Project Management
Project Challenges Simulation

LINKED COMPETENCY: Persistence in the face of ongoing change

Practicing challenging scenarios in project management is essential for resiliency in project management. Most projects, no matter how big or small, rarely go off without any issues; budgets change, timelines need to be extended, things break, etc. If individuals don't have opportunities to practice dealing with challenging situations in safe spaces, such as this simulation, they may not handle such challenges well when they occur in the workplace. This project challenge simulation will help individuals become more confident, adaptable, and effective in managing complex situations. By developing these skills, individuals can enhance their professional development and improve their ability to lead successful projects.

OUTCOMES:

- Practice and reflect on strategies for dealing with unexpected challenges in project management.

Use strategies to engage in healthy persistence in the face of ongoing change or obstacles throughout a project			
Exploring			**Implementing**
I have attended seminars and/or am reading books about healthy persistence.	I have used my knowledge about healthy persistence to engage in reflection on the strategies to build resilience in the face of ongoing obstacles or change.	I have created flexible clear, actionable goals and have a realistic plan for achieving them.	I use a variety of strategies to overcome obstacles and persist in the face of ongoing change or challenges, including but not limited to surrounding myself with a supportive accountability community and seeking and support as needed.

Remind your students to reflect, add, and annotate evidence of competency to their portfolios.
o **Reflect** on their experiences and what they learned through the activities and feedback.   o **Add** evidence of competency to their portfolios.   o **Annotate** the evidence to highlight their specific competency.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: CASE STUDY GROUP SIMULATION

Materials Needed:
- Case Studies

Instructions:

Choose one of the case studies below or allow each group to choose their own case study. Alternatively, you can create your own case study relevant to your discipline or have the student discuss existing challenges they are facing in their current projects. ChatGPT is an excellent tool for generating case scenarios for this type of exercise. All case studies below were generated with ChatGPT (2023).

Provide each group with the case study and allow them time to review and discuss the scenario.

Instruct each group to conduct a role-playing exercise in which they discuss the impact of reduced funding on the academic research project and come to a decision about how to proceed.
In their groups, encourage them to discuss:
- Potential benefits and drawback the challenge poses
- Potential impacts of the newly introduced challenge
- How might they manage the conflicting stakeholder needs and ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed?
- What decision might they make, and how will they communicate this decision to the project team and stakeholders?

Provide about 20 minutes for each team to produce a decision. At this time, you can debrief as a large group and add additional suggestions for how they might address the challenges. Make sure to ask them how they might apply their decision-making skills to their potential challenges they may experience in their program of study as well as in their future careers.

Case Study #1: The Academic Research Funding Project

Background: You have been hired as a project manager to oversee an academic research funding project at a university. The project team consists of five principal investigators, two research administrators, and one financial analyst. The project is expected to take two years to complete.

Scenario: During the first year of the project, the university's budget is significantly reduced, and the administration announces that they will only be able to provide half of the originally agreed-upon funding for the project. The remaining funding will need to be sourced externally from grants and donations. The principal investigators, who are the primary stakeholders in the project, are concerned that the reduced funding will compromise the scope and quality of their research. The research administrators and financial analyst are concerned that sourcing external funding will take time and resources away from the actual research work. As the project manager, you must navigate these conflicting stakeholder needs and decide how to proceed.

Instructions for Role-Playing Exercise:

Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students.

Assign each group a role to play in the scenario:

- **Project Manager:** Responsible for managing the project and making decisions about how to proceed with the academic research funding.
- **Principal Investigator:** Concerned about the impact of reduced funding on the scope and quality of the research.
- **Research Administrator:** Concerned about the time and resources required to source external funding.
- **Financial Analyst:** Responsible for financial management of the project.

Provide each group with the case study and allow them time to review and discuss the scenario. Instruct each group to conduct a role-playing exercise in which they discuss the impact of reduced funding on the academic research project and come to a decision about how to proceed.

