

# Roundtable Takeaways

## Project Management: Sharing of Exemplary Practices

The April 5, 2001 Roundtable meeting was held at Pershing, in Jersey City. The objective of the Roundtable was to continue un-layering the topic of project management, through discussion of exemplary practices. Participants believe that project management is one of the most important functions in today's business environment, and this meeting was aimed at sharing practices that have worked well for the various organizations. We had two presenters/facilitators: Michael Poli from Stevens and Bill Jacobs from Pershing.

### From Michael Poli's section:

- Michael based his discussion on the findings presented by Harold Kerzner in his 1997 book, "In Search of Excellence in Project Management – Successful Practices in High Performance Organizations".
- Kerzner identifies six broad areas in which organizations must excel to achieve high performance in project management. These are listed here, along with some of their principal components:
  - Integrated processes
  - PM, TQM, CCE, Risk Management, Change Management
  - Culture
    - Shared Values, Relationships, Priorities, Roles
  - Management Support
    - Sponsor, Empowerment, Environment
  - Training and Education
    - Need, Selection, Design, Conduct, Measurement
  - Informal Project Management
    - Trust, Communication, Cooperation, Teamwork
  - Behavioral Excellence
    - Human Factors, Situational Leadership, Conflict Resolution
- Kerzner, while describing the environmental/cultural elements for excellence, does not develop the operational side.
- Prem Pungaliya of Lucent gave his view that excellence in project management depends on the entire evolution from growth through maturity. It was argued, however, that this typically was the definition of product management. The point is that excellence must depend on the outcome.

- Efficacy in project management should be defined in relation to expected outcomes, for example time-to-market, certainty of delivery, and cost. Achievement requires appropriate environmental factors (such as described by Kerzner and others) to support the organization (project team).
- Alice Davenport described some exemplary practices at ExxonMobil. They create "principles" statements for projects that develop a shared sense of purpose among the project team. These are short, easy to recall statements aimed at generating discussion about the project philosophy, to ensure that all team members are in alignment.
- ARDEC, whose project teams include their customer (military), believes that cultural behaviors and a strong set of practices/procedures are required for excellence.

### From Bill Jacobs's presentation:

- Dynamic changes in their industry environment (cost structure, rigorous new customer demands, etc.) demanded that Pershing develop a strong project management group. They felt that someone had to be responsible for achieving project success.
- Pershing adopted the definition that projects had definite beginnings and endings. They clearly differentiated projects from processes (most of their projects are for specific customers)
- What organizational structure works best for project management? It was agreed that both centralized and product business reporting could work.
- Pershing has developed a significant project management curriculum. Their objective is to have a Critical Maturity Model (CMM) level 5 capability in project management. CMM's metrics serve as input for course and curriculum development.
- Pershing has developed processes for upward communications. Project managers collect project information that makes the health of projects clear, and present that information to the decision-makers.
- Bill candidly described Pershing's tendency to initiate programs and then failing to follow through (e.g. in TQM), and emphasized the need for persistence with respect to their project management initiatives.