

## Mini-Case Study: Team Building at Global Green Books Publishing

*Global Green Books Publishing* is continuing to grow. As their eBook business continues to drive that growth, they now are continuing to add staff to be able to keep up with customer demand. Most all of the new people and many of the eBook staff have not worked together in the original print-based business area of the company, and indeed are new to the company and its culture.

These new employees have a diverse set of skills, backgrounds, and motivations. Their supervisors know how to manage their projects, but do not always have the expertise to step in and do each of the unique tasks assigned to team members. Most of the employees that have been around since the beginning of the eBook business have been trained in their project management techniques, so they can get the work done well; but not all of the newer employees have had this training. There is just too much work that needs to be done to take time out for training.

Supervisors need provide leadership, to provide inspiration for their team and to be good motivators of their team members, as well as be a good manager, worrying about the day-to-day and minute-by-minute accomplishment of the project's goals. Being a good motivator also means that the supervisors must be good listeners to understand what issues are confronting their team members and the needs of their team members.

Beyond this role as leaders, supervisors need to be a good manager. They need to identify the skills that they need for their projects. Supervisors at Global Green Books normally do this as they start from the standard job template for eBook projects and build the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for their eBook project. Next, they need to identify team members that have those skills, and work with their current project managers and with human resources to make sure that they will be available to support the new project. Based on the lessons learned analyses, a supervisor might also identify a person as a back-up for a critical role on the project, in case they run into difficulties or assigned staff are not available as planned.

Once the team is assembled, challenges can arise. Some of the challenges teams face have to do with knowing the status of the work, as part-time employees come in and hand a piece of a project off to another worker. Some deal managing conflicts as they arise – both technical issues as permissions are delayed and content cannot yet be incorporated, leading to scheduling changes, and inter-personal issues among staff. Some of these conflicts occur between a mostly young, part-time contingent of student workers and the full-time employees. Supervisors are often drawn into mediating or resolving these conflicts. They really need to meld together their staff to create highly capable, productive project teams for these fast-paced eBook projects. The staff needs to trust each other and their leadership to be fair and to balance work priorities with the times that they are available.

Supervisors are finding it is very important to make sure every team member understands the goals of the project, the roles of each team member and how they inter-relate, and the sense of urgency about completing the project. This urgency comes from understanding the intense schedules for completing eBooks and from understanding why it is important that all of the work come together to create a finished eBook – any part not completed keeps the final eBook from

going into quality check and release. Because of the issues around employee absence and the use of part-time employees, they are also trying to make sure that employees are able to do their role, but can also help out in related roles as needed.

To help build a common understanding of the project work and minimize some of the conflicts, Samantha is working with some the supervisors to hold a project kick-off meeting where the team reviews the goals and plan for the project, and develops and agrees to a project team charter. Letting the team develop their charter gives the supervisor an opportunity to observe how the team works together, and gives the team the ability to set ground rules for how they will work together. The team charter starts with the project goals. The team may set their goals in order to accomplish these project goals. Other topics that the team might address in their team charter include agreed-upon guidelines for how they want to participate in the project, conduct (or behavior), communications among project members, communicating status and problems, problem solving, and holding meetings. This charter and its guidelines that they team have agreed to can then serve as a basis for team building and team behaviors during the project.

Comment on the following aspects of the case study:

- a) What are some of the challenges facing project teams? Have you encountered any of these problems in teams that you have been part of? What other team problems have you experienced?
- b) Are there skills that team members need to be effective team members in a project? If so, what are these skills?
- c) Why is it important that team members understand the goals and scope of the project?
- d) Think about creating a team charter. What categories of guidelines would you you're your team to agree on before beginning work? Why would you include these categories?
- e) Brainstorm and identify some guidelines that you would suggest teams follow for each of these categories?
  - Team member participation in the project
  - Team member conduct (or behavior)
  - Communicating among project members (including communicating status and problems)
  - Holding meetings
- f) What are the advantages of a kick-off meeting? What are the advantages of developing a team charter?