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Fiat and Chrysler: Can Chrysler's Project Culture Survive?

"That's why Chrysler hasn't produced the kind of cars customers want"

As the Fiat and Chrysler merger moves closer to reality the differences in the way these two companies manage projects appears to be substantial.

Chrysler, under CEO, Sergio Marchionne, emphasizes getting the job done, speed, and focus.

When Marchionne took over Fiat three years ago, the company was losing money and its product line was out-of-date. He took action, turned the bureaucracy upside down, fired senior managers and hired young ones to take their place.

Now the company is successful and Marchionne has created a reputation as a can-do results-oriented manager.

But Chrysler has a very different culture. According to an article in the Economist, April 25, 2009, the Italians are "shocked" at how bloated the Chrysler management team is even after several very difficult years with Daimler AG and Cerberus, two companies that were tough on Chrysler.

One consequence of this bloat is that projects are tough to get off the ground and as the article noted committees still dominate

a painfully slow decision process.

At Chrysler it's no surprise to conclude that the bureaucracy stifles project management. Project managers focus more on doing things right than doing the right things. They emphasize Chrysler's 'best' practices and in the process place less emphasis on the competitive environment.

That's why Chrysler hasn't produced the kind of cars customers want.

Will the project culture at Chrysler survive? Stay tuned.

How to Deal with a Bully on the Project Team

"Workplace bullying can cause more harm to employees than sexual harassment"

Almost every team has a bully. He or she is the person that pushes you around, is rude, discourteous, makes you feel uncomfortable, and forces you to be defensive.

In a New York Times Article on March 8, 2008, Jeanna Bryner suggests that workplace bullying can cause more harm to employees than sexual harassment.

How prevalent is it? The Workplace Bullying Institute says that 37 percent of the workforce is affected.

Often the bullying is subtle, like being excluded from meeting. Sometimes it is blatant like confronting you about the quality of your work.

What should you do if you are a victim? The first step is to recognize when it

happens, and label it as bullying behavior. Some take a second step and confront the bully. They ask why they have been excluded from lunch, or why a colleague was smirking during a presentation.

Sometimes bullying is tough to stop, but at least you need to recognize it. For some people that helps.