

INTE 5160 SEMESTER PROJECT:
**IDENTIFYING PROJECT MANAGEMENT ISSUES AT HIGH
NOON ENTERTAINMENT AND RECOMMENDING
ADJUSTMENTS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTION**

Learning Objective #1: Identifying project management concerns at my television production job at High Noon Entertainment.

This objective took more time than projected to implement but the results were greater in detail than initially conceived. Originally, I had planned to complete interviews with company stakeholders by March 20th. This key milestone proved difficult to achieve for two reasons. First, due to the volume of responsibilities of the five stakeholders that agreed to respond to my project management questions, it was extremely difficult to find time to interview each individual in-person. Upon consulting the class instructor, I opted to deliver the questions in an email form and give each stakeholder five business days to respond. The second, and perhaps greater factor, was creating simple questions that asked stakeholders to discuss effective and ineffective television production management techniques without discussing effective and ineffective television production managers. Criticizing former or current co-workers in a written context could have been very intimidating and generated a toxic environment. Plus, I did not want to provoke a reaction from senior stakeholders that could influence my future job prospects with the company. These two reasons factored into my not completing the first learning objective until April 13th.

The quality of the completed project management questionnaires, however, was better than I anticipated. Initially, I was concerned that the five stakeholders would respond with very brief answers. Given that each stakeholder had a business week to formulate and respond to the questions, many of the responses were rich in professional feedback. One question I proposed, regarding personal attributes in a television production manager, resulted various insights:

What personal attributes (listening, empathy, emotional awareness) make a good production manager?

Stakeholder B: “Good PMs (Production Managers) have a mixture of patience and empathy with their teams. If a PM gets frazzled quickly or snaps back at the team, it creates a caustic environment that fosters bad working relationships not just between the PM and the team, but also between the team members themselves.”

Stakeholder D: “The production manager is the therapist, the mom, the dad, the pocketbook and the facilitator of creativity. They free the creative side to do their jobs creating instead of focusing on the logistics and money side of things that kill any creativity when they have to combine these modes of thinking.”

Stakeholder E: “Number one is a passion for the business. You have to love it to embrace the madness. Next is Grace Under Fire. Things change endlessly and there’s no time for a freak out. You need to have the basics of course: a strong knowledge of the business, solid organizational skills, problem-solving skills, and people skills. In the world of television I also love the people who enjoy being a huge kid – the best in the business are those who see the world through the excitement of a kid. There’s a creativity there that’s inspiring and contagious.”

There were other questions regarding changes in production budgets, advances in communication technology and managing creative personnel, but the responses to personal attributes were very insightful.

Learning Objective #2: Determining the role emotional intelligence plays in the company’s project management.

Based on the responses from the questionnaires, I saw a clearer picture on how emotional intelligence plays a role in High Noon Entertainment’s project management. First of all was the concept of empathy, a key component in social awareness. Mersino (2013) argued that conflict “could be reduced or eliminated if we simply tried to understand the other person’s point of view” (p. 101). In discussing the management of creative personnel, this social awareness attribute was significant:

Stakeholder E: With talent, I’ve always found it best to look at the shoot schedule and demands through their eyes and then shift your dialogue to what is best for them... make them understand that you are always

watching out for their brand and they'll trust you and listen to your requests.

The other relevant factor was the role of communications in project management. Specifically, congruence in communications, which is, as Mersino emphasized, paramount between internal staff and outside freelancers. It's an invaluable project management component praised by some of the company stakeholders:

Stakeholder B: This industry would not exist as it does today were it not for tech advances such as smartphones, email, etc. They are integral in this industry as a production team requires constant intercommunication to ensure all the pieces of a production are coordinated in a timely manner.

Even with the congruence of communications, other stakeholders found negative consequences of new technology:

Stakeholder E: All the new technology is a double-edged sword. It's impossible to get away from work when you have calls and images coming in around the clock from around the world.

Learning Objective #3: Discover best project management practices at other television production companies.

This learning objective I came up short in research material. I hoped I would find articles in media trade sites, like [Broadcasting and Cable](#) or [Synopsis Media](#) about effective project management practices, but most of articles were about recent industry business transactions. I did have some success with find material pertaining to managing creative personnel, which was a key component in my production management questionnaire. In addition to a INTE 5160 class reading, *Instructional Project Management* by Brenda C. Litchfield and John M. Keller, I found articles on managing creative professionals on *Harvard Business Review* ("[Seven Rules for Managing Creative-But Difficult People](#)"), and *Fast Company* ("[10 Tips For Managing Creative People](#)") and *The Creative Pathfinder* ("[#25 Herding Cats – Managing Creative People](#)"). Each article had a unique perspective on how best to manage these passionate but sometimes problematic people. If I had more time to explore more on-line and library material, I might have had more to report.

Learning Objective #4: Recommend project management adjustments at my company to improve effectiveness.

After reviewing the project management questionnaire in relation to the key emotional intelligence concepts discussed in Anthony Mersino's book *Emotional Intelligence For Project Managers*, there seems to be two clear non-financial issues that my employer, High Noon Entertainment, should consider to improve project management. One is communication. Congruence of communication, especially if all project stakeholder and production team members can participate in a synchronous conversation, is crucial to the distribution of key project information. The other is social awareness, especially being able to understand another project team member's point of view. Television production is a unique mix of creative and logistical minds and both minds need to work together. If these minds don't collaborate, it will result in one giant headache!

Conclusion:

The semester project identifying project management concerns and recommending adjustments at my employer, High Noon Entertainment, was more challenging than I had previously imagined. This is my second semester taking two 3-credit classes at the University of Colorado-Denver Information & Learning Technologies (ILT) program and balancing schoolwork while working a full-time job. It's an endeavor that has tested my time management skills. While I gained some insights into effective management techniques from company stakeholders, I could not find nearly as much information online regarding ideal management practices throughout the television production industry as I had hoped. Furthermore, I fell far short in getting feedback from my online peers regarding the results of my learning objectives. The responses from the questionnaires were qualitative so a data chart deliverable was not possible. In retrospect, I underestimated the time needed to fully complete this project and incorrectly assumed that online publications of project management would be readily available.

REFERENCES

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