Business Leadership

written by Manoj Khanna | October 9, 2004
Business Leadership is a very important subject. Through this blog I plan to create a thread of my thoughts about businesses and their leaderships. Not necessarily in the order they are in different industry domains. Through different readings in books, mags, and on-line I intend to capture the gist and present it here.

This is an important subject from academic stand-point as well. Though, biz school adopt a new approach almost every year to tackle this subject but the practical walkthrough of any industrial domain says and talks a lot on itself. Probaly, it would be wise to say that this cannot be taught in text. But rather, be experienced.

On the oher hand, the good thing is, that the busines today have started realizing the importance of it organization’s demands and priorities. There are more things to look into than profit and maximization.

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Project Management & Leadership

written by Manoj Khanna | October 9, 2004
For a successful project manager, there lies a dire need of project specific leadership. And it holds true in all sort of projects, be it small, mid-sized or large. In my recent experience, I tried different hats, being a worker, a leader, a management person, and focused mainly on working with the team, listening to the team, and thinking through them. It helped me getting a good rapport with my team; but in scenarios where the upper management doesn't feel that this is the way the PM should work then it's not worth the effort. Hence, in order to make a stand in front of ones those who have more power than the PM and are also seated in the higher chairs it would be worthwhile first to win the consensus across the board.

If the reference is made to the organizations leadership, then

it would be a good idea to investigate what the manager lacks in managing his/her teams and find out different ways to improve their leadership skills. Also, it’ll be worthwhile to pinpoint some of the very common notions on how the managers treat and greet their teams. Not to mention the-worst-case-scenarios.

In a nutshell, there are lots of resources available today to figure out and research on how one can improve their organization leadership skills. But the starting course should be to begin from the latest project/experience. And then, move forward. A simple checklist of what-happened-when-scenarios would be ideal too. Asking some specifics to the self would do and not getting into details. The idea is to find out the feedback from the self. And then, compare with what others management gurus have to say on leadership.

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Offshore Project Management : The Business to Technical Communication (Part II)

written by Manoj Khanna | October 9, 2004

As a project manager there are many things going through PM's mind. Many tasks – knowledge bank – technical and as well as business wise. If one understands correctly not all the information which he/she has in his/her knowledge bank is

supposedly meant for every stakeholder. Otherwise there will be a zillion questions from business – “Why are we doing it this way?” or “Why weren’t our department included as part of this discussion?” or “This does not meet our requirements” or “That’s not the way we do business here?” or “Who’ll do all this documentation?” and many more. The bottom-line is some information hiding is necessary and is fruitful in the long run.

Now the point is, at what level there should be interaction between business users and technical team. To throw technical team in front of business users – is not a wise idea. There are many complications. There are many whys and wherefores. There are many confusions. Business people – pure business people do not understand our world of tables, records, JSP page, queries, stored procedures or the alike terms. Should you bring this in front of them? Not if its intended to amuse them with these tech-o-items. There are several layers of communication between technical team and business users. You see it and we see it – as technical people – but what the business world sees it – that is purely business. Their objective is simplification and the solution to their problem – absolute, fast and crystal. There is no complicated world – unless or until we create it otherwise.

So how does this communication should happen? The technical aspect of the project cannot be hidden completely from the business – sometimes they need to know what they need to know. PM cannot and should not deny the information at any point to any stakeholder. Presenting the facts and correct figures that’s the right thing to do. Or otherwise it’s going to come back and haunt the PM himself/herself. There is no full-fledged technique for this sort of communication – everyone follows his/her individual style. For certain people – communication through channeled sources work well. Having a BA which translates exactly what the business needs to know and wants to know – helps a lot. As business is not interested in

10101 gibberish. The BA and the PM some times play hand-in-hand and in certain cases PM has to adopt and wear the hat of a BA – to smooth things out. In certain cases – PM himself/herself has quite an understanding of the business world with years of experience in that domain where the project is. In other cases – a pre-identified project lead from the technical side – plays the role of BA and brings out the best of the technical jargon. At the same time, that project lead is expected to posses business skills and should be proficient in the business that project is dealing in.

To summarize, to have pure business and pure technical team face to face and each of them making an effort to understand what each other means is sort of communication overkill. And this shouldn't happen in a proficiently managed offshore project.

More to follow…

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Changing faces of Outsourcing from Enterprises to Individual Developer

written by Manoj Khanna | October 9, 2004

Imagine your work; a software module, assigned to you with a timeline of 1.5 weeks. And you tell your boss – that you are telecommuting. As you need to concentrate and all for this piece of work. Instead of working yourself, you delegate it to a software developer in India or Philippines or China. And check on and off with the progress and complete your task with in a week including testing. Sure, you are on your way to somewhere. Your boss is happy and you are happy and the software developer getting pennies for his work is happy as well.

An interesting feature, which somehow wasn't completely unforeseen – but does how far can one go. Sky is the limit. A recent story; Shane Schick brings about some interesting

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Offshore Project Management : What a PM feels? (Part I)

written by Manoj Khanna | October 9, 2004

There are many factors influencing the day-to-day activities in a very active offshore project. There are several things that need attention. And they need attention at all times. Right from the beginning in the project there are certain stakeholders in the project that needs the ultimate attention in the project. And their stakes are always high. And a PM needs to watch that- all the time.

Likewise there are things that make perfect sense out of anything. Likewise the project management for an offshore project is not an easy thing. There are several challenges that come in between. Many bottlenecks. Many road stoppers. And many show stoppers as we might call it in the implementation of the project.

There are factors considering the status of the mind – several stakeholders – with their own stakes make perfect sense for the do and die situation for the perfect project. Not necessarily everyone makes sense out of the project activity. But there are some that do. Some people or stakeholders are straight forward – to the point – mean exactly what they say. And some are not so whatsoever clear. They have their own language. Their own interpretation – not necessarily you'll find them in the entire project but it is certain that you will find characters like that in one or the other project.

Coming, back to the complexity of an offshore project. The things or the objectives that make it so complex beyond the obvious is not the managerial lack ness with the project manager but in fact the offshore team not so clear in presenting the picture on what's really going on. If you really don't have the complete picture from the other side of

the world then it’s not obvious that you’ll make up your own and come up with the perfect situation. But guess what, the profession of project management demands that from a project manager. No matter what; the PM has to be on its toe – in a dog-eat-dog-world.

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