Risk or Issue?

There is often confusion between what a risk is and what an issue is, and how the activities of managing each interface and interact with each other. According to the Project Management Institute (PMI) Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK):

- **A risk** is an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative impact on project objectives, time, cost, scope, or quality.
- **An issue** is a point or matter in question or in dispute, or that is not settled and is under discussion, or over which there are opposing views or disagreements. Often project issues are first identified as a risk and through the risk management planning process may already have a planned approach to managing the issue.

Project risk can be anything that threatens or limits the goals or deliverables of a project. Risk is present in all projects and may have one or more causes and, if it occurs, one or more impacts. Risk must be identified, managed, and addressed throughout the project in order for the project to be successful.

Risk identification is an iterative process that begins early and is conducted throughout the project life cycle. It is the practice of systematically thinking about all possible outcomes before they happen and defining procedures to accept, avoid, or minimize the impact of risk on the project. It's a practice that proactively identifies and addresses potential obstacles that may arise and hinder project success or block the project team from achieving its goals.

Project risk management includes the processes for conducting risk management planning, identification, analysis, responses, and monitoring and control of a project. Risk management plays an important role in maintaining project stability and efficiency throughout the project life cycle. The objectives of project risk management are to increase the probability and impact of positive events and decrease the probability and impact of events adverse to project objectives.

To manage risks effectively, risk must be recorded and managed in a central location. This is accomplished through the utilization of a risk log. The risk log maintains information regarding identified risks, their symptoms, triggers, mitigation strategies, and contingency plans. The log allows for a central source that the project team can reference for all risk related information.

As issues arise, or risks evolve into issues, they should be documented in an issue log. Similar to a risk log, an issue log includes information such as a description of the issue, the assignment of each issue to individuals for resolution, a target date by which the issue needs to be resolved, and other related information. The log helps the project team monitor and control issues until closure is reached.

However, some debate exists about how risk should be managed if it escalates to become an issue. Is it moved to the issue log or continued to be managed within the risk log? Express your opinion at…
http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/other/risk_talk.asp

A project issue may arise during the course of managing a project and a project team. Unresolved issues can be a source of conflict that delays or prevents the project team from attaining project goals, milestones, and deliverables. It is the responsibility of the project manager to effectively manage and monitor issues on a regular basis, follow up with issue owners to ensure progress is being made towards a resolution, and to report on the status of issues. In addition to overcoming obstacles to success, effective issue management also contributes to having constructive working relationships among the project stakeholders, including the project team.

More information and a discussion forum regarding project risks, issues, and other relevant project management tools can be found at:
http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/ ▮

CDC PMCoP Kicks Off Project Management Professional Study Group

In May 2007 the CDC Project Management Community of Practice (PMCoP) established a Project Management Professional (PMP) self-study group with the goal of supporting participants in their pursuit of obtaining PMP Certification from the Project Management Institute (PMI).

Peggy Joyner, PMP, a BearingPoint consultant leading the CDC Unified Process (UP), and an experienced and certified project manager has volunteered to serve as a facilitator for the initial study group. Peggy obtained her PMP certification in 2001 after participating in a similar self-study group and currently serves as a PMI board member.

The first self-study group convened on May 7th and defined a ten week study schedule to prepare members to take the PMP certification exam. Since then the group has met each Monday during their lunch hour to share tips and review assigned study materials. The group expects to continue meeting each Monday for the remainder of the 10-week study schedule.

By studying together members of the group have high expectations for passing the PMP certification exam. As a whole, the group expects to perform much better on the exam than if they had studied on their own. The structured schedule, peer interaction, and study support provided by the group environment establish a more ideal learning environment for members.

Group members take responsibility for facilitating the study process. Each member signs up to present a particular PMI PMBOK chapter to concentrate their study efforts on. Each weekly group meeting is then structured so that it focuses on a specific area of the PMBOK. The appropriate member then has the opportunity to present to the rest of the group the chapter that they were assigned, in conjunction with any additional study resources they may have found helpful. Study focus is concentrated on areas most likely to be on the PMP exam.

Some current group participants are saying…

"I am really learning a lot by participating in the PMP Study group. With the knowledge I am gaining from the reading assignments, group discussions and oral presentations along with applying these concepts and skills in my job duties as a Project Manager, I feel that I will be well prepared for taking the exam." – RW [MISO]

"It's been really helpful to me to have the group and to have the discussions – being able to ask questions and discuss the answers I think helps in learning a topic." – MR [CHHIS]

"It helps to hear comments from others about the process, and especially, the exam." – MF [CCID]

The PMCoP expects to continue to encourage the CDC project management community to pursue professional certification by formulating new PMP study groups most likely every quarter. If you would like to participate in a future study group or have questions regarding the efforts of the current study group or the PMCoP, contact the CDC Unified Process Team (cdcup@cdc.gov) ▮

Upcoming Project Management Community of Practice Meetings and Topics

- **Friday, June 22**
  Enterprise Architecture
- **Friday, July 27**
  Managing Expectations
- **Friday, August 24**
  Business Analysis
- **Friday, September 28**
  Project Management Tips for Delivering on Schedule
- **Friday, October 26**
  Effective Project Management for Public Health IT Initiatives
- **Friday, December 7**
  The Inadvertent Project Manager

Contact the CDC Unified Process Team

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For questions about the CDC UP, comments regarding this newsletter, suggestions for future newsletter topics, or to subscribe to the CDC UP Project Management Newsletter please contact the CDC UP Team at cdcup@cdc.gov

http://www.cdc.gov/cdcup/