Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher Nationals in Business (RQF)

Unit: 6 Managing a Successful Business Project

Assignment 1: Information Pack

1 in a series of 2 for this unit

Learning Outcome 1 & 2

Project Plan

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Establish project aims, objectives and timeframes based on the chosen theme
Project management:
What is project management and what does it involve?
The key stages of project management.
The advantages of using project management and why it is important.
Initiation of the project and project planning phase:
Scoping a project – defining objectives, scope, purpose and deliverables to be produced.
Steps and documentation required in the initiation phase.
Developing the project plan, including planning for timescales and time management, cost, quality, change, risk and issues.
The work breakdown structure.
Use of Bar and Gantt Charts for effective planning.

Conduct small-scale research, information gathering and data collection to generate knowledge to support the project
Project execution phase:
Selecting appropriate methods of information gathering, data collection and material resourcing.
The distinct phases which support a coherent and logical argument.
Use of secondary research to inform a primary empirical study.
Qualitative and quantitative research methods.
Field work:
Selecting a sample of the consumer market, businesses or individuals (those who meet certain characteristics relevant to the research theme) is used to gather data (qualitative or quantitative).
Sampling approaches and techniques, including probability and non-probability sampling.
Ethics, reliability and validity:
Research should also be reliable (similar results achieved from a similar sample) and valid (the research should measure what it aimed to measure).
Analysing information and data:
Using data collection tools such as interviews and questionnaires.
Using analytical techniques such as trend analysis, coding or typologies.

GUIDANCE

This document is prepared to break the unit material down into bite size chunks. You will see the learning outcomes above treated in their own sections. Therein you will encounter the following structures;

Purpose

Explains *why* you need to study the current section of material. Quite often learners are put off by material which does not initially seem to be relevant to a topic or profession. Once you understand the importance of new learning or theory you will embrace the concepts more readily.

Theory

Conveys new material to you in a straightforward fashion. To support the treatments in this section you are strongly advised to follow the given hyperlinks, which may be useful documents or applications on the web.

Example

The examples/worked examples are presented in a knowledge-building order. Make sure you follow them all through. If you are feeling confident then you might like to treat an example as a question, in which case cover it up and have a go yourself. Many of the examples given resemble assignment questions which will come your way, so follow them through diligently.

Question

Questions should not be avoided if you are determined to learn. Please do take the time to tackle each of the given questions, in the order in which they are presented. The order is important, as further knowledge and confidence is built upon previous knowledge and confidence. As an Online Learner it is important that the answers to questions are immediately available to you. Contact your Unit Tutor if you need help.

Challenge

You can really cement your new knowledge by undertaking the challenges. A challenge could be to download software and perform an exercise. An alternative challenge might involve a practical activity or other form of research.

Video

Videos on the web can be very useful supplements to your distance learning efforts. Wherever an online video(s) will help you then it will be hyperlinked at the appropriate point.

What is project management and what does it involve?

The Pre – History of Project Management

Before the profession of project management was defined there were projects, but they didn't share many of the foundations that hold up project management today. The pharaohs built the pyramids of Egypt around 2500 BC, and to this day we aren't certain how they accomplished such a vast task, but records do show that there were managers, who were responsible for each of the four faces of the Great Pyramid.

In 208 BC the Great Wall of China was constructed, but there are records that indicate the planning went back even further. Historical data reveals that the workforce for this large project was organised into groups. There were three that we know of: soldiers, common people and criminals. Millions were ordered to complete the project.

More recently, the need for a more pronounced structure in construction, manufacturing and transportation in the 19th century lead to the birth of project management as we recognise it today. Examples include the building of the Transcontinental Railroad and the rebuilding of the southern states after the devastation of the American Civil War.

While there might not have been task management, scope or workload considerations at the time, there was certainly leadership at play, and there must have been some budget, even if open-ended, and scheduling of some sort. But with practice came process and refinement.

It was not until the 1900s that project management as we know it began to take form. As projects became industrialised, the process to manage them also experienced a revolution.

So what is Project Management?

Project management is the practice of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing the work of a team to achieve specific goals and meet specific success criteria at the specified time. The primary challenge of project management is to achieve all of the project goals within the given constraints.

Video

Figure 1: What is Project Management

Project planning phase

A life cycle defines the inter-related phases of a project and provides structure for the progression of work. All projects are designed to deliver objectives, these objectives may be expressed as outputs, outcomes or benefits.

The scope of a project life cycle can take various forms to suit the context. Some projects will be part of a programme and will only be concerned with delivering outputs (the traditional project life cycle). Some projects will be expected to incorporate the management of change and realisation of benefits (the extended project life cycle). Some applications (e.g. whole life costing) may consider the full product life cycle.

