



PROJECT MANAGEMENT (534E5B) CASE STUDY

Case Study 1: Project Management at Global Green Books Publishing

Global Green Books Publishing was started two years ago by two friends, Jim King and Brad Mount, who met in college while studying in Philadelphia, USA. In the new business Jim focused on editing, sales and marketing while Brad Mount did the electronic assembly and publishing of books for Global Green Books. Their business was successful and profitable in the first two years, largely due to contracts from two big businesses.

In their third year they got very busy thanks to their third major customer, a local college that needed customized eBooks. They hired several part time employees to help them with their publishing business.

But by the end of third year of operation, Global Green Books started experiencing critical problems. They were:

- unable to leverage all the new employees effectively
- unable to deliver eBooks to their customers on schedule
- unable to provide quality texts—time and money was being spent fixing defects in their products
- unable to control costs—their business was not profitable in the third year.

Global Green Books saw a significant rise in issues, a lot of unpleasant “surprises” were cropping up; business was down as new resources were hired, also some of the projects were poorly estimated. The local university was unhappy as their eBook products reached campus late for use by professors and student. In some cases, the books were a week or two late. Since the courses must start on schedule and students need their



books at the beginning of their courses, the new lucrative college customer was unhappy.

One of the new part-time employees hired by Jim and Brad, Samantha, had taken a project management course at college. Samantha was excited about the discipline of project management and had intentionally selected a job with Global Green Books Publishing as she saw an opportunity to polish her project management skills.

One fine day, Jim invited Samantha, for a lunch meeting. He was aware that Samantha was familiar with project management, and wanted to hear what she had to say about the problems he and Brad were facing. Over lunch he questioned why their small business which had operated and implemented projects so successfully over the first two years was being challenged significantly now. He specifically listed the problems they were facing and asked for input to solve them.

Samantha asked for more time to research all the issues but noted that Global Green Books, while being innovative, completed projects without a roadmap or a project plan and lacked a disciplined approach to project management. She noted that Jim and Brad did not use any project software for scheduling and they did not use tools or techniques to estimate, budget or to communicate with stakeholders. Finally, they had no processes in place to manage project risks and quality.

Impressed with this and other conversations, Jim King asked Samantha if she would consider joining them as a project associate or project manager on a full-time basis to help them introduce project management practices and help them tide over their current crisis.

Samantha accepted the offer! She has several key skills—she is an excellent communicator with very good interpersonal skills and detail-oriented. Within the first three months in her new role as PM, she introduced formal project management processes, created a PM manual and trained the employees to get the work done well.



Within nine months Samantha had fully turned things around. Due to proactive risk analysis and risk response planning, surprises and issues reduced. Communication with stakeholders was enhanced.

Brad and Jim noted that the company was delivering projects on schedule, the quality processes worked—and customers were happy with the products!

Comment on the following aspects of the case study:

- a) Why did Global Green Books Publishing struggle?
- b) What were the specific PM solutions that were introduced by Samantha that worked?
- c) What kind of suggestions would you give to Brad and Jim if you were the PM?
- d) Are you aware of other similar start-up businesses that struggle in a similar manner? How did they overcome the challenges?
- e) Global Green Books Publishing is a technology intensive business, but Samantha is not technically knowledgeable, will she continue to be a successful project manager?

Case Study 2: Project Quality Management at Global Green Books Publishing

Global Green Books Publishing was started two years ago by two friends, Jim King and Brad Mount, who met in college while studying in Philadelphia, USA. In the new business Jim focused on editing, sales and marketing while Brad Mount did the electronic assembly and publishing of books for Global Green Books. Their business was successful and profitable in the first two years, largely due to contracts from two big businesses.

In their third year they got very busy thanks to their third major customer, a local college that needed customized eBooks. They hired several part time employees to help them with their publishing business.



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- unable to deliver eBooks to their customers on schedule
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Global Green Books saw a significant rise in issues, a lot of unpleasant “surprises” were cropping up; business was down as new resources were hired, also some of the projects were poorly estimated. The local university was unhappy as their eBook products reached campus late for use by professors and student. In some cases, the books were a week or two late. Since the courses must start on schedule and students need their books at the beginning of their courses, the new lucrative college customer was unhappy.

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One fine day, Jim invited Samantha, for a lunch meeting. He was aware that Samantha was familiar with project management, and wanted to hear what she had to say about the problems he and Brad were facing. Over lunch he questioned why their small business which had operated and implemented projects so successfully over the first two years was being challenged significantly now. He specifically listed the problems they were facing and asked for input to solve them.

