Where the Authority Lies

Think of the last few projects on which you've worked. Were you the project manager or a team member? How much authority did you have? Answering that question will key you in on which project management methodology you were using- Traditional or Agile.

First, let's look at the authority a team has in an Agile framework. First of all, the structure of an organization can make a difference in how much authority the team will have within a project. The success of Agile is founded on giving the team power to make decisions and adjustments to the project. Having this kind of participative decision making allows team members to make decisions and to take responsibility for those decisions. Participative decision making does not:

- Run the decisions through management for approval
- Get caught up in bureaucratic red tape
- Spend time waiting for a decision

When allowing the team to make the decisions, three types of styles arise.

Command Style
This decision making style is very autocratic. It has the "Do what I say" mentality and arrives at a decision very quickly.

Consensus Style
This style seeks input and advice from the entire team. The goal is to get everyone involved to support the decision.

Consultation Style
The Consultation Style seeks input and advice from the team. All team members will give their input; however, a full consensus doesn't have to be reached. Some members may still disagree.

There are many hindrances that may be encountered when giving the team authority to make the decisions.

- Old style management fights to control the project
- Project managers experience role ambiguity
- Team members are not trained and comfortable taking on the new responsibility
- Management is looking for someone to blame when something goes wrong

Before your team is allowed to have authority in the project, be sure to have upper management's support and ensure that team members have the proper training in the required decision making processes.

Now let's switch gears to see how team authority looks in Traditional Project Management. A traditional project team consists of the project manager and the group of individuals who act

> *If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security.*
> *Gail Sheehy*
> *Writer*

together in performing the work of the project to achieve its objectives. This includes members who carry out the work, but who are not necessarily involved with the management of the project. They are considered to be the project's worker bees.

The project manager is the responsible party of a traditional project. It is this person who directs the performance of the planned project activities and manages any unplanned activities to determine the appropriate course of action.

When changes arise, neither the project manager nor the project team can authorize those changes. All change requests must go through the Perform Integrated Change Control Process. This process reviews all requests for changes or modifications to project documents, deliverables, baselines, or the project management plan and approves or rejects them. This allows for documented changes to be considered in an integrated fashion while reducing project risk, which often arises from changes made without consideration to the overall project objectives or plans. While changes can be requested by any stakeholder, it can only be approved by the Change Control Board. This board is responsible for meeting and reviewing all change requests.

Changes will always arise in a project. It is important that you understand who in your organization holds the authority to make project changing decisions and what steps should be taken to make them happen.