



Professionalization of the project management at Aschendorff through training in combination with coaching

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At the beginning of 2009 MTI started developing and conducting a project management training programme at Aschendorff tailored to particular company's needs. Up to now a culture is established within the company group which not only permits professional project management but also promotes it.



The PABA Team at the beginning of the training

The staff executive of the Aschendorff company group was planning a career training consisting of six modules (called PABA: Projektarbeit bei Aschendorff) which should provide a tool for project managers to overcome interdisciplinary challenges self-dependent, targeted and structured.

Initial Situation

The company Aschendorff is a nearly 300 years old, family-owned enterprise with currently 700 employees in Münster. In the course of time print media, digital media and service came along to the traditional book publishing. Today Aschendorff is a modern media enterprise which is like the whole media industry in a dynamic development process especially caused by the emerging new media. To meet this challenge more and bigger projects occur and that's why a professional project management became a factor of success.



Aschendorff - Münster

Within the IT, the print division or the digital media, the amount of project tasks increased steadily during the last years. There had been missed increasingly an overview of which project was managed by whom and until when with which target and which resources were needed.

Therefore a board consisting of three persons was established to push structured and companywide - the topic "introduction of project management". This board named himself "Project board" and set himself the target to establish appropriate structures and rules for a successful project management at Aschendorff in close cooperation with the staff executive.

The close cooperation between us, the MTI consultants Birgit Tali Menne and me, and the staff executive Mrs Budde, who has also been the initiator of the career training, has been very important to ensure that the PM training content was in accordance with the PM activities of the Project board.



Beteiligung der Projektleiter

By means of an as-is-analysis the situation and the fields of operation became clear: mandatory project proposals, clarification of the target and therefore a consistent project controlling were needed. The situation, needs and topics of the project manager career training PABA had been adjusted with the Project board in advance. Furthermore members of the Project board have continuously been involved in the process and also participated in some workshop modules.

The staff executive and person in

charge for PABA Mrs Budde has been an important link between MTI and the company. So the continuous transfer had been secured and the different modules could be developed regarding to Aschendorff's needs. Each module has been developed specifically to the needed training content and the development of the participants.

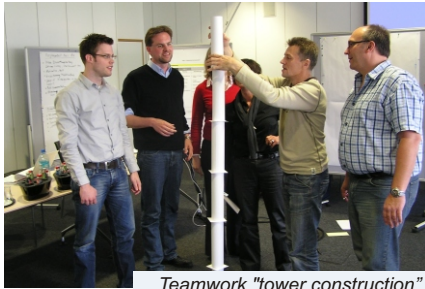
Companywide 12 project managers and those who should become a project manager - were named by their managers. To enable networking within the company the participants were deliberately chosen from different divisions. They came from diverse working environments - from production over new media and IT to editorial office. So, the group of participants was very inhomogeneous. At the beginning of the training the role and importance of the PABA participants and their successful networking during the implementation was not foreseeable.

So it became clearer module by module that the proactive involvement of the PABA participants into the change process has been the key success factor for the implementation of the project management system at Aschendorff. Furthermore the involvement and participation of the project managers whose working area was directly concerned, has been another key success factor.

The training modules

The kick-off session (module 1) started on May 7 in 2009 by teaching the project management basics of PMI. The focus of the basics training was on the methodical competencies and the practical application of the project work at Aschendorff. Over and over examples of the every day life were discussed and proposals for solution were made. Within small groups a stakeholder analysis was made, project structural plans were developed and also the fun factor was not missed out. For example on the second day there was the task to build a stabile and as possible high tower within small groups by using paper.

The feedback of the participants regarding module 1 was only positive. One participant wrote an article in the employee newspaper and reported that she is highly motivated after the first module to play an active part in initiating and living an efficient project structure at Aschendorff.



Teamwork "tower construction"

The 3-day long module 2 dealt with the role and personality of the project manager. After each participant has determined his own MBTI personality profile, we worked on the further development of the leadership personality within role plays. It was focussed on leading a team without using strong power. Referring to the Habit 1 "Be pro-active" by Stephen R. Covey ("The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People") the participants continuously have been encouraged to reflect their own behaviour during practical projects and to discover their potential for improvement.



