



## Navigating the political minefields of product management

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How the customer explained it



How the Project Leader understood it



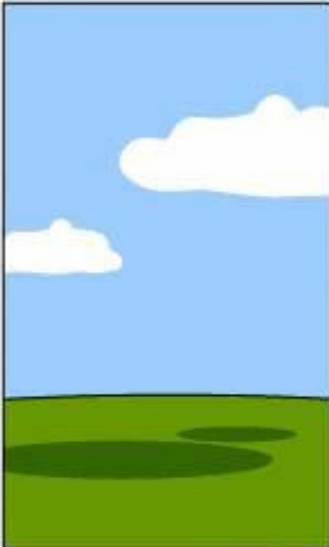
How the Analyst designed it



How the Programmer wrote it



How the Business Consultant described it



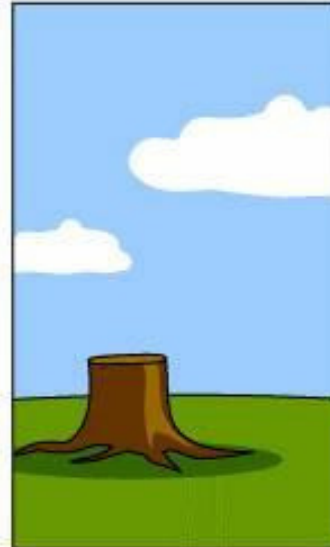
How the project was documented



What operations installed



How the customer was billed



How it was supported



What the customer really needed

# Why is it political?



- Product managers work on some of the most high profile projects within a company.
- All product development means “change”
- Everybody has an opinion about what’s best strategically for the company
- People would like to see you fail

## Set the strategic direction



- When using resources across a company's organizational structure, it is imperative to your success to have senior management set the tone.
- Get the CEO to send out a message
- Communicate the strategic goal
- Build coalitions

# Political minefield?



- Office politics can derail a project and can often occur when there is a difference of opinion on the project deliverables, requirements, scope change requests, risk perceptions, etc. Remember that politics can come in play when different people are trying to exert their influence to get done what they want.

# Using Influence



- Influence is more important than titles.
- Building relationships is the fastest way to build coalitions across functional areas of an organization.

# Master the unwritten rules



- Cultivate relationships with the influence leaders...they know the unwritten rules of office politics and can help you navigate around obstacles.

# Nip the G.M.O.O.T



- Communicate with senior management every step of the way.
- Think through the obstacles and prepare for the inevitable “Get Me One Of Those” that senior management will throw at you.
- Do not get emotionally involved or attached to your product
- Be flexible, but keep your strategic goal “top of mind.”

# Listen more than you talk



- Let the grapevine come to you. You'll learn who has an "agenda" and have time to navigate around it without it being a surprise.
- Don't be the grapevine

# Document



- If sabotage is afoot, the gantt chart that is well documented is all the evidence you need in any conflict that arises.
- “I don’t care for bullshit. I don’t care to speak it and I don’t care to hear it.”

# Getting buy-in



- As a product manager, get buy-in from the most senior levels within an organization first and foremost.
- It's ok to build consensus on the project team, but when some middle manager comes after you "Let's take it to the CEO" will bring that to a screeching halt.

# When does it get political?



- Generally, project managers need to become good at identifying and resolving political situations.
- This includes recognizing the times and events where politics are most likely to be involved. This could include decision points, competition for budget and resources, and setting project direction and priorities.

# It's not about you



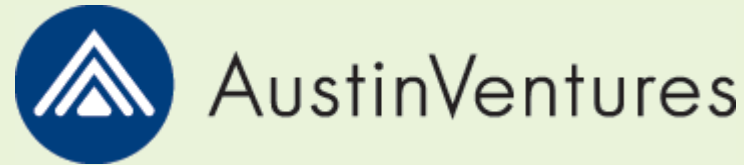
- The best way to avoid political missteps in a project is to practice humility. Product managers are very visible, making them high-profile targets. Take the spotlight off of you as an individual and put it on the team and the results.
- With a team buy-in any political missteps will bring the team together to move past them in a productive way.

# The fact is...



- The more humble you are, the more your boss and company will realize your quiet power to complete projects without chaos.
- Egos can ruin a good product development career.

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