

# Providing an Independent Assessment of Your Project

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Project Management Community at NIH



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# Goals of the Presentation

- Consider conducting an independent assessment of your project
- Consider watching an episode of “Brain Games” on National Geographic

# Independent and Objective

**Independent:** Not influenced by the thought or action of others

**Objective:** Not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts

Without an open-minded mind, you can never be a great success. - *Martha Stewart*

## Persuasion

- National Geographic – [Brain Games - Episode 5](#)

# Some potential project issues?

- Customer provided a low evaluation
- Customer is not happy with the quality
- Requirements were not what customer wanted
- Developers made wrong changes
- Released wrong version of the code
- Defect was not tested thoroughly
- Missed internal milestones
- Missed customer deliverables
- Over budget
- Poor team communication
- Low retention rate

# My Story – Project XYZ

- **Problem**

- *Hired to manage a project, then realized after I started it was the project everyone wanted to get off of. Customer was not satisfied with quality of work.*

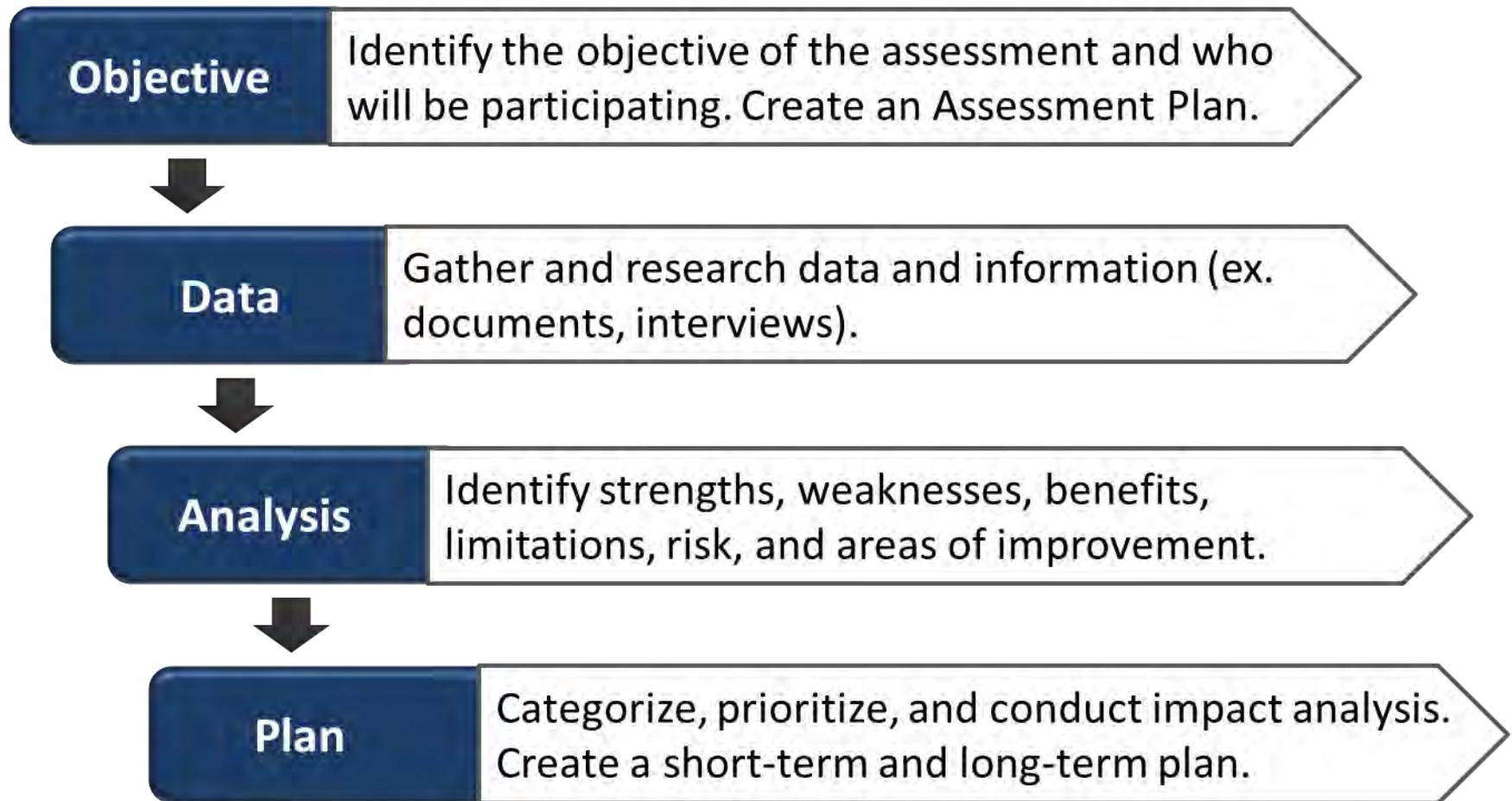
- **Solution**

- *Understanding the Customer, Process Improvement, Focusing on Quality, Organization, and Built a Team.*

- **Result**

- *Increased revenue and project team by 125%. Maintained 100% employee retention.*

# Independent Assessment Phases



# Gathering Data - Where Do Start?



# How Do We Ask Questions?

- Are? Do? Is? Can?

