What does project management mean to me - a project manager's sermon

A selection of blog posts from the first ever PM Flash Blog

Conceived by Shim Marom

Compiled by Allen Ruddock

Foreward

By Shim Marom

When I contemplated the idea of having a global project management blogs' collaboration event I didn't quite envisage the excitement that such an idea will have in a 100% virtually driven environment.

I've been thinking about some form of a global collaboration exercise for a couple of years but had difficulty focusing on what exactly it would aim to achieve and how it would be executed. The challenges I was unable to resolve were around scope (i.e. what would the end result of such collaboration be, conceptualizing a viable and sufficiently generic idea that would be acceptable by a large number of contributors) and around execution (how do you approach, manage and co-ordinate a collaboration effort on a grand / global scale).

The solution came to me with the realization that while running a true collaboration initiative might be a bit ambitious, changing the terms-of-reference could result in a suitably satisfactory outcome. And this is how it came to be. Rather than attempting large scale collaboration, engage a large number of project management related bloggers from around the world and get them all to agree to write and publish a post globally at exactly the same time.

The proposed theme for all publications was 'What does project management mean to me - a project manager's sermon'. The intent behind the proposed theme was that contributing bloggers will use this as an opportunity to deliver a genuine, convincing, rational yet emotional message and by doing so, capture the imagination of, and captivate, their audience.

The collection of articles presented in this eBook is thus the culmination of a process that started in preliminary discussions with a couple of bloggers around mid August 2013 and ended up with an explosion of 70, world-wide, blog publications roughly a month later on September 25th, 2013.

While not all posts included in this compendium carry the same title, they have certainly hit the mark in terms of attending to the prescribed concept. They are all engaging, tell a personal story, suggest a unique view point and challenge the readers (and the authors) to dig deeper and explore their own motivation and drive when managing projects.

So what did we achieve?

First and foremost the key objective was to actually be able to administer such a large scale project and make it work. This objective was absolutely met. There were, however, other unintended consequences worth noting. 1) The PM blogging community has become aware of its size and diversity; 2) it introduced us to bloggers of whom we did not hear before; 3) the use of social media and the use of a common #PMFlashBlog hash-tag to track and promote the event; and 4) the apparent desire by many of the participants to turn this into a recurring event.

Irrespective of what the future will hold for this and future initiatives, this eBook is a celebration to our collective creativity, collaboration and good will. I personally drew an immense satisfaction from not only the process itself but from being able to communicate and collaborate with so many like minded, gifted and experienced project managers. If I could integrate but a small portion of the lessons arising from the intellectual material available in this pack I will be a much better person and project manager for it.

This has been an outstanding team effort and I thank you all for that.
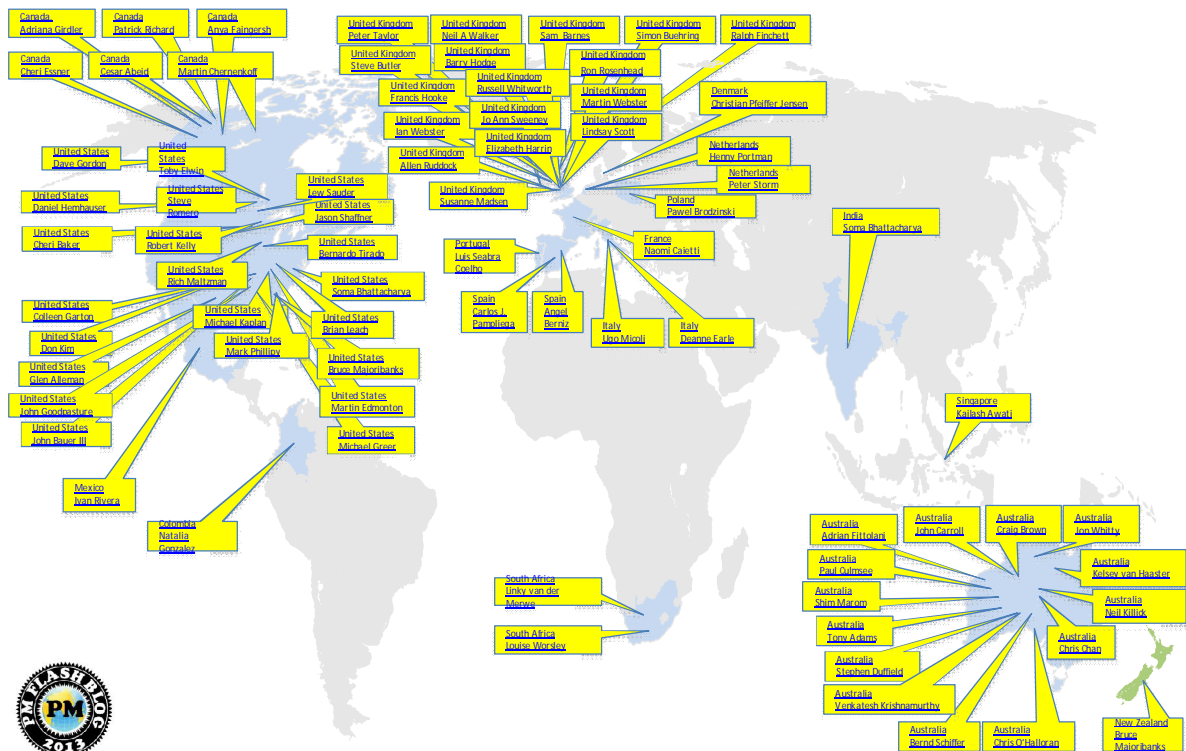
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Infographic by Henry Portman

Canada Adriana Girdler
Canada Patrick Richard
Canada Anya Faingersh
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Australia Stephen Duffield
Australia Venkatesh Krishnamurthy
Australia Bernd Schiffer
Australia Chris O'Halloran
New Zealand Bruce Majoribanks

Infographic by Henny Portman, 2013

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Name	Cesar Abeid
Blog	http://pmforthemasses.com
Twitter	@pm4tm
Bio	Host of the Project Management for the Masses Podcast. Life is a project. You are the manager. Check out the podcast at http://pmforthemasses.com

Every other year I hop on a plane with my family and fly from Toronto to Seattle for Christmas. Between the restlessness of the children and my grumpiness over the lack of leg room, I eat my mini pretzels, wondering how much longer I will have to sit in that metal tube breathing other people's breath. Five hours is certainly too long.

What I seem to take for granted is that just a few years ago, the only way to make that trip would be by boat, taking a slight detour through the Strait of Magellan. That's where you have to look north to see South America. The trip would take months, and some would die along the way. Heck, some would be born along the way.

But what does that have to do with project management?

Before we could actually fly from coast to coast eating mini pretzels, something amazing was achieved. An unbelievable feat of engineering provided for a much shorter and smoother way of going from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

That project is called the Panama Canal.

The Panama Canal not only changed the way people travelled, but also completely redefined commerce and facilitated trade. The world would not be the same today without it. I was blown away by the history of the construction of the Canal when I interviewed its current project manager for the Construction Industry Podcast.

That is the beauty of a project. It changes how we live. It adds value.

As project managers, we get to watch projects unfold, steering them according to our abilities and external conditions. In a world in which history is marked by milestones such as the pyramids, Roman architecture, works of art, technological breakthroughs such as plumbing and air flight, we realize that each of these were once projects.

Projects allowed us to create tools, which were used to build machines, which are now used to make parts for other machines, which are further used to make products and create services that make the world a different and better place.

But most of all, projects remind us that human efforts are not a zero sum. Projects show us that together we can add more than we take. An iPhone is better than a bucket full of iPhone parts. The Panama Canal has afforded us benefits far beyond what it cost to build it.

So what does project management mean to me? It's pretty simple.

Project management is what made the seemingly impossible task of joining two oceans a reality. Project management is what makes a metal tube full of mini pretzels, crammed legs, and whiny children, fly above the clouds from the CN Tower to the Space Needle.

Project management to me is the science of effectively changing the world. As project managers, we are agents of change. In a culture hungry for change and a better future, project managers are the ones who will eventually deliver it.

What about you? What does project management mean to you?

Name	Samad Aidane	
Blog	http://GuerrillaProjectManagement.com	
Twitter	@samadaidane	
Bio	Samad is passionately committed to coaching leaders, especially those who must achieve results without authority through highly matrixed, cross-functional teams. His clients benefit from his experience in leading change in highly complex and politically charged environments from Public Safety 911 to Enterprise Resource Planning technology change initiatives. To do that, Samad applies the latest findings in social neuroscience to help leaders and teams increase their resilience, mental agility, and stamina.	

The first time I met my brain was 15 years ago, when the doctor showed me MRI scans of a tumor that was growing in my head, causing me unbearable pain, and threatening my life.

After a successful operation, I fully recovered and was back to normal. I soon forgot about my brain.

Few years later, when I became responsible for the toughest project that I have ever managed, I experienced a different kind of pain. That pain led me to meet my brain for the second time. This time, the pain was from chronic fear, anxiety, and anger I was experiencing from my project that drove me deeper and deeper into despair.

