

Global Project Strategy (011) (603) 862-3374

The basic principles of incidence management are no different from conventional projects. Ignore knowledge areas, such as communication to stakeholders, at your own risk.

Make it clear, as Kotter suggests, who the enemy is.

Fukushima Daiichi and PM

Fukushima Daiichi once again confirmed the risks associated with poor communications.

At the beginning of the disaster we learned that the damage to the reactors was minimal and that they posed little threat to property and no threat to human life. Then as the problem escalated out-of-control, as we learned that more than one reactor was in trouble, confidence in Tokyo Electric Power Company, TEPCO, the power company operating the reactor began to falter. But poor communications prevailed as the meltdown

process continued and as the evacuation radius continued to increase.

No one likes to be the bearer of bad news, and the natural inclination is to hold it back in the hope that the situation will reverse itself or disappear altogether. But once a pattern begins to emerge, once it begins to become obvious that the situation is deteriorating, the truth usually works better than fiction.

Whether it is Toyota's acceleration problem, the BP oil spill and countless other disasters, avoiding

the truth early makes it more difficult to recover later. This is like any project where problems that are addressed earlier can be corrected at a much lower cost than if left to later.

Both Fukushima and BP have focused attention on "incidence management." These are short duration projects where urgency dictates the speed at which the project must be planned and executed. While the context of these projects differs from more conventional projects, many of the same principles still apply.

The Secret of On-Time Completion

Careful planning, execution and control is essential to effective project management, but how do you assure that the project is delivered on-time?

In a Harvard Business Review article by John Kotter he says that the first factor in successfully transforming an organization is urgency.

Let's see how that applies to project management.

If a project manager can

convey a sense of urgency, and if the project goals are clear and seen as feasible, then urgency can act as a powerful motivational factor.

But doesn't everyone understand the importance of meeting due dates already?

Yes they do, but creating a sense of urgency means more than meeting a due date. It means that stakeholders have a clear idea of what product line or service the project will

provide and why it is so important to accomplish this goal and accomplish it in as short a time as possible.

How do you do it? Identify your competitors. Identify their products and services. Make it clear, as Kotter suggests, who the enemy is.

Urgency is a tool that project managers can use, but it has to be used skillfully and honestly.