Program Mania

Question:

Samoht, My project is huge. There are a number of major deliverables that we have to complete over a two year timeframe. There will be over 20 people working on various aspects of this project. I am pretty savvy about managing projects, but this one will tax all of my skills. What advice can you give me before I start?

Buford

Answer:

Buford,

Thanks for your question. To be honest, the first advice I would give you is to change your name. Buford sounds like a dog's name. Do you find that people are always telling you what to do – like "Hey Buford, can you fetch the schedule"? Do they say "Good boy!" when you do something well?

Your question is another matter. There are a number of ways to address this type of large project.

- Defer if possible. This might be a good time to fake an illness. If you are out for two weeks with a tummy-ache your company would probably need to find another person to run this project and you get off the hook. Believe me, in about a year you will be thanking me.

- Outsource. One of my favorite strategies for large projects is to outsource them to other companies. It is much better for you to be beating up the vendors and making them look like dummies. Otherwise you will be the one getting beat up and called a dummy.

- Set up a program. The first time I was told I was going to be a part of some big important program I asked "Which one? *Seinfeld* or *Cheers*?" Then I asked if I could get an autograph.

  I have out since the true purpose of a program. You can break your work down into a number of smaller projects and then you can establish a program to coordinate all of the projects. This is the equivalent of cutting a turkey into smaller slices rather than try to eat an entire turkey at once. I don't know about you but I just find it easier to eat a drumstick or a wing rather than an entire turkey.

  In addition, when you set up a program you get a cool new title – program manager! Doesn't this sound much better than being a dopey project manager? Since you are the program manager, you can still beat up project managers and make them look like dummies – just like if you outsourced!

Take my advice and implement one of the solutions above. Projects like the one that you described are considered a fast train to nowhere. It is best that you either get off the train or else have others to blame when the train jumps off the track.

Okay Buford. Good boy!