Desperate for a relief, I started reading about how the human brain creates fear, anxiety, and anger. Perhaps if I know how my brain creates pain, I may be able to stop it.

Learning about how the brain works helped me see how and why I perceived things the way I did, what triggered my fear, anxiety and anger, and how I responded to them.

Here I share with you what I learned and how it has saved me.

The brain is the source of every thought, feeling, and behavior. The brain controls every bodily function through the central nervous system.

One key concern that keeps your central nervous system awake is keeping you safe. Think of your Central Nervous system as an efficient "Survival Operating System" that has been fine-tuned, through thousands of years of evolution, to keep you alive and safe.

But your "Survival Operating System" is not be optimized to deal with the intense and chronic anxiety, fear, and anger that are the occupational hazards of leading people in projects.

Managing people can be extremely taxing on your system. Internally, you stress about whether you are doing your job or not, whether you are "in control" or not, what others may think of you when you feel like you are not "in charge".

This does nothing but increase your loss of control. The loss of control leads to stress, which in turn leads to anxiety, fear, and anger. All this does is rev up your nervous system.

But you can't lead anyone or learn to lead for that matter when your central nervous system is constantly on fire and out of control. Friedman and Forster suggest negative emotions, such as those associated with high levels of stress, tend to constrict the scope of attention. Negative emotions are triggered in order to signal danger and prepare the body for fight or flight. Cacioppo, Berntson, & Crites found that stress can narrow the scope of perceptual attention. In other words, stress causes the brain to "miss the forest for the trees. All in all, you are not you when you are under chronic stress.

Learning about the brain gave me a language to help me understand my mental experiences as they

happen, especially when I am in intense situations and need to think with clarity and focus.

Learning to calm down my central nervous system helps me see a wide range of options in how I might want to respond to different situations on my projects. I am able to slow down long enough to determine the right way to respond with confidence, clarity, and intent in a way that is aligned with my goals.

This skill is not just important for developing our leadership competencies but also for protecting us from physical and psychological wear-and-tear and burnout – otherwise known as the greatest hits of chronic stress.

My learning journey continues. While I remain "work in progress", with every project I get a chance to evolve into a better version me. Project Management taught me that the most important skill in life is the capacity to learn. I get the opportunity to deal with new people, new experience, and new challenges. And with each challenge, I get to test how low or high my ceiling of complexity is. That is how much ambiguity and uncertainty my central nervous system can cope with, before I feel loss of control. I get to learn about who I am and what I am capable of. But more importantly, with every project I get to learn how to continue to raise the ceiling.

This is what Project Management means to me.

	Name	Kailash Awati
	Blog	http://eight2late.wordpress.com
	Twitter	@kailashawati
	Bio	Lapsed physicist. Interested in systems, organisations and the people who make them. Co-author of The Heretic's Guide to Best Practices (http://hereticsguidebooks.com)

What project management means to me – a metalogue

Salviati: Hello Simplicio, I haven't seen you for a while. Where have you been?

Simplicio: Salviati! It is good to see you. I've been busy learning about project management.

Salviati: That is good news indeed, Simplicio. How are you learning? Are you working on a project?

Simplicio: No, of course not; I'm still learning. I don't think my boss would let me work on a real project until I've completed my

Salviati: Certification? Now I'm really curious.

Simplicio: Oh yes, and as a part of it I'm reading this wonderful book that is the authoritative guide to project management. I'm also attending an evening discussion group twice a week where I get to explore the finer details of "The Book". It's great! We have some experienced project managers in the group who tell us stories.

Salviati: That's good, and I would pay more attention to their stories than the tools and techniques in "The Book".

Simplicio: Really? Why would I want to listen to a bunch of stories about old projects? Surely it's the tools and techniques that are more important. Stories are….well, just stories. Half of them are probably embellished anyway.

Salviati: May be so, but the fact is, project managers often make sense of their work by constructing stories about it.

Simplicio: What do you mean "make sense of their work?"

Salviati: Well, despite project managers' best efforts, things never quite go as planned: team members fall sick or leave the company; vendors do not deliver on time; users change their requirements on a daily basis…I could go on. When these things happen, project managers need to understand what has happened so that they can devise appropriate responses. They often do this by building narratives of what happened or, in simple terms, by telling stories.

Simplicio: To be perfectly honest I think the real reason things go wrong is that people do not follow processes properly. It seems to me that storytelling is just a means to cover up the truth, a rationalisation.

Salviati: Ah, truth. You see, Simplicio, truth in such situations is often a matter of opinion. Different stakeholders will have different views on what happened. Say a vendor is late in delivering something – the customer may see it as gross incompetence whereas the vendor will, no doubt, have a perfectly reasonable explanation. So, whose truth is the truth? And even if you were able to answer that, does it really matter? As a project manager, you're on the spot; you have to move ahead despite the setback. The truth doesn't help you here, and neither does process. In fact trying to get to the truth and insisting on process may only end up exacerbating the problem.

Simplicio: Hmm, OK, you may have a point there, but are you suggesting there is nothing of value in

"The Book?" Is it all just impractical theory?

Salviati: Oh don't get me wrong, it is necessary to know the stuff in that's in "The Book". But it is also important to remember that there is a gap between theory and practice.

Simplicio: Gap between theory and practice?

Salviati: Yes there is a significant gap between what is taught in business schools (or written in "The Book") and the way managers actually do their jobs. The former is called espoused theory and the latter, theory in use. Espoused theory works in an ideal world where cause-effect relationships are unambiguous, and uncertainty can be predicted and planned for. This is the sort of world that is depicted in those pretty process diagrams that people draw on a whiteboard. In the real world, however, causes aren't always apparent and best laid plans often go awry. Managers have to deal with this. When doing so, they often improvise on what they have learnt through experience. What books and project theorists tend to overlook is that planning and improvisation are complementary facets of project work. Indeed the most compelling project management stories are about improvisation; about what people did when theory or process was no help at all.

Simplicio: So you're saying that theory is incomplete…

Salviati: Absolutely! Theory cannot teach you what experience does. You see, many project management skills are tacit, they can only be learned by doing. Would you pick up a book about guitar and music theory and expect to play like a virtuoso in an afternoon… or even a month or a year? . So it is with project management.   But, look, tacitness is not the only issue. Another major shortcoming of project management, as it is taught, is that it overlooks the fact that every project is invariably part of a larger system: namely, the hosting organisation and its environment. Understanding this is critical to the success of a project.

Simplicio: I'm not sure I understand what you mean by "a larger system".

Salviati: Consider the question of project failure. Many experts will tell you that the top causes of project failure are things like "lack of executive support" or "lack of user input" or even "incomplete requirements." What these experts do not understand is that these are symptoms rather than causes. The true causes of failure invariably lie in the hosting organisation, not the project. For example, "lack of user input" often occurs because users typically work on projects in addition to their normal duties. It is but natural that they will therefore view projects as burdens rather than initiatives that might benefit them in the future. The fault here lies beyond the project. These kinds of issues need to be negotiated through open dialogue between all affected stakeholders rather than via top-down decrees.

Simplicio: OK, I understand the importance of taking a system-based view, but what is "open dialogue"?

Salviati: Ever worked for a team or organization where there are some things that can never be discussed? Ever had bosses who only want to know the good news? Most projects have many different stakeholder groups, each with their own view of the project and motivations. Sponsors, managers, project teams and users – all have their own view on a project's objectives. As strange as it may sound, these viewpoints are often divergent, but are never reconciled until it's too late. …

Simplicio: [interrupting] That's crazy! Why would project managers allow themselves to get into a situation where they are managing projects in which stakeholders hold different views on things like scope? That is completely against what "The Book" says! According to it, things such as scope issues should not be ambiguous at all.

Salviati: Ah, now we get to the heart of the matter! Yes, it is crazy when you think about it, but we are dealing with office hierarchy and politics, as well individual rationality. Many organisations have a blame culture – and as a result, people tend to position themselves for blame avoidance. This creates all sorts of dysfunctional behaviours, and makes it very difficult to discuss things openly. The

trick – and why you need to listed to the stories – is to break down these barriers so that a group can engage in open dialogue that will bring such issues out into the open.

Simplicio: OK, I see your point, but what about the unknown unknowns – issues that no one can foresee at the start.

Salviati: That's where trust comes in. The point is, if key stakeholders have a relationship based on trust, they will feel comfortable about informing each other of potential uncertainties as they emerge. They can then work together to address the uncertainty without the usual finger pointing and blame shifting that typically occurs in organisations. They will be no better than anyone else at predicting the future, but they will be able to deal with whatever comes up because they will face it as a group.

Simplicio: Sounds good, but how does one get stakeholders to trust one another and discuss issues openly?

Salviati: Well, as I mentioned earlier, much of present-day project management practice operates within a cause and effect paradigm do this and that will happen. Instead the focus ought to be on creating the right conditions or environment in which a group of people can collaborate and work together as a genuine team.   There's a ton of interesting work on this – some of it dating back to the 1950s

Simplicio: Why hasn't anyone mentioned this in our discussion group? This is really important!

