

NEED RESOURCES FOR YOUR PROJECT? --- GET INVESTORS TO SAY.... YES!

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Abstract

Every project manager faces competition for the resources they need. Ten simple and time proven rules are presented for influencing the outcome of resource competition issues. How and why these rules work is examined. A process is identified that each resource holder uses in deciding to honor, or not honor, a request for resources. Four interwoven aspects for this process are discussed:

- (1) how projects are not ends of themselves but are a means of achieving the personal goals of those that choose to participate, and how this choice is based on the combined effects of personal benefits expected and personal costs expected,
- (2) how resources flow to make things less bad for the one they flow from, and how resource categories of time, talent, facilities, and funds are all treated alike in this process,
- (3) how resource flow decisions are treated as investment decisions, and how the actual flow occurs as a two-way exchange of resources, and
- (4) how a simple underlying gain-pain metric is used for processing information to make the decision, and how four filtering mechanisms are used in receiving information for use within the metric.

The choices and consequences associated with exploiting this understanding of the resource allocation decision process are described.

One thing for certain is that the decision to provide resources to your project, or your competitor's project, will not be based on meeting the needs of either you or your competitor. It will be based on meeting the needs of the one that currently controls the resources. "Winning " or "Losing" are not two outcomes but rather are just consequences of the same decision, and the "winner" will have done a better job of influencing the decision process than did the "loser". This influence will have been done by intent, chance, or default. The choice is yours!

Need resources for your project? - - - Manage the investor's decision process!

Overview

Every project manager faces three questions: How do I get the resources I need for my project? How do I keep these resources from being moved to another project? How do I restore or replace resources that have moved out of my project? Do you ever wonder why some project managers seem to end up with the resources they need and others don't? To increase your own odds of winning at this highly competitive game of resource acquisition and control --- Think like one that can choose to satisfy the needs. Think like an investor. Address what would cause the investor to say...YES!

Project managers are entrusted to make their project happen --- to acquire or deliver the right product or service, at the right time, and at the right cost. Project managers seldom have the luxury of not needing to assure availability of resources to meet the needs of their project. Project managers develop their own style of describing their project resource needs in a way that they believe (hope) will make their needs sufficiently important that the resources will be provided. Winning or losing in this competition for resources is usually credited to, or blamed on, the project manager's skill in describing their project needs.

The outcome of the process of acquiring project resources becomes much more predictable when the process is viewed from the other side as a process of selecting which project to receive resources. From this perspective my project becomes just another option and my challenge becomes one of describing this option in a way which makes it a preferred option to the one that can meet my needs. From this perspective the needs of the one that can choose to provide the resources (i.e. an investor) are much more relevant to the outcome than are the needs of the one that wishes to acquire the resources. My ability to describe the technical details of my project and its needs is almost insignificant in this process. What counts is my ability to describe my project in a manner that the investor will recognize as being a preferred means for meeting their own needs.

The rules for seeking project resources definitely change when one accepts that: (a) his/her project is just another option competing in a marketplace where resources are bought, traded, and sold, and, (b) that the needs of the one with the resources are much more relevant to the outcome of the marketplace bartering process than are the needs of the one that wishes to acquire the resources. There are about ten simple rules (see below) that have evolved for influencing the outcome of decisions in this resource marketplace. The rules work by addressing four key and interwoven aspects (see below) of the decision process. The resource allocation decision will be made in favor of the option that made best use of these tools in addressing these four key aspects. It will be either you or your competition --- it is your choice. Regardless of the choice, you are accountable for living with the consequences.

Rules for playing the game of resource acquisition and control

“RALPH’S RULES”

1. There are always more resources than I need, but they are in someone else’s account.
2. Resources flow to reduce the consequences of problems - - To make things “less bad”.
3. Resources flow from those that own unacceptable consequences of a problem.
4. Problems are prioritized based on pain to the problem consequence owner.
5. Resources flow as investments to solve the investor’s own problems - - Not mine.
6. Resource allocation decisions are two-way investments - - Each driven by a gain-pain metric
7. Organizations don’t decide - - People do.
8. Decisions are based on personal impact of facts - - Not facts themselves.
9. There are no final decisions - - There are only temporary “means” to personal goals.
10. All Investors have Investors - - ‘Chain-of-pain’ and ‘Golden Rule + 1’ always apply.