Answers are **Yes and No**



- Who? What? When? Where? How?  
Why?

Answers are **NOT Yes and No**



# People - Customer

We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It's our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little bit better. – *Jeff Bezos*

- What is your customer's mission and goals?
- What is important to your customer?
- What are their pressures and drivers?
- What are your customer's expectations?
- What is the best method of communication with your customer?
- How often and when do you communicate with your customer?

**Challenge:** Answer the questions above. If you don't know, ask your customer or team.

# People - Communication

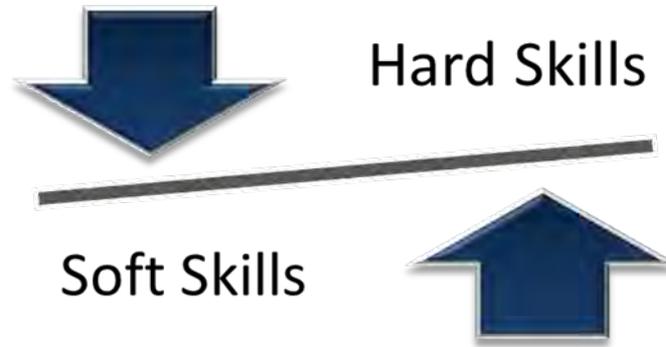
The single biggest problem in communication is  
the illusion that it has taken place.

- *George Bernard Shaw*

- What methods of communication do you have with your team?
- How do you communicate the schedule and upcoming tasks/deliverables?
- How often and how long do you meet with your team?
- What information do you cover in your meetings?
- Who attends the meetings with your customer?

**Challenge:** Evaluate your meetings. Ask the team if you are having too many or not enough, are they too long or not long enough.

# People - Qualifications



- What are the qualifications for each role on your project?
- Do you have the correct qualified and experienced resources?
- What training and/or cross-training do you have for your resources?

# People - Building a Team



- How do you motivate your team members?
- How do you recognize accomplishments and quality work?
- How do you involve your team in solutions and decisions?

**Challenge:** Identify someone on the team and find out what motivates them.

# Organization

Organization

Every company has two organizational structures: The formal one is written on the charts; the other is the everyday relationship of the men and women in the organization. – *Harold S. Geneen*



- Have you prepared and distributed a project organization chart?
- What type of organization chart does your project have?
- Have project responsibilities been created for each role on the organization chart?
- What does your resource plan include?
- What is your mix of junior, mid, and senior resources?

# Organization – Project Plan



Think ahead. Don't let day-to-day operations drive out planning.  
– *Donald Rumsfeld*

- Have you established project goals and overall approach?
- What documentation do you provide to new members when they join your team?
- What are your expectations as a manager/as a team member?

**Challenge:** Pretend you just joined the project and think of the things you would ask for to get up to speed on the project.

# Processes

The older I get the more wisdom I find in the ancient rule of taking first things first. A process which often reduces the most complex human problem to a manageable proportion.

– *Dwight Eisenhower*

## What You Don't Know

- National Geographic – [Brain Games - Episode 6](#)

# Schedules and Estimation

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities. - *Stephen Covey*

- Who provides your estimates to your schedule?
- Who reviews and approves the schedule?
- How do you account for unforeseen circumstances into your schedule?
- What are the things that you have learned from your team that you should or shouldn't do when creating the next schedule?
- How often do you miss internal and customer deliverables?

# Requirements and Design



- What is the difference between requirements and design?
- How are the requirements and designs documented?
- How do you manage the requirements?
- Who reviews and approves the requirements?
- Who participates in the requirements and design phases?

**Challenge:** Ask your team to provide the definition of a requirement vs a design feature. See if the design elements are identified as requirements.

# Change & Configuration Management



- **Change Management**

- What do you do when a defect/change is created?
- Who reviews, approves, and prioritizes the defect/change?
- How is the change incorporated with ongoing tasks?
- How do you manage your customer's expectations and changes?

- **Configuration Management**

- What project items do you have under version control?
- How do you link the change to a defect/change request?
- What is your version control process?

# Quality Assurance

Quality is not an act, it is a habit. - *Aristotle*

- What deliverables are reviewed before they are sent to the customer?
- Who reviews the deliverables?
- How do you conduct internal reviews and how often?
- What is the process for verifying a defect after it has been fixed?
- How do you verify that a change request meets the customer's requirements?

**Challenge:** Ask your team to explain the defect tracking process and get input on any improvements (ex. other information they would like to document, modification of the process, etc.).

# Independent Assessment - Review



# Focus, But Also Look Around

**“Life moves pretty fast. You don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it”.**  
**- *Ferris Bueller***

## **Focus Point**

- National Geographic – [Brain Games - Episode 1](#)

## **Seeing is Believing**

- National Geographic – [Brain Games - Episode 8](#)