Salviati: The "conditions over causes" argument is yet to make an impact on mainstream practice – particularly in project management. Unfortunately, those who wrote the "The Book" (and those who update it) seem to be unaware that conditions are more important than causes. It is a completely different way of looking at projects, so it may take a while for aficionados of "The Book" to make the change. That said, I'm an optimist so I believe that it will eventually catch on; it is just a matter of time …

[Salviati's watch alarm goes off, cutting him off mid-sentence. He glances at it]

Speaking of time, we're all prisoners of time, it seems. I've got to go; I'm late for a meeting. We'll continue our conversation later.

Simplicio: Thanks Salviati. I'd very much like that as I'm curious to hear more about your thoughts on this.

Salviati (turning to leave): Sure, I'll be delighted to chat about it. Let's meet on the weekend. Catch you later.

Simplicio: See you later.

[The two depart, going their separate ways]

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Postscript

A metalogue is a real or imaginary conversation whose structure resembles the topic being discussed. This piece is inspired by Gregory Bateson's metalogues in Part 1 of his book, Steps To an Ecology of Mind.

The characters in the above metalogue are borrowed from Galileo's Dialogue Concerning The Two Chief World Systems in which the character Salviati is a proponent of the Copernican "heresy" that the Earth is not at the centre of the universe whereas Simplicio favours the Geocentric

view proposed by the Greek philosopher Ptolemy.

Name	Sam Barnes
Blog	http://www.thesambarnes.com
Twitter	@thesambarnes
Bio	Although a little short for a Stormtrooper, Sam Barnes has been working in the digital space for over 10 years, mostly as a Web Project Manager, and is currently a Web Development Team Manager.

To me, project management means controlling chaos with a strong determined smile and tenacious attitude that means stuff gets done.

Imagine being smack bang in the middle of many people of varying seniority, many above you, who are all pulling in different directions despite all wanting the same thing, the project you're managing to be delivered successfully.

Project management is not for the faint hearted.

[image-caption] Project management means that many of your days will feel like this.

Image source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/glamhag/1459620709

However project management isn't all doom, gloom and stress. Out of the controlled chaos comes a great feeling of accomplishment and pride when you finish a challenging project, when a team is working well or a client is happy.

These kinds of success are almost always aided by good project management and thus ultimately project management to me means making everyone else's job easy. This is what makes people happy and this is what results in successful projects.

Thus Project Managers have to master the art of being the office chameleon, blending into very different environments at the drop of a hat.

One minute you're talking to irate developers about server issues and working out how best to help resolve the issue, the next you're in a Director's office talking about financial reporting and finally followed up by briefing a photographer on the creative direction you'd like them to take.

Most people end up specialising, project management means having the ability to wear many hats, a skill not many have or fully appreciate.

[image-caption]Some people struggle to wear one hat, let alone many.

Image source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/dippy_duck/4516253140

Successful project management also resulted in the Death Star being built. Case closed.

Name	John F. Bauer III
Blog	http://midwestitsurvival.com
Twitter	@jfbauer
Bio	IT and Security professional writing about the challenges of managing teams and delivering solutions in large companies where IT isn't the company's core product or service.

As those that read my blog (please click on the About This Author (http://midwestitsurvival.com/about-the-author/) if you haven't), I primarily focus on corporate IT concepts in large organizations that consume plenty of IT, but IT isn't the company's core product or service. Projects and project managers play the role of herding the proverbial cats in order to deliver material IT change in these large environments. With that being said, project management in large organizations tends to be exceedingly challenging. Project Management Offices are staffed with folks trying to implement appropriate processes such as Project Life-Cycles (PLC) and Software Development Life-Cycles (SDLC) with all kinds of project toll gates to try and monitor project spend as well as quality metrics and other such governance structures. Additionally, Project Managers report to Program Managers that report to Portfolio Managers and into Enterprise PMOs in these matrix-ed/dotted line organizations. On top of that, reporting structures are constantly vacillating between a central pool of project management talent everyone draws from to talent directly reporting into the IT solution delivery teams. With hundreds and thousands of IT workers all trying to get work done, implementing change while trying to maintain the stability of production services makes strong project managers critical to the successful delivery of change. Thus, when Shim Marom (https://twitter.com/shim_marom) asked if I wanted to participate in this flashblog (http://list.ly/list/7Or-pmflashblog-contributors?) on the topic of "What does Project Management mean to me", I jumped at the chance to add my voice in with all of the excellent bloggers Shim has assembled on this topic.

What does Project Management mean to me? Or ...

The three attributes of IT project management that make an effective project manager stand out amongst their peers.

1. Knowledge of the PLC/SDLC, but more importantly, the processes behind the processes

An attribute that makes a project manager effective in their role in a large IT shop is knowing all of the project processes inside and out. The project manager essentially helps guide the core project team members through those formal processes such as funding tollgates, quality milestones, as well as project and technical reviews. If an engineer has to stop engineering things in order to determine what document or form they need to fill-out in order to request a review of some deliverable or artifact they don't know needs to contain who knows what content, it adds considerable stress on to the engineer as well as adds delay and overall confusion to the project team. For a project manager to be effective, knowing these processes thoroughly is essentially table stakes in a large IT shop.

Now, what makes a project manager excel in their role is knowing all the processes behind the processes and all the people that can help move those process steps forward. The majority of these project process steps involve someone or some group that needs to hear or see certain information in they way they are used to seeing or hearing it in order to approve the project team to move forward or assign a critical resource to complete a task. For example, Sally in "Project Accounting" needs to have a certain spreadsheet filled out a certain way for these certain type of hours to be accounted for in this cell and those other hours accounted for in that other cell. When Sally gets that spreadsheet filled out in exactly the way she is used to seeing it, she can quickly push the "Approve" button in the project management system that enables, say, corporate procurement to indicate the vendor on the project will get paid and thus the vendor can start working. When Sally has to explain

exactly what she needs in order to push that button, it is typically impossible to get a hold of her to join a meeting and when she does, she confuses everyone with her extreme accounting lingo that no engineer can comprehend and thus begins the rinse and repeat cycle of throwing darts at the spreadsheet in hopes you get Sally what she needs. Being able to support the project team with this critical knowledge of how to get through the "Sally-gate" with the minimum of fuss is what makes a project manager excel in a large IT shop. A project manager with this type of value add is constantly in demand and frequently requested to lead projects to the point of having to turn work away in my experience.

2. Ability to translate a technical goal into the bare minimum of project steps to complete

Another attribute of a strong project manager is their ability to understand a project team's technical goal and be able to translate that into the bare minimum project steps to achieve that goal. Here is an example project team conversation that illuminates this attribute:

Joe Project Technical Lead = "Ok, engineer Bob just found this software component that looks to do exactly what we thought we would have to pay the vendor to do in their product. We need to get this into the test environment in order to see it interact enough in some real world scenarios in order to make the call on using it or go back to the original expensive vendor option. We don't have enough data and integrated systems in the dev environment to really determine if this is gonna work. How can we avoid all the testing and validation steps that the SDLC says the testing team needs before giving the green light to install this for us to use in Test?"

Project Manager = "Well, because of all the production problems recently, those testing steps we used to be able to get a pass on are now absolutely enforced. I haven't heard of anyone in the last month getting a pass to skip a single step."

Joe Project Technical Lead = "We don't have two months to go through all the rounds of testing of a new component just to find out it is crap."

Project Manager = "Ok, I have a plan.

Joe Project Technical Lead = "I'm all ears.

Project Manager = "Have Bob ask Judy in Operations to open a trouble ticket on the Flim-Flam app. Have Bob give you the trouble ticket number he gets from Judy. Then you call Tim in the support team and let him know you have a patch for that trouble ticket. If we call it a patch not a new component, Tim's team can install it in the Test environment as a 'production defect resolution'. Have Bob install it in Dev, write up the patch install documentation and attach that doc to the trouble ticket resolution section. Once Bob has done that, you can call Tim and ask for a resource from his team to install the patch indicating the docs are attached to the ticket. If I call, it will look like the project is making the request. If you call, it is Development providing a defect fix. Then have Bob go through the emergency development access process to the Test environment after Tim's resource has updated the trouble ticket with a patch installed status. Bob can do whatever testing you think you need to make the call if it is gonna work or not."

Joe Project Technical Lead = "Do you think Judy is going to go along with this plan? In order to back all this out, she is going to have to call back in and say the trouble ticket can be closed because the defect wasn't an actual defect.

Project Manager = "Yes, I've worked with Judy before. Plus, her team benefits from some of the new functionality delivered in this project phase, so she has a vested interest in helping us push this forward. Plus, Tim is under pressure to show progress in trouble ticket closure metrics, thus he is going to want to get an offshore resource engaged to close this new ticket quickly.

Joe Project Technical Lead = "Ok. I'll grab Bob and fill him in on the plan."

A project manager that just reiterates the formal process maybe doing their job, but a project

manager that knows how to translate a project goal, in this example, additional hands-on confidence in a change to the project solution, brings real project management value to the project team.

