

Using 6 Critical Elements to Drive Quality on a Project

Why do we never have the time to do things right the first time, but always have time to do them over again? Let's change that.

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Quality can be viewed as the process of delivering excellence that exceeds clients' expectations. Throughout a project, there are several components to this process, but let's focus on the *six critical items that drive quality*. It is key to plan for quality, otherwise it may not happen.



to perform those aspects of the project. This resulted in the project being over budget and taking longer than anticipated. If the technical professional was included in the project team at the

quality. Once you have identified your project team, set up time for meetings and deliverable reviews. Include the client in appropriate meetings to ensure the internal team understands the client's goals and objectives.

Set up a process and schedule for project quality control (QC). Schedule work kickoff meetings, deliverable reviews, and debriefs. Use appropriate checklists and templates for work products. Save time and money doing things right the first time around. Project QC must be applied throughout the project process—

Teamwork and quality go hand in hand.

#1: Identify an Appropriate Project Team at the Proposal Stage and Budget Accordingly for Team Members

It is important to identify the necessary team members for the project scope of work and get them involved in the proposal, if possible. In the very least, budget accordingly for colleagues on the project team. An example of this going poorly is where a project had more technical aspects than anticipated, and the project budget was not estimated to include the necessary technical personnel

beginning, the additional cost and time could have been avoided. Choosing the appropriate project team from the start benefits the internal and external team, so the key players are involved from the beginning. Changes to the project team could lead to re-work or cost overruns as a result of getting the new team members up to speed.

#2: Make Time for Quality and Plan Ahead for the Process

I know this sounds rudimentary, but it is so important to make time and develop a process to ensure

not just at the end.

#3: Make Sure All Deliverables, Proposals, and E-mails with Conclusions and/or Recommendations are Reviewed by Two Colleagues

This goes without saying, but it is crucial to have your work checked by other member(s) of your project team. Another set of eyes on work products is important to minimize errors and omissions. You should perform your own self-review, but also have your work reviewed by another team member. Once the

work product is reviewed internally by at least two colleagues, it should be a quality product. This minimizes time needed for the client to review.

#4: Schedule a Project Kick Off to Discuss Goals and Objectives

It is paramount to make sure the project team is on the same page and aligned with the client's goals from the beginning. The strategy and plan to achieve those goals may change, and even the objectives may change. It is important to keep the project team abreast of any of these changes. Additionally, as the scope changes, it may be appropriate to have onsite meeting(s) with the client and/or subcontractor to ensure all team members know the objectives and discuss the best process to achieve those.

For example, I worked on a project that involved routine compliance reporting for a deep injection well system. Typically, this project involves routine tasks; however, we were working on their permit renewal and that involved new objectives for this site. We knew from other deep injection well projects the sampling methods would change per their new permit. To get ahead of this and make sure the new sampling methods would work at this site, we proposed an alternative sampling procedure that was approved and implemented prior to the new permit issuance. This helped the team to prepare in advance for the new sampling methods and ensure that there

would not be any problems completing those once the new permit was issued.

#5: Schedule Regular Check-ins with the Project Team, Both Internal and External

An easy way to keep the project team on track and communicating on a regular frequency is to set up regular check-ins—both internal and external (includes clients and subcontractors, if appropriate). Keep in mind the different types of communication (written, verbal, and nonverbal) and the importance of timely responsiveness. Know when to e-mail, call, or meet in person. There are times when each form of communication is important. Something short and direct can be an e-mail; however, if you have not recently spoken with your team member, it may be best to give them a call. Also, if you have not been to the project site in some time, it may be appropriate to meet with the team onsite. Regular check-ins make it easy to discuss status updates and, if needed, pivot as a whole team to align with client scope changes.

#6: Schedule a Project Debrief to Discuss Lessons Learned for Future, Similar Projects

Chances are, there is something that may not have gone as planned on the project. Unfortunately, even with planning for quality and going through this process, these things can happen. It is important to debrief with your project team and discuss lessons learned. That way,

we can continue to sharpen our skills and learn from any mistakes moving forward.

In closing, let's strive to take the time to do it right the first time around in all things that we do, through executing our planned quality process.

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