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Paper #6

Part I

One of the first issues I noticed in the case of the Altex Corporation, was that the project manager and the sponsor had very different goals in mind. They seemed to have conflicting ideas on what the purpose of the project was. The sponsor gives us the impression that the main goal of this project is for Altex to get their foot in the door with the army. Even if product specifications aren't met on this project he seems convinced that the long term benefits of follow-on production, long-term contracts, and the chance to develop a working relationship with the army is more important. The project manager does not see the big picture, he is still focused on the immediate task at hand and is frustrated that a proposal was presented to the army and a contract was awarded based on lies. This is an important challenge that will lead to a multitude of conflicts and disagreements between the sponsor and the PM. The second issue I see is that the sponsor does not understand the purpose and importance of a risk management plane, he seems to think that a plan of this nature will simply expose problems and risks that would otherwise go unnoticed.

I believe that the project manager should have educated the sponsor on the benefits and purpose of a risk management plan because it would be almost impossible for him to create an effective plan on his own without any input from the rest of the team. "Risk management is the part of projects planning that identifies key risks and develops plans to prevent them and/or mitigate their

adverse effects” (Managing Projects Large and Small, 2004, p. 103). I see risk management falling into the planning stages of a project after the proposal has been presented and accepted. I don’t believe that the customer necessarily has the “right” to expect the contractor to preform risk analysis or develop a risk management plan if it is not a part of the contractual agreement but a customer should refuse to do business with a contractor that doesn’t preform some sort of risk analysis and management plan for their own use. A risk management plan was still beneficial in this specific situation because it provides the perfect platform to tackle some of the most difficult parts of the entire project head on. Even when delays to the schedule and cost overruns are always acceptable, and almost expected, a specific way of identifying issues and focusing on remedies is still important. Something this case study has helped me learn is the importance of each and every member of them team sharing the same common goal that the project is set to accomplish, I fee like so much stems from this idea alone.

Part II

I really enjoyed the message in Margret Heffernan’s, “Dare to Disagree” clip. She presents the idea that creating conflict enables people to do their very best thinking. What a unique perspective. Her ideas relate directly to project management and risk management. Risk management is essentially identifying all of the risks (conflicts) that could possible pose a threat and breaking them down one by one to find resolutions. Margret goes on to say that it is not enough to just realize the conflict and not react accordingly like in her example where the research was out in the open, proving that x-rays during pregnancy highly

increases a child's risk of dying when diagnosed with cancer, but the medical establishments did not abandon the practice until 25 years later!! This means that performing risk analysis is not enough; a risk management plan needs to be developed in response. The methodology used by Alice and George is practical and offers a unique approach to risk analysis and risk management planning. When assessing risk and developing solutions and contingency plans team members should take a sort of devils advocate approach. The team should, "actively seek disconfirmation," or in other words, try to prove the project will fail, this will uncover the potential risks. Margret explains conflict should be seen as thinking, she suggests that we should actively seek out people that are different than we are and find ways to engage with them – they will be able to look at things differently than we can offering a whole new perspective. Something that really shocked me was a statistic that Margret shared toward the end of the clip, she said that 85% of executives admitted that they had issues and concerns that they were afraid to raise within their organization, 85%!! To me, that number is unacceptable, we as leaders need to understand that identifying conflict and risk does expose our weaknesses but actually gives us the opportunity to think, debate, argue, to creatively solve problems.