3. Attention to detail and follow through

In trying to narrow down to three strong project management attributes a project manager needs to have to excel at project management in a large IT shop, having a strong attention to detail and follow through may seem, again, table stakes for all project managers. In my experience, there is a constant state of noise surrounding a corporate IT project that needs constant squelching. In contrast, short running projects, of which there are very few in large shops, can usual squeak by with minimal outside interference. That minimal interference can usually be addressed by an average project manager. Projects that run many months or years don't have that luxury.

For long running projects, it is absolutely critical for the project manager to be completely on top of all the noise and know who to engage to ensure the noise can be ignored or if the noise represents a material impact to the project. One example of noise is a newly proposed enterprise component that everyone needs to use that, on the surface, sounds like a critical path item for the project team, in reality, has no funding support and no project toll gate or review that will enforce its use. Such noise, once determined to be true noise, needs to be cast out of scope to keep the project resources focused on delivery as quickly as possible. An example of noise that can't be ignored might be a new project funding review activity that has enough executive support to warrant proactive insertion of the project into the review pipeline ASAP to ensure smooth sailing through the new process. Ignoring such noise results in the discovery, down the road, of a roadblock when the project is at a critical milestone. Scrambling resources in a finance "fire drill" activity late in the project is obviously inefficient. Calls of "How come we didn't know about this sooner? Does this put the delivery date in jeopardy?" from the project sponsor cast considerable doubt on the effectiveness of the project manager.

Thus, seemingly table stakes for a project manager to be attentive to details, the larger the project the more the need for a project manager to be vetting out details and sorting out noise from real project activities. Project managers that have the skills and intra-company relationships to quick vet the noise and squelch or engage efficiently excel at delivering projects on time, on budget and without undue stress on the project team.

P.S. This post is published as part of a first ever project management related global blogging initiative to publish a post on a common theme at exactly the same time. Seventy four (74!) bloggers from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and the USA have committed to make a blogging contribution and the fruit of their labor is now (literally NOW) available all over the web. The complete list of all participating blogs is found here (http://list.ly/list/7Or-pmflashblog-contributors?) so please go and check them out!

Name	Angel Berniz	
Blog	http://www.projectmanagers.org	
Twitter	@angelberniz	
Bio	Angel Berniz is a dynamic professional widely seasoned with Project and Service Management. For the last 15 years he has been involved in a vast number of projects and services in which he has defined and implemented the capabilities for their successful government and management. He has done this as a top management advisor and also directly as the manager.	

Being a Project Manager is one of the most exciting professions you can have.

From the perspective of a Project Manager, the world can be managed as a set of projects, and this is just what I do in my everyday life.

Project Management is a life style (like being a priest). When you have acquired the knowledge required for applying the best practices, tools and techniques on Project Management, you can apply it to any part of your life: vacations, interests, family plans, education, writing a book, etc.

In fact, recently we have applied it to the new publication book that we are performing at the ServiceManagers.org community, where one of authors has developed a Business Case for the book project.

Any new thing that I plan to do, if I really want to achieve my new objective, it managed as a project and has more possibilities to become a reality.

This way, I don't have to 'invent' how to do it. I simply apply my Project Management knowledge and follow step-by-step the PM processes. It is very simple, because it is an everyday practice.

Then when I go to my job, it is also all very simple. I continue working in a Project Management approach for all the new things to be performed.

It doesn't matter if it is an 'implementation project', a 'proposal project', an 'event project' or a 'cooking project'. I can manage all these new challenges by applying Project Management. And in this way, everything becomes more simple to make things real.

By having the ability to make things happen, it also means having a great motivation to achieve new ones.

In my point of view, Project Management is a powerful knowledge for motivation (self-motivation and corporate motivation).

If we see that we can manage difficult objectives and achieve them by using a PM structured framework such as ISO 21500, we can feel unstoppable and limitless!! Imagine how many new things we can do then!!

So in summary, in my point of view, Project Management is a practice for your entire life (personal and professional). It's like having the ability to change the world.

Name	Angel Berniz
Blog	http://www.projectdirectors.org
Twitter	@angelberniz
Bio	Angel Berniz is a dynamic professional widely seasoned with Project and Service Management. For the last 15 years he has been involved in a vast number of projects and services in which he has defined and implemented the capabilities for their successful government and management. He has done this as a top management advisor and also directly as the manager.

As a Project Director, project management is the practice that guides my decisions.

There are many professions and professionals that don't have a verified and clear reference guide to help them to perform their work. But that's not the problem of a Project Director.

Project Management over the last four decades has concentrated all the best practices to manage difficult projects and make them real.

Our PMO helps many Project Managers to perform their assigned projects. All these projects are delivered to our Customers by the same brand (our company). So, they have to apply similar standardized approaches and deliver them in the professional manner that has been defined.

Project Management drives all of us (Project Managers and Project Directors) to apply proven and value-driven processes, tools and techniques to achieve success through ISO 21500.

Only if we are conscious of the framework approach we have implemented, can we also analyze our Lessons Learned, and with that improve our capacity to drive change.

Life is change. It doesn't matter if you presently earn a lot of money. You don't have any guarantee that tomorrow you will earn any of it. Nowadays, everything changes very fast. Only people and organizations that have the knowledge to successfully drive change will survive.

So in my opinion, Project Management is the definitive solution to drive change.

But we don't need only to successfully drive our change. Also we need to do it better than our competition. Let's mention for Nokia or Blackberry as examples. They have had very good products but have driven change more slowly than their competition.

So, Project Management is the value that makes the difference for a person and company. There is never a high-mark for not continuing to improve it. Is there a maximum profit or success that you desire?. The more excellence in Project Management you have, the more successes you will achieve.

That is the reason why in the last four decades Project Management has been developed by professionals and also why it will continue developing always.

Because in the end, we all can be better leaders who drive our actions to take advantage of change.

Name	Craig Brown
Blog	BetterProjects.nethttp://www.arra-pm.com/blog
Twitter	@brown_note
Bio	Craig Brown has been writing about project management since 2005 at BetterProjects.com. He is a Melbourne based project manager, trainer and consultant. His main focus these days is on building up collaboration, community and connections with customers as ways for improving the way we work.

Identity, power and relationships matter. Project management is a multifaceted tool that can help you manage yours.

I have been blogging on project management since - holy cow - 2005. You would think by now that I would have this question answered. And once upon a time I did. And then I learned more and I didn't again. And then I learned more, and I was able to answer the question again. And today I am not so sure. The lessons are never ending, but there are probably a few fundamental truths at the heart of it.

Let me start with looking at what a project manager is.

Am I a project manager? I am a person with multiple aspects to my identity. There is work me, parent me, partner me, son me, friend me, blogger me, chaotic social networker me and more. Project management is one aspect of my identity. I do it as a job sometimes, and sometimes I do it as an activity within a different job role. Sometimes, I am not a project manager at all.

So I might be a project manager, depending on what I am doing and where I am when you ask me. Or I might not. I suspect the same is true for you.

Job roles, and the related characteristics of identity are an award of organisational power. It's pretty good to have a power job title when you want to influence other people with their identity wrapped up in their ideas of power and control at work. It gets you access to other people in power, particularly the ones that manage the status quo.

Project management can bring power, yes. But not on it's own. You have to step up and take it. You have to be there. You have to have a point of view. You need confidence in yourself with these people or you'll get dismissed and probably never be able to recover until you change companies or departments.

Fortunately project management gives you a toolbox of things to be an expert in, which people have come to value over the years. I am not sure whether people value these competencies for any universal reason, but the project management industry has done a good job of selling the benefits of bringing in a project manager who does formal, recognized Project Management Things.
For a while I suspected the fundamental value of a project manager was the ability to manage forward estimates. We do this differently from other people. We apply disciplined and arcane planning and estimating practices that factor in things like past performance, uncertainty and risk.

This is a particular differentiation from a normal 'non-project' manager, because things like managing, processes, and products are "normal" management activities. I learned that when I read the PMBOK years ago. Normal management was out of scope of the Body of Knowledge, because it was standing apart from normal management. Not because normal management skills such as listening to staff and helping them be successful were not things to be done, but because they were considered 'default' behaviours.

Paying attention to people, the ones on the team, and the clients and customers we work for, is our main job. It's not an explicit part of the project manager lore, but it is the most important thing we do at work. As people doing work with people for other people, we need to improve our skills in

listening and understanding. While that's not exclusive to project management it is tied inextricably to what we do. How can we be successful in the work we do without paying attention to people.

As project managers, we need to understand what motivates our staff and what our clients and customer value. To do that we need to know them, to spend time with them and to understand them. A critically important idea is that we need to learn to connect with our customers and understand them better.

The other, lesser, but still important parts of project management are to bring discipline and technique to planning, forecasting and managing uncertainty while the project is underway. These are useful things, but not sufficient in the context that matters; providing value for our clients. And yet, they are things you must excel at if you are to call yourself a project manager.

