

Lawrence Gamache, Wreckmaster

Larry Gamache started at NYCTA 24 years ago as a trackworker and progressed through many managerial positions on his way to general superintendent, track operations. His experience over those years clearly qualified him for the responsibility of this assignment, particularly his involvement as field supervisor of several earlier derailments.

He was also highly involved in a 3-year subway reconstruction project that required extensive coordination and negotiation with other city agencies, communities, and political leaders, all the while battling inclement weather and difficult conditions—yet, the project was completed ahead of time and well under budget. This experience, too, was

valuable in coordinating the activities of the many groups involved in the disaster recovery.

Questions

1. In what phase of the disaster plan does providing for alternate services probably occur? In what phase does bringing new equipment and supplies occur?
2. How much preplanning could be done for wrecks such as these in terms of disaster teams, command center locations, task sequencing, and so on?
3. What experience credentials does NYCTA look for in appointing wreckmasters?

Source: S. Nacco, "PM in Crisis Management at NYCTA: Recovering from a Major Subway Accident," *PM Network*, Vol. 6.

Fourth, the PM should build and maintain a solid information network. It is critical to know what is happening both inside and outside the project in order to head off potential problems, a major skill of successful PMs, as noted earlier. The PM must be aware of customer complaints and department head criticism, who is favorably inclined toward the project, when vendors are planning to change prices, or if a strike is looming in a supplier industry. Inadequate information can blind the PM to an incipient crisis just as excessive information can desensitize the PM to early warnings of trouble.

Finally, the PM must be flexible in as many ways, with as many people, and about as many activities as possible throughout the entire life of the project. The PM's primary mode of operation is to trade off resources and criteria accomplishment against one another. Every decision the PM makes limits the scope of future decisions, but failure to decide can stop the project in its tracks.

Negotiation

In order to meet the demands of the job of a PM—acquiring adequate resources, acquiring and motivating personnel, dealing with obstacles, making project goal trade-offs, maintaining a balanced outlook, and establishing a broad network of communication—the PM must be a highly skilled negotiator. There is almost no aspect of the PM's job that does not depend directly on this skill. We have noted the need for negotiation at several points in the previous pages, and we will note the need again and again in the pages that follow. The subject is so important, and Chapter 4 is devoted to a discussion of the matter.

3.3 Attributes of Effective Project Managers

The selection of a PM is one of the two or three most important decisions concerning the project. In this section, we note a few of the many skills the PM should possess in order to have a reasonable chance of success.