Reaction paper on "leadership: the four (not three, not five) principles of manag...

A Reaction Paper on " Leadership: The Four (Not Three, Not Five) Principles of Managing Expectations" Since most, if not all, of Information Technology (IT) projects require significant amount of capital expenditure and human effort, an adequate and effective project management would be necessary to ensure that resources and efforts have not gone to waste. In the case of Joe Eng, Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (Swift), effectiveness in handling the company's high-stakes project was best achieved by following the four principles of managing expectations.

Below is a discussion of the good and commendable points raised for each of the four (4) principles as well as areas which can be improved on. Principle No. 1 ??? Define Expectations Internally Indeed, clearly defined expectations are a pre-requisite for successfully completing projects. However, unlike that of Joe Eng, we believe that expectations definition should not only be limited within the IT department.

Representatives from all departments involved in, or affected by, a project should participate to assist in defining realistic project objectives, accurate informational, functional and interface requirements and objective acceptance criteria. Expectations definition is best achieved with the preparation of a formal project plan, which should include, among others, the roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved in the project (including project sponsors, managers and team members). Additionally, it should identify the responsibilities of third-party vendors (i. . IBM), internal audit, security and network personnel. On the other hand, we believe that the following actions carried out by Eng are quite commendable and are indeed

effective in managing expectations: (a) coordinating with admired and trusted managers to sell the idea of change; (b) leadership training program for the management team; and (c) regular town hall meetings to help allay fears that SwiftNet would not deliver the services users needed or that the IT staff was out of touch with those eeds. However, we are a bit concerned with the expectations set by the IT team which is, " When problems cropped up, the IT team would manage them and learn from them without letting the project get derailed. " While problem management is good, a reactive approach can often times be costly and time-consuming. Adopting a proactive approach would be better and can best be achieved by conducting an adequate risk assessment during project planning.

During risk assessment, certain risks/events can be identified/anticipated and therefore be managed by adopting necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of undesirable events. Principle No. 2 ??? Rules of Engagement There are several instances when various end-users would want to add or modify the system's features while it is being developed. Although the addition or modification of functional, security or control feature may be appropriate, uncontrolled changes can disrupt the development process and thus cause delay to the project.

Eng's actions to manage change during the development process had been commendable. The use of a standard process for determining return on investment (ROI) and/or providing explanation when a certain requirement could not be done technically or within the time frame (or agreeing to put off the requirement for a later release) are effective in addressing the problem

described in the preceding paragraph (said problem is also known as " scope creep".

In addition, Eng's strategy to use the pilot-testing mechanism, enabled the implementation more manageable, as concerns were confined and addressed to a selected pilot customers at its initial stage. Also, it would have been nice if the article mentioned that there were some periodic updates made to participating financial institutions regarding the status of the project implementation. Principle No. 3 ??? Deal with Doubters Although Eng had been successful in satisfying CLS executives with regard to the reliability of SwiftNet, we are a bit concerned with Eng's action when e asked his project manager and technical director to find out whatever they could about how IBM " viewed" its role in the project. In a big project such as SwiftNet, " assuming" that the parties involved know their role in the project can be quite a risky act. We should avoid the instance when problems would arise and parties involved would point their fingers at one another simply because they had " assumed" that it was the others responsibility and not theirs. As what we have discussed under Principle No. , roles and responsibilities of each party involved (including third-party service providers such as IBM) should be clearly documented in the project plan. Additionally, arrangement/s with third-party service providers should be supported with a formal contract and a service level agreement (SLA) to outline the institution's predetermined requirements for the service and establish incentives to meet, or penalties for failure to meet, the requirements. Principle No. 4 ??? Not Everything is Negotiable

Indeed, not everything is negotiable, especially if it is a project which involves various financial institutions around the world. That is why part of project management is to ensure that appropriate back-up and back-out procedures are established in cases of system disruptions. Even though some project teams try to be proactive as much as possible, there are just some problems/disruptions which could not have been anticipated and therefore not avoided. That is why we commend Eng's action on presenting and implementing a new deployment plan.

It not only met the deadline and addressed the concerns of various banks, but it truly had been a reflection of his innovativeness in identifying solutions. Although there had been a three-month delay in the rollout of SwiftNet, it can be said that over-all, the project had been a success. While there are a few areas on project management that can be improved on, Eng showed that " managing expectations", by emphasizing the importance of communicating and being receptive in responding to the necessary, greatly contributed to the success of the project.