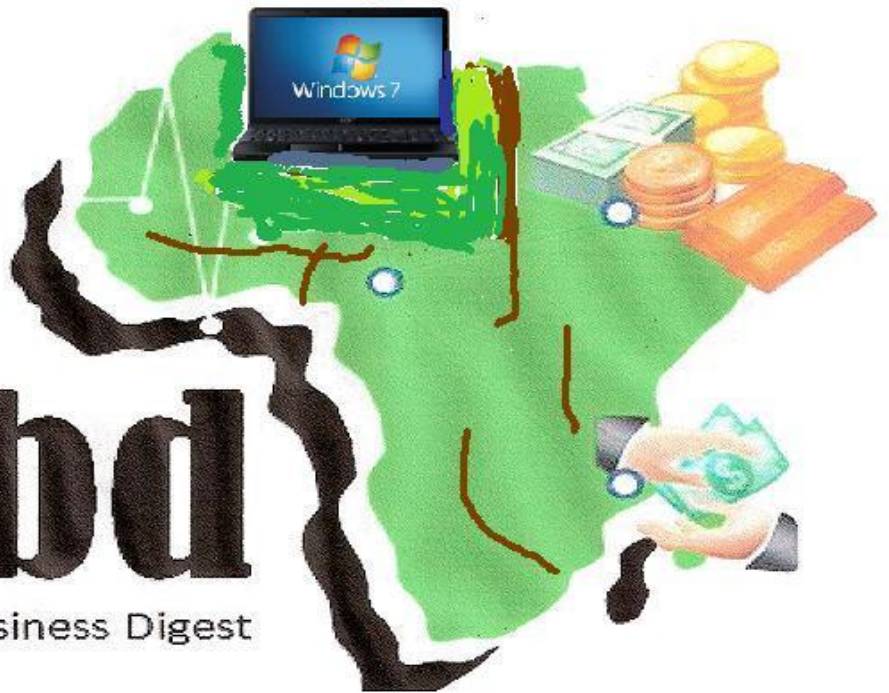




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Africa Business Digest



A monthly on-line digest comprising highlights of current business developments, essay and best practices on project and operations management for professionals with interest in the economic development of Africa.

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Courses

Training dates for Oracle Primavera Project Management Courses

- For Basic course: January **23rd – 25th** , **26th – 28th**
- For Advanced Course: January **16th – 18th**

The training schedule for the quarter is included in the blog

Venue: Total Technology Consultants Limited, Training Room,
Flat 4 God's Grace Estate, 5 Waterworks Road, Rumuola, Port Harcourt.

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1. Towards Sustainable Fuel Supply

Sustainable fuel supply can only be achieved through effective and on-going maintenance of the refineries to ensure continuous fuel production. As Nigerians, we should be sad at our failure to refine and produce our fuel locally. There are four refineries in the country, yet we have been importing fuel. We are about the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world but we cannot even refine the oil produced in our country to provide the fuel we need as a nation. This is the problem at the heart of the just concluded nation-wide strike instigated by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). For, if we had been producing adequate supply of fuel locally, the issue of subsidy removal could not have arisen.

Therefore that the cost of importation has been reportedly biting hard on our resources, and that also our resources are being misused such that the government thought it wise to remove the subsidy, underscores the waste which should not have occurred, if we were up to the task of refining our fuel. All that we wish to write here is to underline the fact that it is extremely unacceptable to continue this way if we wish to advance technologically as a nation. This should be a topic for an article on the necessity for our technological advancement as a nation in line with the vision 2020.

In the mean time, it should be full marks to the government for entering into a long term maintenance arrangement with the builders of the refineries. Getting the refineries to produce optimally cannot be achieved through a one-off service maintenance arrangement. It just has to be a continuous service maintenance contract. The fact is that when a mechanical equipment is repaired once and is in operation, it is not insulated from future failures. Even the car that we drive, after full servicing and repairs, fails a few weeks after, and we will return it to the mechanic for further repairs. In the same way, no matter how well the refineries are repaired now, each of them will still fail in no distant future. Therefore, with a long term contractual arrangement with the makers, the failed refinery can be repaired as soon as possible and returned to production. This is why the government deserves commendation for entering into such an arrangement. We would even go as far as suggesting that the new refineries being built should be handed over to the producers to maintain until such a time, the maintenance companies can be represented locally by Nigerians and foreigners who will be tasked with keeping the refineries continuously operational.

In this edition, we touch on the arrangement by the government to resolve the fuel supply problem. We also discuss other project management topics such as how to kick start a project, how to build a productive workforce, and lastly, we present our company, Total Technology Consultants Limited, and our services.