By building these planning and managing skills, you earn yourself a place in the discussions about what does matter to the organisation and to its customers. You will be invited to bring project management competencies and knowledge to the steering teams and client discussions that are highly valued and affect the strategy of your company. You will also participate as a human, not just a role. You will have the opportunity to bring your other knowledge and experience to the discussions. You will influence their decisions about what to do and how it should be done on both your and other projects. You will get to use your influence and place in these discussions to help the team be successful, by providing advice to partners and clients or brokering understanding across networks of people involved in the project.

What does success look like? Success comes before the end of the project, but not at the beginning, although you might have early clues about your chances. For me the beginning of a project provides an opportunity to feel success but you won't be sure.

You know that frantic insanity that Hunter S Thompson opens Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas? That sense of overwhelming paranoia? Anything and everything could go wrong, and you don't know where the problems are going to start, or where they are going to come from. To me this is exhilarating and exciting. And important. It gives you urgency and mission. You just don't know whether you'll be able to beat the system or not, but you know you have to get started… now.

After a while, you knock out some wins and the project starts to build a rhythm and produce a set of valued outcomes. You'll have some credibility with your clients and partners. You'll have tested the delivery environment and understand the your chances of success and the various risks that will get in your way. If project management can be likened to a game, you'll feel like you know the rules.

Success manifests in the people around you; the team are confident and regarded as doing a good job. The client and stakeholders feel informed and included, and part of a broader team. Success is palpable. Confidence is in the air. There's a noticeable lack of stress and worry. People are talking about value, and opportunities rather than risks and problems. You'll know it when your there. You'll feel it.

And when you consistently nail your projects this way you are ready to tackle the next level - bigger, tougher environments, more complex problems. And you start afresh, knowing that success is not an indicator of who you are, but a score in a game. And you'll have the quiet confidence to go to work on these problems because you are constantly testing and challenging yourself to grow and be a better player.

You know that project performance doesn't mean you, as a person, are a success or failure. Your value as a person is something else. Your projects all deliver value in one form or another. Your job becomes one of generating mutual understanding about value and options rather than rushing to a deadline. Your personal successes will be measured in the relationships you form with people, with the value you see created from bringing people together and in helping the world around you navigate change.

Name	Simon Buehring
Blog	http://www.knowledgetrain.co.uk/blog/latest.php
Twitter	@PRINCE2course
Bio	The founder and Managing Director of Knowledge Train and a PRINCE2 and project management trainer and consultant.

#pmFlashBlog

"The **greatest** human achievements of all came about due to **project management**. The **greatest** human achievement in the future will be to **stop** global warming **destroying them**."

Whenever you think of any of the grand achievements from human history they all required an understanding and application of project management techniques.

Think of the Egyptian pyramids, Rome's Coliseum, India's Taj Mahal and New York's Empire State Building. All of these are perfect examples of what project management means – which is to take an idea which only exists in someone's imagination and to construct something which reflects in a concrete form those thoughts in the real world.

Leaving aside the fact that many of these ancient wonders were vain attempts to leave everlasting memories of often cruel leaders, pharaohs or kings, they also epitomised something which sets humans apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. That is the ability of humans to form abstract ideas and to be able to communicate such ideas to others. Without this ability, humans would never have been able to develop the tools needed to gain mastery over the natural world.

A world without project managers?

So, would human advancement have occurred without project management? No, because every new tool which was invented, every improvement in human society which occurred, and every change in our daily life was a deliverable of one project or another.

Does that mean that earlier humans had an understanding of project management? Possibly. Of course they didn't have qualifications in PRINCE2® or PMP® certification which we have, but they may have had methods which were verbally handed down from one generation to another.

With the advancement of the written word, it's possible that best practices might have been communicated this way as well. Was there a "Roman patrician's guide to managing amphitheatre projects"? I don't know, but what I am certain of, is that we wouldn't have been able to put a man on the moon, eradicate smallpox or rebuild the twin towers were it not for the project management achievements of the past.

So, is project management also advancing, just as technology has advanced since we learned how to fashion a flint stone? Yes it is. The combined experiences of thousands of project managers, managing tens of thousands of projects over many years forms the project management best

practices of today.

Available for download on your Kindle, or available to be learned on a workshop, these modern project management methods are an attempt to provide project managers with workable sets of tools and techniques. These can help us turn our client's ideas into deliverables which they can then use in their own beneficial way.

Human communication

What modern project management methods cannot do however, is provide us with the most important and fundamental skill of all – that of communication. Of all the project management skills, this is the one which is the hardest of all. It is this skill however, which if humans had failed to learn would mean that as a species we'd still be no different from the rest of the animal world.

So, learn and read about project management and get the latest qualification by all means. But, the one skill which will elevate you and which will enable you to deliver the most fantastic deliverables from your projects is the ability to communicate with your fellow human beings.

All the work performed on projects is done by people. They need to know what's expected of them, they need to be motivated to work for the common aims, and they need to be able to visualize complex things before they have been created. They need to be able to cooperate together, to resolve differences and to put aside petty wants. It's the project manager who needs to facilitate such things.

Challenges today

In a world dominated by wonderful human and technological achievements – the most amazing modern cities, technology and infrastructure for example, the world faces a myriad of challenges.

Global warming threatens to destroy many of the achievements of the past. Rising sea levels, if left unchecked, will flood many of the world's great cities. Droughts will cause hunger leading to millions of refugees. Wars between nations will increase as resources get scarcer.

Project managers have a role to play in helping prevent this catastrophe by using that most precious project management skill of all – communication.

So project managers, I call on you to help persuade your fellow human beings and politicians of the impending catastrophe so that they do something to prevent it.

The greatest human achievements of all came about due to project management. The greatest human achievement in the future will be to stop global warming destroying them.

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Name	Steve Butler PMP
Blog	http://www.pmpartners.co.uk/project-management-resources/blog/default.asp
Twitter	@SteveButlerPMP
Bio	Steve is Head of Delivery at PM-Partners, and was previously Head of Projects & PMO at the Financial Times - as well as serving as the European representative on the PMI Standards Core Committee tasked with defining and writing the Portfolio Standard 5th Edition. Currently, he serves as Associate Director of the PMI. He also sat on the Harmonization Committee, ensuring integration across the latest editions of the PMI programme and project standards (as published in December 2012). He currently sits on the governance board tasked with creating the new Portfolio Management Professional (PfMP) qualification, due for release in December 2013. He has been delivering projects and programmes, large and small, across a variety of sectors for most of the last 20 years, and is a part-time body double for The Hulk.

Project management is all about change. Strip out all the latest fads, standards and gimmicks and at its heart all project management really boils down to is a risk mitigation exercise when you are trying to effect change – be it deliver a product or a service or an update.

Keep that thought at the front of your mind when managing a project, and everything becomes common sense. You are changing something, and you want to get it right. So what do you need to consider?

Well, you need to make sure "it" is the right thing...so some sort of requirements gathering exercise and scoping exercise is needed so you can hit the target. To do that you need to make sure you are talking to the right people to find out the right information, and to make sure you are keeping the right people up to speed with what you are doing – so some sort of communications management and stakeholder happiness plan needs to be in place. Obviously when you gather the requirements and define the scope, a budget and a timeline needs to be defined and managed, and how they progress needs to be communicated (hence having a communications plan). Within the timeline will be milestones and deliverables and some sort of mechanism for delivering them and reviewing the milestones.
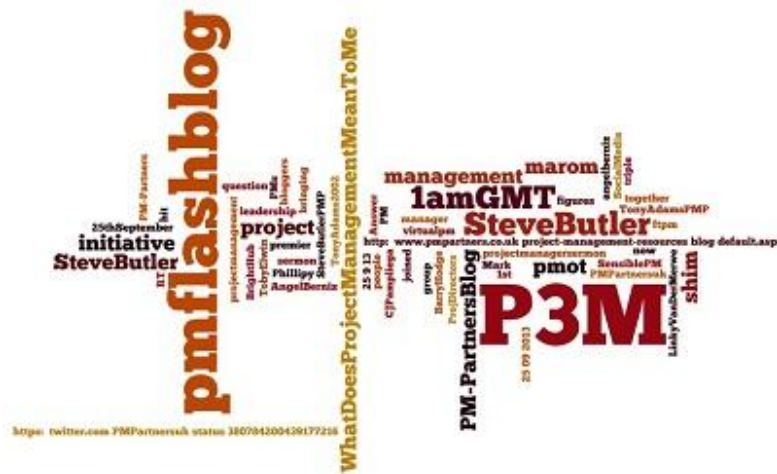
Part of making sure you hit the target is making sure the quality of what you are doing is acceptable, so some sort of plan to manage that is necessary.

You can think about assembling the team, and keeping them happy and efficient. If you're not sure exactly what you're doing, maybe deliver in bits and make sure you are heading in the right direction by regularly reviewing with someone who knows what is required. Maybe regularly review with the team to make sure they are doing the right thing and have no blockers you don't know about. We could call that basic concept, oh I don't know, Agile? A concept that has been around for decades, but now has a name!

Project Management – an exercise in common sense.

