Why Project Management?

No matter what business you are in there are always going to be requirements, responsibilities, resources, workflows and timelines. Whether your end products are items or services, lots of things have to happen in order for them to get to your customers. What is the best way to ensure each part of the process is completed and done well? Project Management.

Let's face it, we all get busy. There are things we know we need to do, steps we need to take in order to get things moving. Sometimes there just aren't enough hours in the day. Sometimes it's difficult to get organized.

Even if you have a very clear workflow, changes in staffing, resources and client needs can easily throw a wrench into the works. This is where good project management comes in. While your business may not support a full-time project manager, applying good PM techniques can save you time, headaches and money.

While there is entirely too much information on PM best practices to cover in one blog post, I would like to share a story that demonstrates why Project Management is important at its most basic level.

Some time ago I managed a cross-functional workflow involving 14 people. Each person had something they needed to touch in order for the process to go from start to finish. There were multiple cases being processed simultaneously.

When I first joined the team they met weekly to update each other on progress of each case. The meetings ran up to 3 hours at times. I found that there were cases that had been lost, forgotten or had otherwise fallen through the cracks. Each meeting was a protracted and painful experience for the group. It was immediately apparent what they were lacking – project management.

I suggested that I take on PM duties as part of my workload. The leader was doubtful and thought it might be a waste of my time since I was hired to do a multitude of other things.

In order to make my case, during the next meeting I brough a "spirit stick" – a small baton decorated in the company's colors. I asked everyone to stand. I handed the stick to the first person in the workflow. I then set a timer and asked everyone to pass the baton the same way they would pass the cases along, to whomever was after then in the workflow.

It quickly became apparent that not everyone agreed on how the workflow was supposed to go. Many people forgot who they were supposed to pass to next. By the time the baton had made it to the end of the process over 10 minutes had passed.

As part of my preparation for the exercise I had documented the workflow and made myself a handy chart. I pulled that out and held it in front of me. Everyone agreed that the process was what it was supposed to be. We tried again, with the chart available. The group's time was now just over 5 minutes. An improvement, but still fairly sluggish.

Then I said, "okay, I'm now your Project Manager. What this means is that each of you, when you are done with your part of the case submit it to me. I am the person responsible for marking it as done and moving it along to the next person. Got it?"

At first some people were confused. "So when we're done we ALL inform you instead of the next person?" "Yep!," I responded. Just hand it to me.

Once again I got out the stick and the timer. I handed the baton to the first person on the workflow and said, "go!" Each person handed the baton to me and then I handed it to the next person on the flowchart. We got through the exercise in under 30 seconds! I got approval to take on PM duties for the program.

Later, I set up a dashboard in our system so that I could easily update any case and have an overview of our caseload at any time. I was able to run reports and give updates to leadership as a single point of contact rather than her having to ask each person or wait until the weekly meeting.

The weekly meetings went from 3 hours to a half an hour on average. We used the time to troubleshoot and brainstorm since everyone already had the information they needed.

The power of project management made everyone's lives easier and saved us both time and money!

So what does this have to do with translation? If you have a larger or ongoing translation project, Transfluent is there to help you navigate your workflow and provide project management as needed to ensure that all pieces are accounted for and that the "baton" gets passed all the way to your customer!

To learn more about how Transfluent can assist you, contact us today.