2. Government hands over repairs of refineries to the builders.

On Wednesday, December 20th, 2011, in Lagos, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mr. Labara Maku, announced measures to ensure adequate production and supply of petroleum products to most Nigerians. They include the following:

- The repairs of the four refineries, which have been operating at epileptic level. To ensure uninterrupted operation and adequate maintenance of the four old refineries in Kaduna, Port Harcourt (two in Rivers State), and Warri (Delta State), the government said it had handed over the Turn Around Maintenance

(TAM) to their original builders. The measure, it said, had helped to eliminate middlemen, who were profiting from the repairs of the refineries that never worked at optimal capacity.

- These are long-term technical contracts between the government and the original builders of the refineries.
- The minister said the government has planned to build three new refineries to match its transformation agenda, adding that the new plants would process 400,000 barrels of crude oil into finished products daily and with the total of seven refineries, "we will start exporting."
- The government plans to build the new refineries in Bayelsa, Kogi, and Lagos states.

Maku said the massive local refining of fuel through the seven refineries would turn Nigeria into an exporter of petroleum products. The minister told reporters at the Presidential Wing of the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos, that the refineries would be in their "full capacities within 18 to 24 months."

3. How to kick start your project

As a Project Manager, the New Year is a challenging time for your project. We suggest the following five tips for doing kick starting your project:

Tip 1: Stop and take control

Projects could be ahead in some areas and behind in others. Stop and take the time to get a firm handle on the project progress. Make a list of all of the areas that you are behind in. Then prioritize the list and estimate the efforts needed to get them back on track. Use the necessary resources to complete these late tasks as soon as possible.

Tip 2: Rework the plan

Once you are up-to-date, revisit your Project Plan. Update every task in the plan and recreate your schedule ahead. You need to revitalize your team and to do this, you need an updated project plan that shows how you are going to deliver the rest of the project on time. This will boost motivation and enthusiasm for completing the revitalized plan. Especially if your team can see that it is actually achievable.

Tip 3: The road ahead

When you have a clear plan ahead, you are ready to get the team behind it. Walk them through the remaining challenges and the time frames in which they must be achieved. Try not to talk about any failures to date. Instead, be positive and focus on the road ahead to gather their support. If possible, ask a customer to come along, to impress on your staff on what it is that they need to deliver and by when. Tell them you are proud of them and what they can achieve.

Tip 4: Individualization

It is advisable to make each person feel like they are a critical cog in the wheel. Meet them individually, reward their successes and recognize achievement whenever you see it.

Tip 5: Quick wins

A winning team like to know they are winning right from the start. Focus on delivering a couple of critical tasks early, then shout about the success. Then get more quick wins under your belt and talk about your

successes again. This creates the feeling of achievement and it creates momentum in the team. Sure, the project may not be finished until you have crossed the finishing line, but half the fun should be in getting there. By taking these five tips, you can kick start your project to boost motivation to an all time high.

4. Building a productive working relationship in a project team

Establishing productive working relationships with your project team is as critical as building the plan, managing risk or reporting to stakeholders. Without a productive working relationship with the project manager, team members will quickly start to feel lost, handcuffed or uninspired or sometimes all three. When that happens, project risks and other problems will go unreported and unaddressed. Fresh ideas and potential opportunities will not be discussed. Team morale will suffer, along with teamwork and honest communication. And your project, however promising, will become much more susceptible to failure.

Warning signs: Here are some warning signs to show that all is not well in the team.

- Team members express concern to you or each other that they do not know where they stand in terms of roles or expectations.
- Team members rarely, if ever, come directly to you with questions, issues or concerns about the project.
- Team members resist participating in meetings and avoid project communication channels such as email, intranet or voice mail.
- Team members do not seem to be enthusiastic about collaborating on project challenges or suggesting solutions and new opportunities.

Your responsibilities as the project manager

- As the project manager, you should make sure each team member can clearly “see” and “hear” you; likewise, they need to know that they will be seen and heard.
- You must be fair and consistent in your dealings with the team. Also, acknowledge that each team member is an individual, with different strengths and weaknesses, work styles and motivations. That means you want to try to be flexible and attentive to each relationship as it evolves. You want the best that each team member has to offer.
- Your ultimate goal is to find how your team’s individual talents can best serve the project as a whole, and how you can *help them* make that happen. This requires honesty, respect and support from you. In return, you can rightfully expect, and should receive, the same from your team.

Seven principles: Here are seven principles that could help you get your team members to maximize their individual and collective value.

