

MOCHA: Assigning Roles When Projects Involve Multiple People

In projects where multiple people are playing roles, it's easy for the work to devolve into confusion if people aren't clear on their roles and the project lacks a clear driver or decision-maker. One way to combat this is to have a standard vocabulary within the organization for who should play what role throughout the work.

You can do this with a simple tool we call "MOCHA," an acronym for the different roles for a piece of work. (You can remember "MOCHA" because if you get this right, everyone's job becomes easier and you can sit at a café all day sipping mochas.)

MANAGER | Assigns responsibility and holds owner accountable. Makes suggestions, asks hard questions, reviews progress, serves as a resource, and intervenes if the work is off-track.

OWNER | Has overall responsibility for the success or failure of the project. Ensures that all the work gets done (directly or with helpers) and that others are involved appropriately. There should only be **one** owner.

CONSULTED | Should be asked for input or needs to be bought in to the project.

HELPER | Assists with or does some of the work.

APPROVER | Signs off on decisions before they're final. May be the manager, though might also be the executive director, external partner, or board chair.

MOCHA IN PRACTICE

Let's say that you're a development associate in charge of the upcoming gala. Your manager, the development director, might be the M (manager) on this project, and you would be the O (owner). The communications director and program director should be consulted (C), the development assistant is an H (helper), and the executive director might be both an H (helper by making calls to the largest donors to ask them to buy tables) and the A (approver on the final program and the table assignments).

As the O (owner), your job isn't to do all the work yourself, but rather to ensure that the work is a success. For instance, you might assign the development assistant to send out invitations, track ticket purchases, and liaise with the caterer, and you'll pull in the executive director to make calls to major donors, but you'll have overall responsibility for the event's success. That means that you'll identify what must be done to throw a successful gala, ensure that those items are being done well and on schedule (whether by you or by the two H's), and spot any needed course corrections. Throughout the project, you'll keep the M in the loop on your progress, and ensure that the C's are consulted and that the A signs off before decisions are final.