

## **EDI Project Management in a Recession**

Well, things are a little different now. For those of you who became EDI project managers in the last few years, pay attention. Projects are not something “nice to have”, they are “we must have”. The budget is tight. Act like the assigned budget is your own money.

Even before you get hired, express this attitude to the hiring managers. Continue to explain to both the IT organization and the business organization that the budget is paramount.

Try and hire multi-skill consultants. Let's say you will need an AS2 consultant, starting week 9. Instead get someone that has AS2 plus other skills, and start this consultant earlier in the project. If they are AS2-only, and even if you are the best scheduler in the World, this consultant will have a lot of slack time. Consultants: I was not born yesterday; I know when you are slack.

Your job gets more interesting (some say tougher) trying to do more with less. You may even have to violate the unwritten rule that the PM does not do “grunt work”. Well, after all, recruiters keep asking you what your “EDI skills” are. They don't understand me when I tell them that I am a Project Manager. They need to know what EDI translators I am familiar with. (All of them, I predate everything that is on the market).

If one of your consultants is on a task they are unfamiliar with, recognize immediately and readjust.

Keep even closer with your business contacts. Don't depend on project meetings or scheduled appointments. Buttonhole them before 8 and after 5. Sit at their lunch table. As always, keep close to your IT contacts. Most EDI PM's came up the IT side, I came up the business side. But, if I self-appraise myself, my biggest mistake is not keeping close enough to the business people. Maybe I overcompensated trying to know and understand the IT people better?

Here is my take on a project manager position: Provide a link between the business units and the IT department for major requests regarding technical projects or upgrades. This person should be capable of leveraging structured project management techniques to effectively manage small to large-scale EDI projects. Ensure a high level of client satisfaction with a focus on responsiveness, resolution of problem situations, and successful completion of deliverables.

Like always, follow the general rules for project management. One positive thing: in tougher times, there will be less push for project enhancements.

Do carry a sharp pencil; cost is paramount.