Name	Naomi Caietti
Blog	http://theglassbreakers.weebly.com/index.html
Twitter	@califgirl232/@theglassbreaker
Bio	Founder of The Glassbreakers. Living and loving life in California. A certified geek at heart; my passions and personal interests are focused in Project Management, Information Technology (IT), Women in IT, Leadership, social media, sports, art/wine, healthy living and all things California.
	Leadership Philosophy: *"Influence others, build consensus, and be persistent to achieve success!"*

Today, I've stepped up to the challenge to participate in the first ever #PMFlashBlog created by Shim Marom with over eighty (80)+ bloggers from around the globe. Shim, my hats off to you for the inspiration of this big idea! It has mobilized our global community to wear different hats to tell our stories, created a writing storm of grand proportion and allowed us to shine as a collective of PM experts.

Our objective today is to respond to the question "What Project Management Means to Me?" Today, my story is both personal and academic. Over a year ago, my personal coach recommended I watch Simon Sineks' Ted Talk titled "How Great Leaders Inspire Action" based on his book "Start with Why". Simon contends that "people don't buy what you do; people buy why you do it." It was this inspiration that lead me on a year long journey of introspection of my vision and values. It was the hard work I focused on this past year for my passion in the field of personal growth and leadership in project management that allowed me to tell my story by re-launching my blog and sharing this post with you today.

Why is Six Hat Thinking Important to Project Management?

Early in my career as a project manager I learned how to use the Six Hat Thinking® method in a facilitated critical thinking class. Edward de Bono created this tool in his book called "Six Thinking Hats". Six Hat Thinking is a core skills tool used to develop an atmosphere of creativity, improved communication and allow your team to focus on clearer thinking. Research by The de Bono Group has identified that traditional Western thinking methods of analysis and argument needs to get flipped on its head to deal with the rapidly changing business challenges in the global economy.

In the spirit of the inspiration of Six Hat Thinking I, like many other project managers around the globe, wear different hats to make decisions every day that affect our teams, our projects and our organizations. Personally, I focus on wearing the multiple thinking hats below each day to LEAD ~ Listen, Engage, Adapt, Dream:

Yellow Hat: Stay active within the global PM community as a thought leader, speaker, published author and blogger. Engage and share with my community of project managers to advance the profession one project manager at a time.

Multiple Hats: (Blue, Green, Yellow, Red, White, Black) As a credentialed Manager and Enterprise Architect working in the field of
Information Technology in the public sector in California I practice leadership daily to pay it forward.

Green Hat: Launch a startup as Founder of a women's network called "The Glass Breakers" with a vision to inspire women to lead and promote excellence in projects, leadership and management.

Who Can Use this Tool:

Project, Program and Agile Managers can use this powerful tool. You can use this tool in a small or larger group setting to facilitate a discussion to solve problems.

How/When to Use:
Small, core or focus group team meetings are the best way to facilitate these discussions.

Method:
This tool uses a parallel thinking process for you to gain different perspectives while you collaborate on problems, issues and risks on you project with your team, stakeholders and sponsors.

What Are the Six Thinking Hats:

© Paul Foreman http://www.mindmapinspiration.com
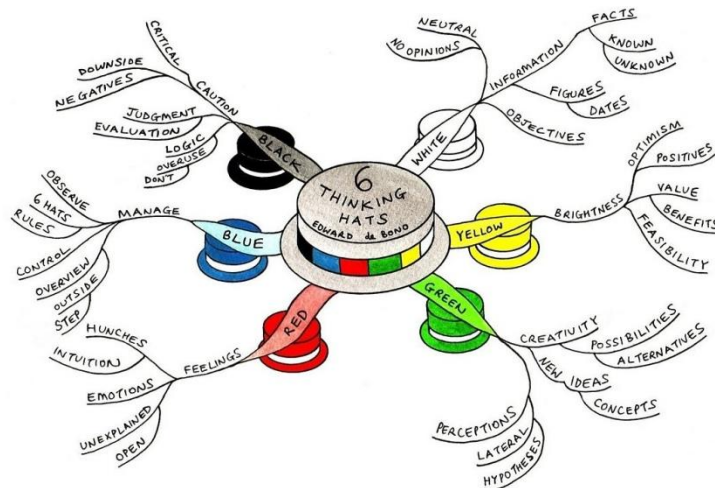
Examples of How to Use:

Single Hat Thinking:
 Use a single hat to facilitate and direct discussion around this type of thinking.

Sequenced Based Thinking:
You can facilitate a sequence of hats one after another during the discussion. Sequence of hats may be one or more hats of your choice. You may facilitate the discussion and use one particular hat often.

Time based Thinking:
Brief discussions of one hat per minute per person.

Summary:
Six Hat Thinking is simple yet powerful way to focus on problems and solutions quickly by viewing different perspectives.
 Employ parallel thinking - look at fresh ideas and solutions from all angles

Unbundle ideas; look at information and formulate thinking with the same hat

Cut discussion time in half by simplifying thinking by focusing and filtering

Focus on solution based discussions and allow for creative stream of thinking as opposed to focusing on only obstacles and criticism

Make meetings fun! Illustrate a way to share ideas in a nonthreatening manner; positive and

creative thinking will fuel innovative ideas

Focus on thinking; not power, position or ego

Eliminate judgment of ideas; creativity will flourish and aide in decision making

Achieve meaningful results quicker

Leadership Challenge:

What action will you take for your personal development after reading this post?

How can Six Hat Thinking improve your approach to working with your teams, stakeholders and sponsors?

Mentor a project manager; share this post with someone who wants to improve their personal development and leadership as a project manager.

Read more about the Six Hat Thinking method by clicking here.

> "Creativity is a great motivator because it makes people interested in what they are doing. Creativity gives hope that there can be a worthwhile idea. Creativity gives the possibility of some sort of achievement to everyone. Creativity makes life more fun and more interesting." — Edward De Bono

Name	John Carroll (a.k.a. PM Blogger)
Blog	http://thetaoofpm.blogspot.co.ukhttp://www.arra-pm.com/blog
Twitter	Not used
Bio	Retired PM Consultant, still writing books and blogging about PM. Living in SW England, baking bread, making wine, walking and having fun.

What does project management mean to me?

Over the years I have thought more and more about this question. I don't know if I have a definitive answer yet but I am moving closer to it with each week's blog.

Many years ago, when I was first made a project manager, I had absolutely no idea how to go about it. The fact that I had previously worked for some poor project managers had taught me a few things I should not do, such as alienating the team members and trying to do everything myself. There wasn't much around by way of training courses back then and we were expected to learn as we went along. So I did my best and naturally made quite a few mistakes, but on the whole more things worked out right than wrong. Maybe I was just lucky.

With advancing years and experience I have realized that good project managers have a basic understanding of how things work. When I say things, I mean everything, people and processes included. But while much has been written on the 'what' of project management, from the lofty heights of PRINCE2 and the PM-BOK to my own humble efforts in "Effective Project Management in easy steps" and "Agile Project Management in easy steps", little has been written on the how of project management. For this reason I first started this blog about five years ago to try and record how things happened on my and other people's projects and in life generally.

Because of an interest in Taoist philosophy, I decided to look at how a wise project manager goes about ensuring the success of a project. From this I soon found that what mattered to me was the soft (or people) skills of project management together with an understanding of how things happen. From my own experience of running training courses I realized that the way cannot be taught, it can only be understood or known. So the blog and the book I published based on it "The Way of the Project Manager" is based on my observations of how things have happened in real projects and in life, set against the background of the thoughts and advice of Lao Tzu.

So to return to the question of what project management mean to me, it means wise project management. The wise project manager starts with no expectations and observes how things unfold. He concentrates on the deliverables and not the tasks of producing them. He is aware of processes but not driven by them. He concentrates on the team having what they need to produce their deliverables and protects them from outside interference. He is a facilitator and does not interfere because he trusts the team.

The wise project manager does not try and take credit, he gives credit to the team. He put the good of the team ahead of his own good. Like water flowing, he takes the path of least resistance. He stays aware of what is happening on the project by being silent and listening. He stays calm by being centered and grounded.

The wise project manager ensures the success of his projects by listening to all the project stakeholders. He concentrates on the here and now, not what has happened in the past, or what might happen in the future. He is considerate, courteous and knows how to yield gracefully and is therefore enlightened. If he has problems he tries softer not harder.

The wise project manager appears to do little, yet achieves much. He always stays flexible. He shares his knowledge and understanding with the team, thus making the team stronger. He is simple, humble and does not pretend to know things he doesn't. He has no hidden motives and always tries to keep things simple.

Finally the wise project manager does not try to claim success, he encourages others to be successful and takes pleasure in their success. He expects the best of people and is usually rewarded for it.

Finally in my own words, but expressed in the style of Lao Tzu:

The Way is not complex.

Follow the simplest path for it is The Way.

Be open with your team and they will be open with you.

Be one with the universe and the universe will be one with you.

The wise project manager is humble, he knows the team does the work.