Projects are “means” not “ends”

Projects are about more than about acquiring or delivering the right product or service, at the right time, and at the right cost. Projects are also about being a clearinghouse where resources are gathered and released as a means of making personal visions come to life. A project is an activity that offers both value and cost to those that choose to participate. Choosing to participate is based on answers to two questions: “What is this project going to do for me?” and “What will I have to do, or tolerate, in order to achieve this?” The project which provides the balance of answers for these two questions, that is best for the one that can choose to provide the requested resources, will be the project that receives the resources. It is the process of creating this favorable balance of answers, that is at the core of getting an investor to say “yes” in meeting my project needs instead of my competitor’s project needs.

Resources flow to make things less bad

Resources necessary to run a project fall into four distinct categories: Time, Talent, Facilities, and Funds. While each flows (or doesn’t flow) using its own language, the decision process whereby flow occurs (or does not occur) is common across all four categories. Resources flow to fix problems and they flow from the one who owns accountability for the consequences of the problem. They flow when the consequences of the problem are unacceptable and the consequences of a mitigation plan are a preferable alternative. Differences always exist between the consequences of “the situation as it is” and “the situation as it could be”. A problem is what you have when this difference is recognized and is deemed to be unacceptable. The problem does not have to be eliminated --- it only has to be reduced to a level deemed to be an acceptable annoyance.

Resource flow is a two-way street

There are always more resources available than are needed for any project. The problem is that they are always in someone else’s bucket. They are in a particular bucket as an investment, and they will remain in that bucket until the need for, and the existence of, a better investment opportunity is recognized by the one that placed them in that bucket. While they may be placed in a bucket in a manner described as a gift, donation, grant, expense, or

some other equally correct term, they are primarily there as an investment. And, like all investments, a return on the investment is expected. While being in the bucket may appear to be a unilateral deposit --- it is actually the consequence of a two-way exchange agreement --- an alliance --- a teaming for mutual success --- and each investor will hold the other accountable for providing a return on the investment in accordance with the terms of the alliance.

Decisions are driven by a simple metric

Acquiring and protecting resources involves influencing the investor's decision process. Every decision we each make can be viewed as allocating insufficient resources to competing demands. Fortunately, evolution has given us a subconscious process for living with the potential for information overload in analyzing the alternatives. Each of us uses a gain-pain metric in making decisions and we use four filters for screening information to influence this metric. The decision process is the same regardless of the category of resource, the magnitude of the resource, or the decision-maker's place in the hierarchy of an organization. A difference between decision-makers comes about not from alternative factors, but rather in the relative weights that each places on the information received through each of the four filters. Decision-makers may think (wish) that their individual ranking of these filters is a personal secret but with very little effort the secret can be revealed. Decision makers may also think (wish) that their decisions are final. Such however is unfounded and unwise as it fails to recognize that those affected have their own gain-pain metric that will drive their own decision on how to react to the consequences. No decision is ever final. Those that are affected by the consequences of any resulting problem(s) caused by a decision get to decide next (see Resources Flow... section above). Decision-making is a linear world --- you decide --- then I get to decide. You can't un-ring a bell --- and you can't un-do a decision --- You can only deal with accountability for the consequences.

Choices and consequences

We can choose to intentionally exploit this opportunity to influence the investor's decision, or we can choose to ignore it and take our chances at the outcome. Either way, information of importance to the decision-maker will not have changed. One thing is certain, the decision to invest in your project, or your competitor's project, will not be based on meeting the needs of either you or your competitor. It will be based on meeting the investor's needs and be driven by the investor's gain-pain metric. "Winning" or "Losing" are not two different outcomes but rather are just consequences of the same decision, and, the "winner" will have done a better job of influencing the gain-pain metric than did the "loser". This influence will have been done either by intent, chance, or default. Which option do you prefer? Regardless of your choice -- -You are responsible for living with the consequences of the outcome.

GETTING INVESTORS TO SAY ---“YES”

.....the bottom line

My ability to get my resource needs satisfied is directly related to my ability to influence decisions in the marketplace of those searching for the best place to invest their resources.

Investor choices in this marketplace are made using a predetermined process that selects options based on their ability to meet the investor's needs - - not my needs - - not my competitor's needs.

It is the Investor's choice and he/she will be held accountable for the results. I can ignore this process, or I can harness it, but I cannot change it. It is my choice and I am accountable for living with the results.

Choices, consequences, and accountability for results.....That is what it is all about!!

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