Samantha asked for more time to research all the issues but noted that Global Green Books, while being innovative, completed projects without a roadmap or a project plan



and lacked a disciplined approach to project management. She noted that Jim and Brad did not use any project software for scheduling and they did not use tools or techniques to estimate, budget or to communicate with stakeholders. Finally, they had no processes in place to manage project risks and quality.

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- a) Why did Global Green Books Publishing struggle?
- b) What were the specific PM solutions that were introduced by Samantha that worked?
- c) What kind of suggestions would you give to Brad and Jim if you were the PM?
- d) Are you aware of other similar start-up businesses that struggle in a similar manner? How did they overcome the challenges?



e) Global Green Books Publishing is a technology intensive business, but Samantha is not technically knowledgeable, will she continue to be a successful project manager?

Case Study 3: Event Management Case Study

An event planning team of five is tasked with planning a corporate retreat for a business with 85 employees. This retreat involves hundreds of to-dos, a large budget, client-initiated changes, and important discussions with the client. The project manager knows there is a lot to do, and they are ready to lead the way. Right from the beginning of the project, the project manager creates a spreadsheet to track what needs to get done in the project, and what teammates are working on. They also send status update emails twice per week to the stakeholders.

The project has a \$100,000 budget. There are many items to purchase and rent, including venue space, retreat materials, food, chairs, and tables. The project manager allows each one of their teammates up to \$3,000 in expenses, with anything over requiring an approval. Shortly after the project begins, the client decides they want to slightly change the theme of the project to focus on the future instead of the past. The project manager has to work with several team members to implement the changes which include graphic design, retreat materials, and signage. Throughout the process of changing the theme of the retreat, the project manager works closely with the client by phone, email, chat, and video to ensure that the theme updates meet their expectations. There is an award-ceremony dinner at the end of the retreat. The deadline to finish scheduling the dinner is in two days. Several crucial decisions need to be made: the menu, lighting, and presentation music. To make sure the deadline is met, the project manager has a video meeting with the client to ensure the dinner choices meet their expectations.

Questions

1. How did the project manager enable decision-making in the project?



2. How did the project manager communicate and escalate in the project?

3. How did the project manager remain flexible in the project?

Write 1–3 sentences.

4. How did the project manager use strong organizational skills in the project? Write 1–3 sentences.

Case Study 4: Project Team Management Case Study

Tim Aston had changed employers three months ago. His new position was project manager. At first he had stars in his eyes about becoming the best project manager that his company had ever seen. Now, he wasn't sure if project management was worth the effort. He made an appointment to see Phil Davies, director of project management.

Tim Aston: "Phil, I'm a little unhappy about the way things are going. I just can't seem to motivate my people. Every day, at 4:30 P.M., all of my people clean off their desks and go home. I've had people walk out of late afternoon team meetings because they were afraid that they'd miss their car pool. I have to schedule morning team meetings."

Phil Davies: "Look, Tim. You're going to have to realize that in a project environment, people think that they come first and that the project is second. This is a way of life in our organizational form."

Tim Aston: "I've continually asked my people to come to me if they have problems. I find that the people do not think that they need help and, therefore, do not want it. I just can't get my people to communicate more."

Phil Davies: "The average age of our employees is about forty-six. Most of our people have been here for twenty years. They're set in their ways. You're the first person that we've hired in the past three years. Some of our people may just resent seeing a thirty-year-old project manager."



Tim Aston: "I found one guy in the accounting department who has an excellent head on his shoulders. He's very interested in project management. I asked his boss if he'd release him for a position in project management, and his boss just laughed at me, saying something to the effect that as long as that guy is doing a good job for him, he'll never be released for an assignment elsewhere in the company. His boss seems more worried about his personal empire than he does in what's best for the company."

"We had a test scheduled for last week. The customer's top management was planning on flying in for firsthand observations. Two of my people said that they had programmed vacation days coming, and that they would not change, under any conditions. One guy was going fishing and the other guy was planning to spend a few days working with fatherless children in our community. Surely, these guys could change their plans for the test."

Phil Davies: "Many of our people have social responsibilities and outside interests. We encourage social responsibilities and only hope that the outside interests do not interfere with their jobs. "There's one thing you should understand about our people. With an average age of forty-six, many of our people are at the top of their pay grades and have no place to go. They must look elsewhere for interests. These are the people you have to work with and motivate. Perhaps you should do some reading on human behaviour." (Source: Project Management Case Studies by Harold Kerzner)

Case Questions

1. Why was Tim unhappy in his new role of being a Project Manager?
2. What specific suggestion did Phil Davies offer to Tim?
3. If you were appointed a new Project Manager, how will you start your new assignment?