1. Define your role: Before you can define what you expect from team members, you need to describe what they can expect from you throughout the project. Make it clear in no uncertain terms that your eyes are always on “the prize.” From project kick-off to closeout, they should be completely confident that everything you say and do is in the name of project success.

2. Set expectations: Next, you need to set expectations for the team as a whole, and for each team member. Some of these expectations will be universal regardless of the project or team makeup , they include:

accountability for their work and effort, commitment to the goals of the project, etc. Some expectations will need to be tailored to each individual's skillset. This requires time for discussion, questions and clarification with each team member. Expectations cannot just be handed down or imposed. As the project manager, to establish productive work relationships and generate buy-in, you should ensure that these expectations serve as motivational tools, not emotionless dictates.

3. Be available: Generally, some team members will have no qualms letting you know exactly what they think and how they feel. Others will be less inclined to speak out in the presence of their peers. Whether your preferred managing style is "open-door," "walk the floor," or something a bit more reserved, it is necessary that you make yourself available to team members for private, one-on-one conversations. These talks can be much more informative than what results in official settings.

With your more introverted team members, these "protected" exchanges often reveal things that are bubbling under the surface. With the more vociferous personalities, these talks can help lower the volume and clear the air without the drama of a wider audience. In both cases, the earlier and more frequently these conversations happen, the more likely you are to mitigate tensions and avoid unwelcome bombshells deeper into the project.

4. Be appreciative: Diligent team members work hard on their daily tasks and responsibilities. When they occasionally look up from the work at hand, they should feel that their contributions are being recognized and acknowledged in relation to the bigger picture. Appreciation cannot really be conveyed in monthly status reports. Make it personally meaningful by thanking them face-to-face whenever possible. In addition, make their contributions visible to the rest of the team and sponsors by public commendations to deserving team members in weekly meetings as well as informal group settings. Recognition is a powerful relationship-building tool.

5. Be trustworthy: You should not expect team members to share their concerns about the project openly if there is any apprehension that bad news will affect their standing or be shared in a detrimental way with peers or superiors. If a culture of fear has existed on other projects in the organization, make it clear that it will not rule the day on your project. It might be difficult to convince an individual who has been burned before; others may prefer to play politics. But showing that you value honesty over calculation will eventually pay dividends, be it uncovering festering problems or encouraging more realistic estimates and assessments of current risks.

6. Be congenial: It does not hurt and can often help to show interest in your team members' lives outside the workplace. This does not mean you have to step outside of your comfort zone or try to feverishly form friendships with everyone, though that might happen quite naturally at times. The point is, professionalism and collegiality are not mutually exclusive. For example, knowing that a team member has a parent who is ill is an important insight into their state of mind, and offers guidance for how you might approach them on a work issue. Knowing that a team member has a passion for classical music or a sport team, on the other hand, provides a comfortable outlet for easy conversation that can go a long way to strengthening your working relationship. In the end, a team that knows you care about them beyond the spreadsheets and timelines is a team that will almost always work harder for you and the project.

7. Be yourself: Finally, there is no substitute for authenticity. You do not want a job that forces you to be someone else. That cannot bring you satisfaction, neither can it make you effective in leading others. Be yourself, and at the very least, your team will know who they are in the trenches with.

Acknowledgement: This material has been taken from an article written by Aaron Smith. It is based on a chapter of a book, entitled: Project Pain Reliever edited by Dave Garrett, J. Ross Publishing, 2012. The book features contributions from 36 project management thought leaders, subject matter experts and successful practitioners. It contains 93 sub-chapters, and each describes a common project management problem and its warning signs, explains consequences of inaction, and outlines a best practice solution with specific steps and techniques.

6. Total Technology Consultants Limited (TTC): Representing Oracle Primavera and Oracle University.

We are the Premier Oracle Primavera Project Management Training and Software Solutions Provider In Nigeria. We provide you with Oracle Primavera Project Management training and software solutions at our offices or at your facilities if and when requested.

Who we are: Since 2003, we have been working with Primavera, initially as the only Primavera Authorised Representative in Nigeria until 2009. With the takeover of Primavera by Oracle, we have become a Gold Level Reseller of Oracle University for Primavera courses and a partner of Oracle Primavera Global Business Unit.

Our offices

In Nigeria: Our training facilities are located at our office in Port Harcourt at 4 God's Grace Estate, 5 Waterworks Road, Rumuola. **Contact phone no.: 08037100284**

In the UK: Our office is at Fairview, Duke Street, Withington, Hereford. From this office, we are able to guarantee timely delivery of Primavera solutions and products because we not only propose and order but we also follow up on your requirements to ensure that we deliver on our promises.

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