

Project Management for New Supervisors: Guest Post by Donna Izor

☒ As a consultant, I have been asked to go into many organizations where I have found important projects lingering or causing such stress for a supervisor that they feel paralyzed. No one is happy. Not the leader asking for results or the supervisor who is feeling overwhelmed.

Regularly scheduled meetings with your leader should be your norm.

Make an agenda for this meeting so that you are sure to cover all important issues. Use this time to go over project lists, comment on what you feel are your priorities, and give project updates. Having a discussion on the priority of the work will help you gain insight to the “bigger picture” and how your work affects the overall organization.

The following steps provide a framework for supervisors having difficulty moving forward with a project.

Understand the work that is requested by asking clarifying questions.

- What are the expectations or deliverables?
- When is it due?
- Who is the decision maker?

Divide the project into manageable tasks.

- What are the major sections to complete?
- Determine what you need to complete each section/task.
- Will you need information or resources from other departments? (Information Management and Finance are two areas from whom you will find you frequently need assistance.)

Will you need additional staff or resources?

- Do you need someone to backfill the front desk/phones/clinic while you work on this project?
- Will your staff be doing work that is taking them away from their normal tasks?

Develop a timeline and work plan including all projects assigned to you.

- Carefully estimate the time needed for each project and to complete each task.
- Are tasks able to be completed concurrently or do you need to finish one before starting another?

Develop a simple GANTT chart (see resource below) that will provide a visual representation of the start

and end times for each project task.

- Assign tasks if needed and don't be afraid to ask others for assistance.
- Be clear with what you are asking other staff members to do and your expectations.
- If asking staff to collect data, develop a format and collection sheet if needed.
- Be sure to provide staff training so that the information you collect is what you want and need.

Focus your effort on what is needed and stay organized.

- Use a checklist to make sure each task is completed on time.
- Update your checklist regularly.
- Communicate updates.

Have team meetings if you are involving others.

- Follow an agenda and go over the work plan.
- If things are not complete, ask what help is needed and facilitate this.
- Be open to change as long as it meets the needs of the project.

What happens if you don't receive the help you need from others?

This isn't the time for the blame game. Determine who else can help or if this is a task you can pick up. If it is a

performance issue, treat it as such.

Assure the finished product is professional.

- Take time to review the document to make sure you are meeting the needs of the project and that the flow of the document is easy to follow.
- Make sure your data represents what you are trying to measure and is correct.
- Check and double check for typographical and grammatical errors. Do not overuse abbreviations, acronyms, bolding, exclamation points or highlights.

Share the success of having a completed project!

- Thank those that have helped you and acknowledge their work.
- Be appreciative when you are recognized for your work. Accepting compliments can be difficult for some. If you are given feedback, consider it constructive and use the information to improve.

Accepting a project is accepting the accountability to complete the work. This is an opportunity to add value to the team and assist the greater organization. Being able to successfully complete a project on time will add to your credibility and possibly advancement.

NOTE from MMP: Several practices that we work with report liking online project management tool SmartSheet. (As always, we receive nothing for mentioning a product on our blog.) Are there other products you like to use for project management? Tell us in the comments below.



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