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1. Introduction

Once an information systems (IS) project has been approved, i.e., a business case for it has been justified, then a project charter needs to be written for the project at project inception.

The presentation below illustrates how project charter fits in the project management roadmap.

In project initiation, the go-ahead and approval for a particular project has been given. Hence the next step will be to write the project charter, which is also referred to as the project initiation document, to capture the key elements of the project.

Objectives: Project Charter

Upon completion of this topic, you should be able to
- describe the role and purpose of a project charter
- develop a project charter for an IS project

2. Project Charter

The project charter is also referred to as a project initiation document, project brief, project outline or project scope document; however, the purpose remains the same. The project charter is a single, consolidated reference document that provides a description of the key aspects of a project, including
- project scope
- project objectives
- project budget
- roles and responsibilities
- key deliverables and milestones
- risks
- key resources
- project management and control process (including any methods or frameworks to be used)
- stakeholders
- risk and issue resolution process

The project charter serves as a communication tool to ensure that stakeholders are clear about what the project is about, why it is being conducted, who is involved and in what capacity. The document also serves to obtain commitment to the project as a formal agreement that is signed by the appropriate stakeholders. Normally, the
project charter should not change once it has been signed. Any changes to the project charter after it has been signed represent a significant deviation to the project and so needs to be formally approved by the stakeholders.

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that a project charter is agreed and signed-off. Until this is done, the project cannot progress. The project charter is one of the most important documents in a project because it establishes all that follows for the remainder of the project. Creation of the project charter can involve intense and lengthy discussion with each project stakeholder. Within the project charter, the project manager should consider the overall feasibility of the project. The project manager should ensure the milestones and deliverables are realistic given the resources, and that the risks have been articulated. This is important, as the project charter forms the basis for more detailed project planning, which is the next phase of the project management roadmap.

**Reading:**

Read the following article that suggests a set of questions that can be helpful while preparing a project charter.


**3. Summary**

**This topic covered the following main points:**

- A project charter is created at project inception and captures the key elements of a project such as project scope, budget, deliverables, milestones and risks.
- The project charter is used as an instrument to gain commitment to the project, as well as a means of project communication.