direction-setting

•Decision-making

•Oversight

But they also have a crucial role in stakeholder engagement. Yet we are still not at the core of your relationship with your Project Sponsor…

Your Project Sponsor is like Your Line Manager, within the Project Context

Project life differs from day-to-day operational life. And often, we either don't have a permanent line manager or we do, but don't spend a lot of time with them. But

we spend a lot of time with our Project Sponsor. It is your Project Sponsor who provides you with a lot of what other employees would normally get from their line manager:

•Guidance

•Support

•Coaching

•Mentorship

•Feedback

So, there is no doubt about it: this is a critical relationship to get right.

The Trouble with Sponsors

There's a 'but…'

Few people in a project sponsorship role have training for how to discharge their responsibilities. Worse still, many didn't seek the role, or have other things that, to them, appear to take priority. Your relationship with your sponsor can be problematic in many ways.

So, getting it right is what this eBook is all about:

•We'll start with the basics, and investigate what a Project Sponsor wants

•Then, we'll look at how to keep them happy

•Next, we'll consider a sponsor who has other things on their mind, and see how you can engage them in your project

•Ramping up the challenge, our next chapter discovers how to handle a difficult Project Sponsor

•Finally, we have the biggest challenge of all: a Project Sponsor who goes rogue. What do you do if your sponsor turns to the 'dark side'?
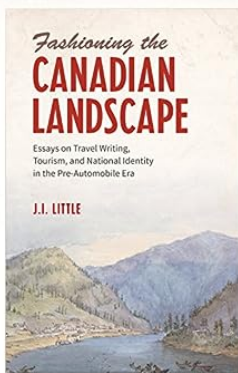
Summary

The five chapters (and one appendix) of this eBook will guide you in rising to the

challenge of building a strong and positive working relationship with your Project Sponsor. Arguably, this is not solely your responsibility.

But, one thing we learn, as project managers, is that when we want something, it pays to go out and get it. If you want this relationship to thrive, you need to take on the challenge yourself.
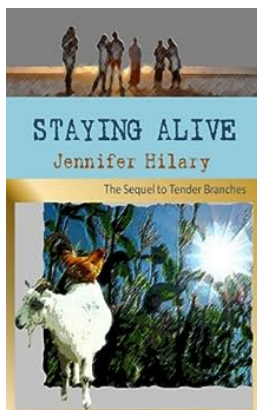
And, the truth is, you are a project manager: a professional. You have training, expertise, and a commitment to your profession. Project sponsorship isn't like that. So, your sponsor will likely not have thought about this, nor deliberately learned the skills. So, project manager, it's down to you!

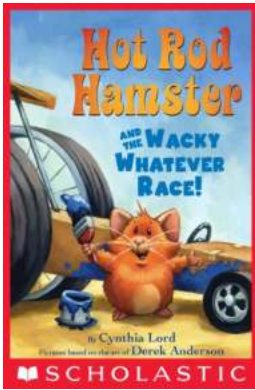This is a topic that demands its time in the spotlight. And here is that spotlight: this eBook.

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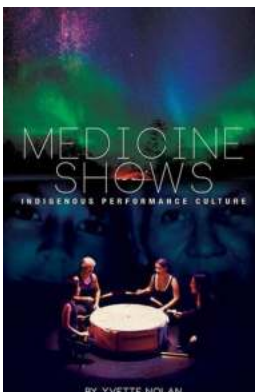## The Natural Colors Cookbook: Tantalize Your Senses with Vibrant and Healthy Creations

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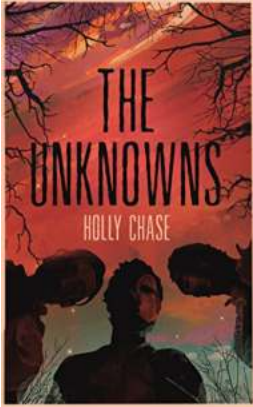
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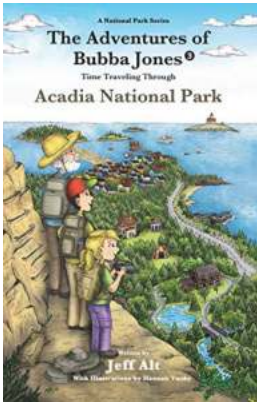
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