National University

PME 601 Homework 2

Due on or before: 10/22/19

**Macon, Inc.**

Macon was a fifty-year-old company in the business of developing test equipment for the tire industry. The company had a history of segregated departments with very focused functional line managers.

The company had two major technical departments: mechanical engineering and electrical engineering. Both departments reported to a vice president for engineering, whose background was always mechanical engineering.

For this reason, the company focused all projects from a mechanical engineering perspective. The significance of the test equipment’s electrical control system was often minimized when, in reality, the electrical control systems were what made Macon’s equipment outperform that of the competition. Because of the strong autonomy of the departments, internal competition existed.

 Line managers were frequently competing with one another rather than focusing on the best interest of Macon. Each would hope the other would be the cause for project delays instead of working together to avoid project delays altogether. Once dates slipped, fingers were pointed, and the problem would worsen over time.

One of Macon’s customers had a service department that always blamed engineering for all of their problems. If the machine was not assembled correctly, it was engineering’s fault for not documenting it clearly enough. If a component failed, it was engineering’s fault for not designing it correctly. No matter what problem occurred in the field, customer service would always put the blame on engineering.

As might be expected, engineering would blame most problems on production claiming that production did not assemble the equipment correctly and did not maintain the proper level of quality.

Engineering would design a product and then throw it over the fence to production without ever going down to the manufacturing floor to help with its assembly. Errors or suggestions reported from production to engineering were being ignored. Engineers often perceived the assemblers as incapable of improving the design.

Production ultimately assembled the product and shipped it out to the customer. Oftentimes during assembly the production people would change the design as they saw fit without involving engineering. This would cause severe problems with documentation.

Customer service would later inform engineering that the documentation was incorrect, once again causing conflict among all departments.

 The president of Macon was a strong believer in project management. Unfortunately, his preaching fell upon deaf ears. The culture was just too strong. Projects were failing miserably. Some failures were attributed to the lack of sponsorship or commitment from line managers. One project failed as the result of a project leader who failed to control scope. Each day the project would fall further behind because work was being added with very little regard for the project’s completion date. Project estimates were based upon a “gut feel” rather than upon sound quantitative data. The delay in shipping dates was creating more and more frustration for the customers.

The customers began assigning their own project managers as “watchdogs” to look out for their companies’ best interests. The primary function of these “watchdog” project managers was to ensure that the equipment purchased would be delivered on time and complete.

This involvement by the customers was becoming more prominent than ever before.

The president decided that action was needed to achieve some degree of excellence in project management.

The question was what action to take, and when.

QUESTIONS

1. Where will the greatest resistance for excellence in project management come from?

 2. What plan should be developed for achieving excellence in project management?

3. How long will it take to achieve some degree of excellence?

4. Explain the potential risks to Macon if the customer’s experience with project management

 increases while Macon’s knowledge remains stagnant.