Encourage each group to consider the following questions:
- What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of sourcing external funding to compensate for reduced funding?
- What are the implications for the scope and quality of the research, and the time and resources required to source external funding?

- How can we manage the conflicting stakeholder needs and ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed?
- What decision should we make, and how can we communicate this decision to the project team and stakeholders?

Debrief

Allow each group to conduct their role-playing exercise, and then reconvene as a class to discuss the outcomes and insights from each group's discussion. Facilitate a debriefing session in which students reflect on the role-playing exercise and the challenge of managing conflicting stakeholder needs. Encourage students to share their perspectives and insights and to identify strategies for managing similar situations in their future careers.

Case Study #2: The Software Development Project

Background: You have been hired as a project manager for a software development project that is already underway. The project involves developing a new software product that will be used by a large insurance company to manage their customer data.

The project team consists of six developers, two quality assurance testers, and one business analyst. The project is expected to take six months to complete.

Scenario: During the third month of the project, the project sponsor contacts you with a major change in scope. The sponsor wants to add a new feature to the software that was not included in the original project scope. The new feature involves developing an automated customer survey that will be sent out after each customer interaction. The sponsor believes that this feature will help to improve customer satisfaction and retention rates.

However, the addition of the new feature means that the project timeline will need to be extended by two months, and the project budget will need to be increased by 25%.

To complicate matters further, the business analyst on the project team is strongly opposed to the new feature. The analyst believes it will require significant changes to the existing software architecture and will delay the project further. The development team is split on the issue, with some developers excited about the new feature and others concerned about the potential for delays and cost overruns.

As the project manager, you must navigate these conflicting stakeholder needs and decide how to proceed.

Instructions for Role-Playing Exercise:

1. Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students.
2. Assign each group a role to play in the scenario:
   o **Project Manager:** Responsible for managing the project and making decisions about how to proceed with the new feature request.
   o **Project Sponsor:** Responsible for providing funding and support for the project. Pushing for the new feature to be added.
   o **Business Analyst:** Responsible for analyzing and documenting the requirements for the software. Opposed to the new feature request.
   o **Development Team Member 1:** Excited about the new feature request and believes it will enhance the software.
   o **Development Team Member 2:** Concerned about the potential for delays and cost overruns and opposes the new feature request.
3. Provide each group with the case study and allow them time to review and discuss the scenario.
4. Instruct each group to conduct a role-playing exercise in which they discuss the new feature request and decide how to proceed. Encourage each group to consider the following questions:

- o What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of the new feature request?
- o What are the implications for the project timeline and budget?
- o How can we manage the conflicting stakeholder needs and ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed?
- o What decision should we make, and how can we communicate this decision to the project team and stakeholders?

5. Allow each group to conduct their role-playing exercise, and then reconvene as a class to discuss the outcomes and insights from each group's discussion.

Debrief

Facilitate a debriefing session in which students reflect on the role-playing exercise and the challenge of managing conflicting stakeholder needs in a project. Encourage students to share their perspectives and insights and to identify strategies for managing similar situations in their future careers.

Case Study #3: The Art Exhibition Project

Background: You have been hired as a project manager for an upcoming art exhibition at a prestigious art museum. The exhibition will feature works by contemporary artists from around the world.

The project team consists of six curators, three art handlers, and one public relations specialist. The project is expected to take nine months to complete.

Scenario: During the sixth month of the project, one of the featured artists contacts the museum with a request to change their artwork. The artist wants to make significant alterations to the piece, which will require additional time and resources to complete.

The artist believes that the changes will enhance the artwork and make it more relevant to current events. However, the curators on the project team are concerned about the impact of the changes on the overall exhibition theme and coherence.

Additionally, the public relations specialist is worried about the potential backlash from other artists who have already contributed their artwork to the exhibition. The specialist is concerned that changing one artist's work may undermine the integrity of the exhibition.

As the project manager, you must navigate these conflicting stakeholder needs and decide how to proceed.