He respects and acknowledges the team and they in turn respect and acknowledge him.

The poor project manager seeks fame, the wise project manager seeks inner peace.

With fame come problems, with inner peace comes understanding.

The poor project manager worries about what to do next.

The wise project manager relishes not doing, when nothing needs to be done.

Do little, for this is the way of the project manager.

Name	Paul Culmsee
Blog	http://www.cleverworkarounds.com
Twitter	@paulculmsee
Bio	Paul Culmsee is the co-author of The Heretic's Guide to Best Practices: The Reality of Managing Complex Problems in Organisations. Paul is a recognized expert in the field of information architecture, sense-making, strategic planning, IT governance, and facilitation

What does project management mean to me?

Well if you want me to give you the 'glass half empty' perspective, it's easy. What project management means to me is a confused discipline where practitioners routinely do really dumb shit in its name.

Sermon over – go forth and spread the word...

Okay so that was fairly blunt, so I had better elaborate and perhaps take a more positively framed 'glass half full' approach to this sermon. To do that, I need to tell you about the legacy that Cleo magazine has left on society.

When I was younger, I used to skim through magazines like Cosmopolitan and Cleo while waiting in line at the checkout. Now you might think that I must really be in touch with my feminine side in admitting this, but no: the reality is that raw testosterone was the motivator. You see, Cleo would have headline articles like "10 great sex tips (in 50 words or less)" Or "The 10 things he doesn't want in bed." Titles like that dangled the possibility in front of me of finally understanding women, with the added bonus of developing Olympic class skills in the bedroom. Of course, each and every time the actual article never lived up to the catchy title. I rarely learnt anything new and in fact the "10 things" were usually pretty banal, self-evident and left me none the wiser.

So as our collective attention spans diminish via constant exposure to "5 steps to success with [insert buzzword here]" articles (articles designed more for search engine placement than actually informing an audience), the curse of Cleo-like catchy titles telling you stuff of little value is now so commonplace that it is hard to suss out the stuff that really makes a difference in outcomes.

So where does one go to find out the answers in project management? Should aspiring Project Managers master the dark arts of their craft by learning everything there is to learn from one or more of the bibles that contain the word "BoK" in them? On the surface it would seem so, given all of the past collective wisdom that is claimed to be codified therein – as well as shiny certification proving that one has passed the multi-choice exam on its contents.

But wait...which BoK is best? After all, we have multiple to choose from, with each making their own claims to the truth. Some BoKs even reject the key tenets of other BoKs, arguing that theirs offers a better answer. Of course, this leads to an endless stream of debate by their respective proponents as to which is really best and who is really the wisest. Not to mention that over time, new and updated BoKs emerge like phoenixes from the ashes of older BoKs. (Sometimes they are so cool that they don't even claim to be a BoK at all).

It's little wonder that Project Management is a confused discipline. No matter where you turn, someone is bound to tell you that you are doing it wrong.

While I am on the subject of doing it wrong, let's poke a stick in one of the well-known project management hornets-nests: the "Waterfall vs. Scrum" argument. We all know that any self-respecting Scrum guy will not miss an opportunity to tell you about the evils of Waterfall – and for the most part they are right too, as Waterfall has a dubious history of which most people are not

aware.

But that is not the reason I chose this particular topic, even though it is much loved by PMs who spend endless hours filling up the forums of various LinkedIn groups with discussion. I chose it simply because it's fun to mess with Scrum guys – particularly the zealots. So if you have a "scrumdamentalist" in your midst, try this question on them:

"Would Waterfall work if one could create an environment where all parties—as soon as they become aware of something that might affect a project materially—communicate it to all other parties involved in the project in a full, sincere and open way?"

I have posed this question to many Scrum people. Most will think about it for some time, before answering a grudging "possibly" or "I don't see why not." Try it yourself… it's fun pulling the rug out from under their firmly held convictions.

The best answer I have ever got to this question was from Chris Chapman[1] – an Agile coach from Toronto. He gave me what I think is the perfect answer when he astutely observed that in the environment I described, Waterfall would actually not exist in the first place!

Therein lies the heart of my sermon. I contend that the endless debates over the efficacy of methods, tools and even BoKs are answering the wrong question! Don't worry though, Project Management is not the first, nor the last discipline to lean their ladder against the wrong wall in this regard. To explain, let me introduce you to the work (and genius) of J Richard Hackman[2].

From the late sixties, Hackman spent his career researching and teaching about team performance, leadership effectiveness, and the design of self-managing teams and organizations. He died in 2013 and one of his last papers he published was called "From causes to conditions in group research."[3] In this swansong paper, Hackman explained how he spent years examining the factors that made teams work really well. He studied hundreds of teams (not just project teams mind you, but sporting teams, orchestras and flight crews), with the aim to distil the causes of success. Each time Hackman thought he had the causes figured out he would create a model, plug his model into a stats program, and work with real teams to see if the application of his model led to better performance.

On the surface, this approach seems like a logical thing to do. After all, if we can work out the magic levers that cause team success, then organisations would surely work better because they can start to pull those same levers. This is precisely the value proposition offered by the aforementioned BoKs as well.

When Hackman applied the models he lovingly researched and developed, he found they did not make a significant difference in outcomes. Being an academic, he did what most academics do: he spent years trying to refine his models and then re-tested them against real life teamwork situations. But this didn't work either; his models got no closer to predicting or influencing outcomes in a reliable fashion. Reality it seemed, never fitted the models he developed.

At this point, Hackman began to question whether he was looking at the problem through the right lens. He wondered if trying to determine the causes of team efficacy by looking at successful teams retrospectively and then codifying these into causal models was the best approach. So he changed his focus and asked himself a very different question – a question that every project management practitioner (and project team member) should be asking themselves:

What are the enabling conditions that need to exist that give rise to great outcomes?

Now if, at this point, you think that this is the same question as "What are the causes of successful projects" you would be mistaken. Think about the BoKs and consider this: if you have ever argued

[1] http://www.linkedin.com/in/chrisrchapman
[2] http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~hackman/csvsearch.cgi?search=hackman
[3] http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/job.1774/abstract

with someone about whether a tool, methodology or some process is great or completely sucks, eventually someone will say something like "Well it can work for the right organisation."

The implicit point here is that depending on the conditions, something that works for one organisation may completely suck for another (thereby invalidating the notion of a "best" practice). The genius of Hackman is that he challenges us to stop arguing about whether one methodology or model is better than the other and focus on what the enabling conditions are instead. Think about it – if project managers and developers did this, we would be able to avoid low value arguments like earned value management versus burndown charts.

In the case of Hackman, he re-examined all of his work on teams and boiled it down to six essential conditions, arguing that irrespective of what else you did or what methodology you used, having these conditions tended to lead to better results. Hackman did not rank any one condition over any other, instead arguing that all were needed for teams to have a greater chance of being high performing. The conditions are:

A real team: Interdependence among members, clear boundaries distinguishing members from non-members and moderate stability of membership over time

A compelling purpose: A purpose that is clear, challenging, and consequential. It energizes team members and fully engages their talents

Right people: People who had task expertise, self-organised and skill in working collaboratively with others

Clear norms of conduct: Team understands clearly what behaviours are, and are not, acceptable

A supportive organisational context: The team has the resources it needs and the reward system provides recognition and positive consequences for excellent team performance

Appropriate coaching: The right sort of coaching for the team was provided at the right time

There is more to that list than what I am covering here, and it is important to note that I'm not saying that Hackman's conditions are *the* conditions. But I would contend that they are a pretty good start. Look at Hackman's conditions for teams above and think about your projects and how you manage them. Did you have these conditions in place when you started? If you had them, would it have led to better outcomes?

I believe that it is a huge mistake to attribute success or failure of projects to methods, processes and models used to manage them rather than the conditions in which those processes operate. As long as this attribution error persists, people will continue to get suckered into B-grade verbal-slugfests about whether method X is better than method Y.

What exacerbates this "causes over conditions" problem is that enabling conditions rarely get codified in procedures, governance models, bodies of knowledge or certifications. As a result, the very factors that leads to success (the conditions) are entirely absent from the models that we use. My contention is that most organisations, when delivering projects, do not have the right enabling conditions in place to begin with. If your organisation has a blame culture, then chances are that any process, no matter how noble its design or intent, has the potential to become a blame apportionment mechanism or a responsibility avoidance mechanism.

So Hackman, despite looking at a different discipline of teamwork and leadership, gives us an important clue about what ails project management and how to we might improve it. Focus on enabling conditions rather than attributing causes!

Let's get back to Chris Chapman's answer to my Waterfall question. His assertion that Waterfall would not exist in the conditions I described holds a less obvious lesson. That is, the way project management tools or methods are used will affect conditions as well. So if you have ever said to

yourself "I can't believe that I am being forced to follow this wrong-headed process" chances are you have been on the receiving end of negative conditions created by application of a process. (So in this sense the agile dudes have it right.)

So what does project management mean to me? In short, focusing on creating the enabling conditions for great performance, and then getting out of the way!

