RAID Log

A RAID log is a single table where a project team records its risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies. The name is a memory aid made from the first letters of these four words, and some teams read the letters A and D differently, for example as actions and decisions. Keeping everything in one place stops important items from living in inboxes and in memory. Each entry has an owner, a status and a date, and the team reviews the log regularly. We look at the four types one by one.

1. Risks

A risk is something uncertain that might happen in the future and affect the project, usually in a negative way. For each risk we note how likely it is, how big the impact would be, who owns it and what we will do about it. The goal is not to remove every risk but to see the important ones early enough to act. A risk that comes true is moved to the issues.

Example: Before a picnic, a family notes that it might rain. Asking how likely it is and what to do, they decide to bring a tent and choose a covered table.

At work: Tariq manages an office move and logs a risk: the internet line might not be installed before moving day. Asking how likely it is and what to do, he marks it as medium likelihood and high impact, and asks the provider for a confirmed date.

2. Assumptions

An assumption is something we treat as true for planning, without having proof yet. Examples are that a supplier will deliver on time or that a team member will be available in May. Unchecked assumptions are a common hidden source of trouble, because when one turns out to be wrong it becomes a risk or an issue. So for each assumption we note who will confirm it and by when.

Example: A family plans a picnic and assumes that the park allows barbecues. Asking what is being taken for granted and who will confirm it, one person calls the park office and finds that barbecues are not allowed.

At work: Tariq assumes that the new office will be ready on the first of the month. Asking what is being taken for granted and who will confirm it, he asks the landlord to confirm in writing. The landlord replies that the painting will finish on the fifth, so Tariq adjusts the plan.

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3. Issues

An issue is a problem that has already happened and needs to be resolved now. Unlike a risk, it is no longer a question of probability. For each issue we record what happened, who will fix it, the deadline and the current status. Closing issues quickly and visibly keeps the project moving and builds trust.

Example: At the picnic, a tyre of the car is flat. Asking what has happened, who will fix it and by when, the family decides that one adult changes the tyre while the others set up the table.

At work: On moving day, Tariq finds that the lift in the new building is out of order. Asking what has happened, who will fix it and by when, he logs the issue with the building manager as owner and a deadline of noon. The boxes move up by the stairs in the meantime.

4. Dependencies

A dependency is a link where our work needs something from another task, team or outside party, or where others need something from us. Late or missing inputs are a common reason for delays, so dependencies deserve their own line in the log. For each one we record what is needed, from whom and by when.

Example: The picnic depends on the grandmother bringing the cake. Asking what is needed from whom and by when, the family asks her on Friday evening to confirm that the cake will arrive by noon.

At work: Tariq lists a dependency: staff cannot use their desks until the IT team installs the network. Asking what is needed from whom and by when, he agrees with the IT lead on a date two days before the move and a message if it slips. The desks are set up on time.

Conclusion

In summary, a RAID log records risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies in one place. Risks might happen, assumptions are taken as true, issues have already happened and dependencies are links to other work. Each entry has an owner, a status and a date. Reviewing the log in regular meetings turns it from a list into a tool. A small log that is kept up to date is more useful than a large one that nobody reads.

Sources

- Asana: RAID log (guide) – https://asana.com/resources/raid-log
- Association for Project Management (APM): Risk management resources – https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/find-a-resource/risk-management/
- Association for Project Management (APM): APM Body of Knowledge – https://www.apm.org.uk/body-of-knowledge/

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