Instructions for Role-Playing Exercise:

1. Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students.
2. Assign each group a role to play in the scenario:
   - **Project Manager:** Responsible for managing the project and making decisions about how to proceed with the artist's request.
   - **Artist:** Requesting changes to their artwork for the exhibition.
   - **Curator 1:** Concerned about the impact of the changes on the overall exhibition theme and coherence.
   - **Curator 2:** Supportive of the artist's request and believes that the changes will enhance the artwork.
   - **Art Handler:** Concerned about the logistics of making changes to the artwork at this stage of the project.
   - **Public Relations Specialist:** Worried about the potential backlash from other artists and the impact on the exhibition's reputation.
3. Provide each group with the case study and allow them time to review and discuss the scenario.
4. Instruct each group to conduct a role-playing exercise in which they discuss the artist's request and decide how to proceed. Encourage each group to consider the following questions:
   - What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of the artist's request?

- o What are the implications for the exhibition theme, coherence, and reputation?
- o How can we manage the conflicting stakeholder needs and ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed?
- o What decision should we make, and how can we communicate this decision to the project team and stakeholders?

5. Allow each group to conduct their role-playing exercise, and then reconvene as a class to discuss the outcomes and insights from each group's discussion.

Debrief

Facilitate a debriefing session in which students reflect on the role-playing exercise and the challenge of managing conflicting stakeholder needs. Encourage students to share their perspectives and insights and to identify strategies for managing similar situations in their future careers.

Case Study #4: The School Curriculum Redesign Project

Background: You have been hired as a project manager to oversee the redesign of the school curriculum at a K-12 public school district. The project team consists of five subject matter experts, three instructional designers, and one IT specialist. The project is expected to take one year to complete.

Scenario: During the eighth month of the project, the state board of education announces that they will be implementing new academic standards that will require significant changes to the curriculum. The new standards will go into effect in six months, just as the project is scheduled to wrap up.

The district superintendent, who is also a stakeholder in the project, is concerned about the impact of the new standards on the district's performance and reputation. The superintendent wants the project team to revise the curriculum to meet the new standards within the original timeline.

However, the subject matter experts and instructional designers on the project team are concerned that rushing the revisions could compromise the quality of the curriculum and make it difficult for teachers to implement effectively.

As the project manager, you must navigate these conflicting stakeholder needs and decide how to proceed.

Instructions for Role-Playing Exercise:

1. Divide the class into small groups of 4-5 students.
2. Assign each group a role to play in the scenario:
    o **Project Manager:** Responsible for managing the project and making decisions about how to proceed with the curriculum redesign.
    o **District Superintendent:** Concerned about the impact of the new academic standards on the district's performance and reputation.
    o **Subject Matter Expert:** Concerned about the quality of the revised curriculum and its impact on teacher effectiveness.
    o Instructional Designer: Concerned about the feasibility of revising the curriculum to meet the new standards within the original timeline.
    o **IT Specialist:** Responsible for ensuring that the revised curriculum can be effectively delivered through technology.
3. Provide each group with the case study and allow them time to review and discuss the scenario.

4. Instruct each group to conduct a role-playing exercise in which they discuss the impact of the new standards on the curriculum redesign and come to a decision about how to proceed. Encourage each group to consider the following questions:
    o   What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of revising the curriculum to meet the new standards within the original timeline?
    o   What are the implications for the quality of the revised curriculum, teacher effectiveness, and student performance?
    o   How can we manage the conflicting stakeholder needs and ensure that everyone's concerns are addressed?
    o   What decision should we make, and how can we communicate this decision to the project team and stakeholders?
5. Allow each group to conduct their role-playing exercise, and then reconvene as a class to discuss the outcomes and insights from each group's discussion.

Debrief

Facilitate a debriefing session in which students reflect on the role-playing exercise and the challenge of managing conflicting stakeholder needs. Encourage students to share their perspectives and insights and to identify strategies for managing similar situations in their future careers.