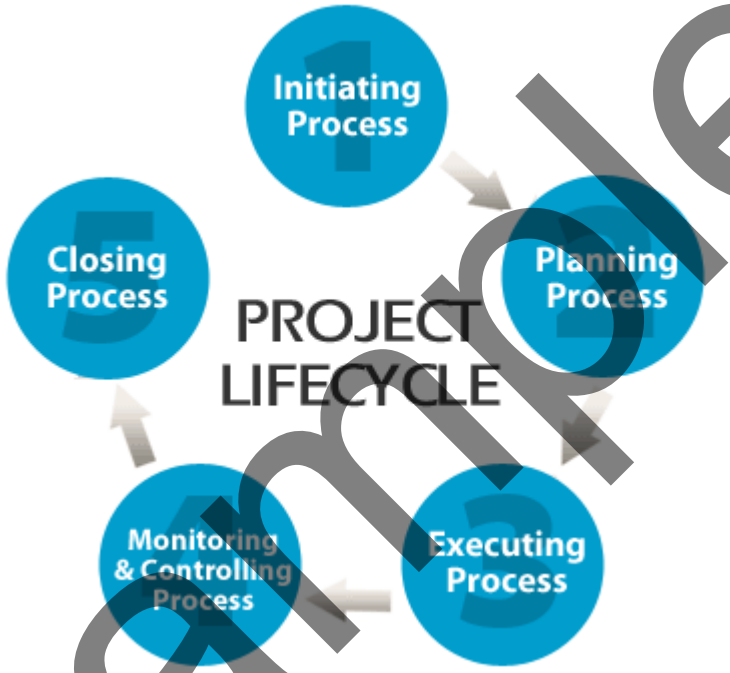


Figure 2: Project Lifecyle

- **Initiation** Defines the business case providing a justification for the project.
- **Planning** Resources, specialists, budgets, communication methods, timescales and constraints all accounted for within the plan.
- **Execution** Criteria for each project task should be outlined in the planning process.
- **Monitoring** Plans for consistent monitoring should be pre-arranged.
- **Closure** Evaluation of both the successes and the mistakes and take that experience forward to the next project.

Project management plan

(pass criteria)

People assume that all that is required in planning a project is to make a list of tasks, classify them under headings, call the project team together and assign them particular tasks, and then work to a deadline.

Project planning is about addressing fundamental questions: what needs to happen and when? It is the process by which the activities in a project are defined, their logical sequence determined, and the needs, in terms of time, cost and quality. A project plan simply provides a route map defining and communicating how the project will move from start to end.

For a project manager, the project plan is the most important tool for monitoring and control. Most project planning tools and techniques have been around for a long time and have proved themselves useful, enabling the project manager to deliver his/her projects on time, cost and quality.

Putting your plan together

Overview

Identify the purpose of your company, providing the reader with some background information.

Introduction

The Introduction provides an overview of the project and what is included in the project management Plan. This should include a description of the project and describe the projects deliverables and benefits. Excessive detail is not necessary in this section as the other sections of the project plan will include this information. This section should provide a summarised framework of the project and its purpose.

Example

Total Software Incorporated (TSI) has recently approved the Smart Voice project to move forward for project initiation within the research and development (R&D) group. This project will result in the development of new voice recognition software and supports TSI's corporate strategy of providing progressive solutions to clients which improve productivity in both the workplace and home environment. While voice recognition software is currently available, TSI believes that new technological developments will enable our team to develop a solution far superior to what is currently available.

TSI has been successful in gaining market share because of its aggressive pursuit of product quality, ease of use, flexibility, and customer service. Additionally, customers understand that our products may be applied to a wide range of uses for business and personal functions. By leveraging our reputation for superior quality and user-friendly products, and capitalizing on new technology, TSI can position itself as the premier provider of effective and easy to use voice recognitions software in today's marketplace.

Needs/Problems

Identify the needs or problems, including information such as the length of time the needs/problems have existed. Whether the problem has ever been addressed before, and what was the outcome, such as the impact on the user. E.g., customer/company.

Scope

Provide a detailed scope of work, this should include what the project does/does not include. This will help clarify what is included in the project and help to avoid confusion within the project team.

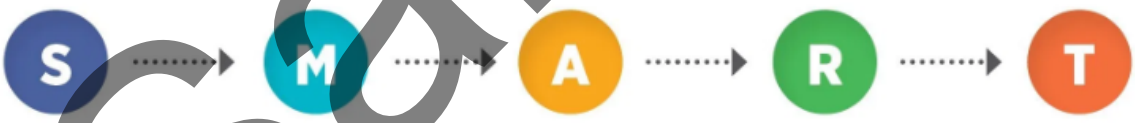
Example

The scope of TSI's Smart Voice project includes the planning, design, development, testing, and transition of the Smart Voice recognition software package. This software will meet or exceed organisational software standards and additional requirements established in the project charter. The scope of this project also includes completion of all documentation, manuals, and training aids to be used in conjunction with the software. Project completion will occur when the software and documentation package has been successfully executed and transitioned to TSI's manufacturing group for production.

All Smart Voice project work will be performed internally, and no portion of this project will be outsourced. The scope of this project does not include any changes in requirements to standard operating systems to run the software, software updates or revisions.

Goals/objectives

State the desired goals and objectives to address the needs/problems, including key benefits of reaching goals/objectives. When considering your goals remember to think SMART.



Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-Bound
Make sure your goals are focused and identify a tangible outcome. Without the specifics, your goal runs the risk of being too vague to achieve. Being more specific helps you identify what you want to achieve. You should also identify what resources you are going to leverage to achieve success.	You should have some clear definition of success. This will help you to evaluate achievement and also progress. This component often answers how much or how many and highlights how you'll know you achieved your goal.	Your goal should be challenging, but still reasonable to achieve. Reflecting on this component can reveal any potential barriers that you may need to overcome to realize success. Outline the steps you're planning to take to achieve your goal.	This is about getting real with yourself and ensuring what you're trying to achieve is worthwhile to you. Determining if this is aligned to your values and if it is a priority focus for you. This helps you answer the why.	Every goal needs a target date, something that motivates you to really apply the focus and discipline necessary to achieve it. This answers when. It's important to set a realistic time frame to achieve your goal to ensure you don't get discouraged.