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Recommended books for your library:

Rework

By Jason Fried

Agile Software Development: The Cooperative Game

Alistair Cockburn

Understanding Variation

By Donald J Wheeler



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Managing Suppliers Effectively to Deliver Your Project Objectives – Quality and Assessment

We were recently asked for an effective method to manage multiple suppliers on a project. The client had a number of potential suppliers to engage and wanted to know the best approach to ensure the suppliers deliver what was required.

Answer – each company has its own special circumstances and so each need to adapt their approach to suit their needs...

However... one approach was to make sure that part of the contract included the need to establish the method of providing quality control and assurance on the delivered products and services.

There are a number of activities required:

- Determine the products/services areas and issues that are critical to the project. If you're not sure, these tend to be the most complex, unknown, or time critical deliverables.
- Specify the required quality for each of the products and services. This often takes the form of Acceptance Criteria. The 'criteria' need to include more than just 'a working product' in their definition. It should also include defect levels and any other non-functional requirements together with the measures needed to assess levels of conformance.
- Identify the quality control (tests, etc) and quality assurance activities for the deliverables.
- Ensure a mechanism is included to address product and process non-conformance. Problems occur even on the best projects and they need to be managed as part of the normal project activities
- Mandate the need for an examination of the key customer processes (management systems, quality systems, Policies & Procedures) to ensure that the capability is there. Don't rely on ISO9001 auditors doing this work for you – the process review that you undertaken needs to be specific

Doing this upfront work enables us to build confidence in the project as we have

- a) identified the need for products and services of an acceptable quality
- b) determined that the supplier can deliver
- c) put processes in place (in the contract or PMP or Quality Plan) that will provide QA/QC guidance throughout the project,

and

- d) built an expectation that when a problem occurs, the standard project activities are in place to manage the problems to a successful outcome for the project.

By having these processes in place, you will not have to resort to 'escalation' whenever something goes wrong...