Fireside chat

On the second evening of module 2 there was a fireside chat together with the Project board. Collectively a SWOT-analysis regarding to the topic "project work at Aschendorff today" was developed and furthermore the Project board presented a first draw of the upcoming Aschendorff project management guideline, called "Project rules". The fireside chat has been the first possibility for the PABA participants to exchange experiences with the project board. Discussion forums like this had so far been unusual because of the former traditional, hierarchical management. The participants as well as the project board were enthusiastic.

Within module 3 we dealt all 3 days with soft skills which are necessary for a

successful project management. The participants had the chance to intensively run through typical difficult interview situation of their daily project management business.

At this time the participants started to engage and to act proactively (Habit 1, Stephen R. Covey) which had been unthinkable at the beginning of the training. They built a team with the target to inform the project board which information had been reached „the basis“ and at the same time the team created a presentation showing the value of project management. At the beginning of module 3 the team reported of the successful presentation at the project board. The project board understood the message and agreed that the PABA team was going to present the „benefit of project management at Aschendorff“ within the different Aschendorff-divisions. Also the staff executive was very pleased about the progress of the participants.

The staff executive said after module 3: "It is certain that the PABA-participants play already after the first half a part in designing the project work at Aschendorff. The team targeted to play an active part in the further development of a lived project culture at Aschendorff and to pass on their knowledge and experiences which they have made during the training, to the project members, partial project managers and project managers."

The 3-day long module 4 dealt with the project team itself. We came back to the personality profiles of Myers-Briggs and developed some possibilities how to handle each type within a team to be successful. Furthermore with the help of a specific Aschendorff project (implementation of a new advertisement system) the participants learned how to build a team most appropriately at the beginning of a project.

Referring to Stephen R. Covey's Habit 6 „Synergize“ the team worked on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. One plus one equals three.



Team spirit

1. By the end of module 4 the topics for module 5 already had been defined: „presentation and moderation techniques“. There we precisely took

care that the topics which were presented and moderated have been up-to-date and out of the Aschendorff daily business.

During module 5 the participants were able to apply the lessons learnt which brought up consistently positive results. Even the participants who had been anxious about talking to a bigger group of people sustained their position very well.

The trainer's manual had scheduled management techniques for module 6. But on demand of the group we made a time travel back to module 1 and once again went back over the project management methods we had developed. This was a great possibility for each participant to reflect to what extent the topics had been implemented up to now.

The highlight of module 6 was the second evening when the team got a 3000 Euro-Cheque from the company for their work which they are able to invest in further personal development measures.



The team at the end of the training

The transfer to the organisation is now complemented by feedback interviews with the chefs who accompany the further development of the PABA participants. At the request of the participants, feedback reports were created after completion of the modules by the participants and the MTI consultants which will build the basis for the discussions of the participants and their chefs, as well as the PABA project responsible staff executive and a participant of the project board.

Conclusion

The described development process at Aschendorff was only possible, because it was likewise wanted by the management and the participants. The wish for change in turn was only that strong because the benefit of a professional project management at

Aschendorff was realized at all levels and formed into a vision within the mind of all participants

One of the key success factors was the personal development of the participants who gained self confidence and pro-activity during the training. We, the MTI consultants, underwent a roll change during the training from a pure trainer to a coach

Christine Goebel-Born, MTI consultant

The success factors

- Participants recognized the benefit of project management at Aschendorff and created their own vision
- Work on personality with the help of the personality profiles
- One-on-one coaching of the participants during the breaks or the evenings on a voluntary basis
- Strong relation of the training content to practical projects (case studies of the project context)
- Two MTI-trainer with different personality profiles and competencies
- Intensive attendance and target focussed transfer into the organisation after each module by the staff executive
- Involvement of the project board and Aschendorff-specialities in concept and implementation

MTI