

5 Characteristics of a clearly defined project

In order for a project to be useful, effective and achieving its full objective, it must be clearly defined. Clearly defined projects share the following 5 criteria:-

i. Specific

The project must be specific. Being specific includes detailing out the project's structure, goals, benefits, milestones and costs. All these requires careful planning and inputs from the project team members involved and if necessary the external consultants or experts. Detailed reporting and planning including command structure, personnel list, communication avenues, gantt chart and the project's costing should be drawn up to detail out the project's responsibilities, timeline, costs and work to be performed by the respective parties. Periodic project meetings should also be scheduled to discuss relevant matters pertaining to the project and any issues arising therefrom.

ii. Measurable

A clearly defined project must be measurable in terms of its benefits and achievements. This should not only be in terms of monetary benefits but also other tangible and intangible benefits derived from the project's execution. A clear and precise plan devised during the project's planning stage will enable objective measurements be executed to analyse the project's achievements and if any shortcomings.

iii. Achievable

A project will only be meaningful if it is achievable. Being too ambitious in planning for the project will not be helpful and may result in the project being unachievable. This may also lead to the project team morale being affected. All these unhealthy things may lead to the project's costs being overrun and timing of the deliverables being significantly affected.

iv. Relevant

The project needs to bring relevant benefits to the entity concerned. This may be in the form of reducing its overall production costs, increasing its operational efficiency or other specific purposes relevant to the entity. If it fails to address this, the project will not be beneficial to the entity and will ultimately result in a waste of resources to the entity and its stakeholders.

v. Time bound

The final ingredient to ensure that becomes clearly defined is that it should be time bound. It means that the project should come with a time frame for its completion including its planning, development, execution, fine tuning before its full run instead of taking forever to be completed. Any adjustments to this time table should be clearly justified by the parties involved bearing in mind the costs involved in the project's execution, opportunity costs and finance costs related to the project.

Please be SMART in all your projects!

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