Resourcing Project Managers

By Gina Lijoi

Ironically, although resourcing production team members is a significant part of a project manager's role, very little focus is placed on resourcing the project managers themselves. Because of this, I've encountered many project managers that are overwhelmed, worn out, and in many ways, ineffective. Over time, I've developed some generic strategies to help directors allocate an appropriate amount of work to project managers. In this article, I'll discuss some simple ideas to help get started.

Base It On Budgets

As with any project team resource, a project manager's full work load should be based on the monies available in project budgets to support their work efforts. In other words, the hours allocated to project management within a project budget must dictate how many hours the PM dedicates to the initiative. As an example, if a project manager has 40 hours in a budget, and the project will be completed within four weeks, the PM should be averaging ten hours per week on that project. This is often how we resource production team members, and the project manager should be no exception to this very basic approach.

Portfolio Management

In this scenario, I am defining a portfolio as all projects associated to a single client. Allowing a PM to manage all initiatives for one client organisation may not follow any mathematical equation for total hours worked, but the benefits of a project manager becoming familiar with multiple facets of a client's business represent added value to that client over time. The project manager will develop a global view of the client's online business, putting them in a position to identify synergies in marketing or technical strategies. If this approach is used, it's critical that the project manager's direct supervisor monitors work load closely. If the portfolio grows past critical mass, it may make sense to bring on a second PM to share the work, as long as project budgets support that decision.

Ultimately, a project manager's workload must be measured and monitored like that of any other production team member. Project hours must be charted across project duration, to understand how the ebb and flow of project work will affect a PM's workload over time. Weekly meetings should be held with each PM on your team to discuss any anticipated issues and to determine contingency plans for busier periods. As I've said before, when a project manager drops a ball, it tends to have a ripple effect on all their projects, so this is a case where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure in preserving the quality of all projects through productive project management.

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