

Assigning People to Roles

Introduction

Assigning people to roles can be one of the most critical tasks you do to affect your project's success. Match the right people to the right roles and you start to create a motivated team. Do this wrong, and you may be facing an uphill battle. A project role is not necessarily the same thing as a title on a business card; it is a set of responsibilities that must be fulfilled for the project activities to be completed. You may have the title of business analyst on your card, but you might fill the project manager role on a project.

The Roles Needed for a Project

You must first identify the roles that must be filled before you assign people to roles. If you are following a strong system development lifecycle, then roles may already be defined. If not, you must ascertain which roles you need to fill. Typical IT project roles include project manager; end-user; business analyst; designer; developer; tester; technical writer; and trainer. Depending upon the project, you may have technical developers and usability designers, or other, more specialized roles.

Skills Assessment

You must ascertain the skills that are needed to fill each role once you understand the roles you need to fill. Think about technical, business, and professional skills. This skills assessment will help you identify training needs and project risks, even if you have no choice as to who is on your team.

The next step is to match the people you have (or to whom you have access) with the roles to which they are best suited. To complete this task, you must know their skills and motivations. Perhaps they are interested in roles that are very different from what they have already done. Their goal may be to gain deeper skills or relationships. Getting to know your potential team is critical, but often tends to be skipped in the interest of time. Understanding your team members' goals, interests, and desires will help you put them into the best possible role on the project, which will benefit both the project and the individuals.

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Availability

In addition to balancing skills and motivation, you must also consider availability. The perfect people may not be available for your project when you need them. You may need to change your project schedule to meet their availability. You may need to change your staffing approach, which can introduce new risks and costs. You may need to negotiate with them (and their managers) to be able to use them for the project within your time constraints.

Conclusion

Following are some considerations when assigning people to roles:

- All responsibilities must be filled by someone on the project team.
- A person can fill more than one role.
- More than one person can fill a role.
- Explain the expectations and responsibilities of the roles to the team.

Provide the reasoning behind your decision, to put assignments in perspective.