

MOCHA: Avoid these pitfalls!

When used correctly, MOCHA is a powerful tool for articulating what roles various people should play in a project. However, make sure that you avoid these five common mistakes.

M = Manager
O = Owner
C = Consulted
H = Helper
A = Approver

1. Having too many owners

How many owners are too many? More than one!

Since the owner has final responsibility for the success or failure of the project, it's crucial that you only have one owner. You might think that doubling or tripling the number of people looking out for the overall success of a project would double or triple its chances of success, but in reality what happens is that the overall responsibility gets diffused. Multiple owners are far less effective and efficient than one owner would be.

2. Having the manager and owner be the same person

The manager and owner of a project should be two different people, since the manager's role is to ask hard questions and hold the owner accountable. If the manager and owner are the same person, no one is serving that role. (It does typically make sense for the *approver* to be the manager, however!)

3. Having a manager who's a secret owner

Managers should be careful not to jump in and take over a project when something isn't going smoothly. Managers should be available to answer questions, review interim progress, and help brainstorm solutions ... but not take over the work. For instance, if a manager sees that a fundraising letter isn't working well, she shouldn't take over ownership by rewriting it. Rather, she should talk with the owner about the elements that need changing and the owner should do the rewrite.

4. Having too many approvers

If you find yourself with a long list of approvers, be rigorous about asking who really needs to be on that list. Often you'll realize that some of those people really should be consulted, but don't need to be approvers.

(And if the reality is that your organization is structured in such a way that multiple approvers are unavoidable, it's helpful to acknowledge that and plan around it.)

5. Owners who don't manage their helpers

Part of the owner's role is to make sure that others involved in the project are carrying out their own roles. That includes checking in to ensure work is getting done on time (and well) and making sure that people assigned to be consulted are giving input.

6. Having too many people consulted

Often a well-intentioned desire not to make anyone feel left out leads to too many people being looped into a project. This can lead to more time and resources being spent on a project than are necessary to do it well.