Thanks for reading

Paul Culmsee

Epilogue:

In this sermon I cannot hope to cover all of the things I would like to cover but never fear, Kailash Awati and I already piled some of our thoughts into 420 pages of goodness known as the book "The Heretics Guide to Best Practices" – so if you like what you read here, you will really like what is in there.

Acknowledgements:

As usual I have to thank Kailash for reviewing this post and making it suck much less than it did 😃

Further reading:

My series on rethinking SharePoint maturity: Don't let the title put you off – the material here further explores the conditions for great project performance: http://www.cleverworkarounds.com/2013/08/19/rethinking-sharepoint-maturity-part-1-conditions-over-causes/

Jon Whitty's brilliant work on memeplexes and reconceptualising project management: http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:8801/sjw_ijpm_05.pdf

Pretty much anything on Kailash Awati's blog, but in particular his sermon in this flashblog: http://eight2late.wordpress.com/2013/09/25/what-project-management-means-to-me-a-metalogue/

Stephen Duffield's work on project knowledge management and risk: http://www.invictaprojects.com.au/pmlessonslearnedblog/?p=850

p.s: This post is published as part of a first ever project management related global blogging initiative to publish a post on a common theme at exactly the same time. Over seventy bloggers from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and the USA have committed to make a blogging contribution and the fruit of their labor is now (literally NOW) available all over the web. The complete list of all participating blogs is found here so please go and check them out!

	Name	Stephen Duffield
	Blog	http://www.invictaprojects.com.au/pmlessonslearnedblog/
		http://www.pmlessonslearned.info/
	Twitter	@invictaprojects
	Bio	Interested in knowledge management (KM), risk, program and project management. Enjoy researching project management and PM Lessons Learned blogger. Have an interest in Systems (Systemic) thinking. Enjoy outdoor beach activities.

What does project management mean to me – "lessons learned"

(Picture Source: Mike Licht, NotionsCapital.com reports)

From my perspective project management means to me the effective management of people and systems. This is where I find a strong connection with lessons learned / knowledge management.

The majority of project managers think of lessons learned as... follow a process and enter your lessons learned into a tool...am I right? Well the focus will not be on the process or the database/spreadsheet/document/log etc as we all know it from PMBOK, PRINCE2, ISO21500 etc.

I have had to learn a number of lessons in my project management career as we all have. Some have been good lessons about humankind and myself, and some have been surprisingly hard lessons to learn about others, and about myself. Some lessons you only have to learn once, other lessons you seem to have to learn over and over...

Dale E. Turner said "Some of the best lessons we ever learn are learned from past mistakes. The error of the past is the wisdom and success of the future". We have a significant challenge for government and business project organizations to ensure that lessons are learned and those mistakes of the past are not repeated. Both the knowledge and project management literature suggests that the lessons learned process in practice rarely happens, and when it does it fails to deliver the intended results.

We all need to do something about this, as our professional image as project managers will suffer in the wider community. The problem does not seem to be with identifying lessons, nor is it to a lesser extent the ability to store knowledge. But rather the problem appears to be that organizations are unable to apply or implement the lesson learned (knowledge) they have. They lack, anthropomorphising somewhat, an organizational central nervous system. Much of the literature re-enforces the point that people factors influence the success of the lessons learned process and that a just culture / learning culture is critical to successful dissemination of lessons learned.

There are some successes in health care, nuclear power, rail and aviation. A common element in these organizations is the cultural practices for learning through safety. There seems to be a connection between organizational learning and how naturally evolved complex adaptive systems (CAS) learn. My research to date has developed a conceptual Systemic Lessons Learned Knowledge model or Syllk model. This model is derived from an analysis of how complex adaptive systems learn and from how the Swiss cheese model for safety and systemic failures is successfully implemented for learning by health care, nuclear power, rail, and aviation organizations. The model is developed

to enable project organizations to learn from their past project experiences by capturing lesson learned from projects and distributing knowledge across an organizational network of elements such as people (individual learning, culture, social) and systems (technology, process and infrastructure).

Syllk model (http://www.pmlessonslearned.info)
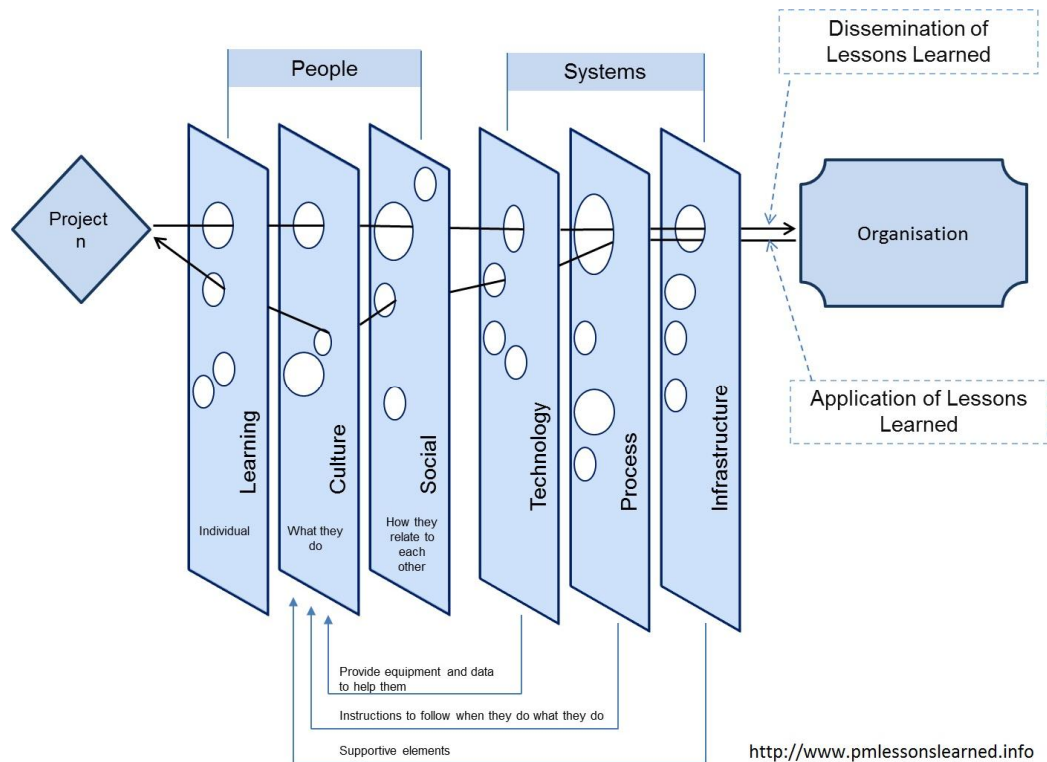
The challenge as I see it is that Project Management needs to consider how to align with the complexity issues of the people and systems elements within the lessons learned (knowledge) organizational environment. This challenge is supported by a recent project management PM World Today editorial post on Lessons Learned but Knowledge Lost. In response, Wideman a recognized project management global expert stated: "...in spite of all the technology that is available to us today, we have not yet found a presentation format that captures the essence of this wisdom in a way that is relevant to future usage, readily searchable and easy to store. ...we have a serious cultural problem. ...we are probably condemned to continue to throw away the valuable resources."

In summary, as stated earlier, we as Project Manager's need to continue contributing to the project and knowledge management literature and provide an opportunity to improve project knowledge sharing, and ensure projects achieve success for organizations.

Finally, I will leave you with a quote from Hugh White (1773 -1840) "When you make a mistake, don't look back at it long. Take the reason of the thing into your mind, and then look forward. Mistakes are lessons of wisdom. The past cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power."

Thanks for reading, Stephen

Name	Deanne Earle
Blog	http://www.unlikebefore.blogspot.com
Twitter	@UnlikeBefore
Bio	I believe in sound business practice, am enthusiastic about the global village of project consulting and participate in many project, management and leadership related forums. My specialty is delivering outcomes and clients hire me to do just that. When not working I'm a keen vegetable gardener, enjoy great food and wine, and I'm an avid All Black supporter with an allergy to exercise.

You knew this was coming and now it's here:

#PMFlashBlog - What Project Management Means To Me

Project Management is an interesting beast conjuring up lots of images and meaning many things to many people. Those who do it are professional in their work yet the debate rages as to whether it's a profession in its own right. I don't think it matters much if the people doing it are professional in their actions and desire to do quality and valuable work. Ultimately it's about people, change, leadership and management. But this post isn't a debate about what project management is or isn't. No, it's a post about what project management means to me.

So, regardless of your experience, involvement with it or credentials, I believe project management exists to contribute and deliver value to an organisation and its business. This must never be underestimated or lost sight of.

With that in mind here's what project management means to me...

An Opportunity to do more than tick a box, file a report, fight a fire, motivate and appease, and attend meetings. Project management gives people and companies an opportunity to understand and normalise change. Through project management the business is able to understand the probable project outcomes and how the project can help not only achieve but sustain the change that's coming. People have an opportunity for encouragement, empowerment and development. In project management hard skills are expected yet people can also practise and hone the soft skills necessary for good sound leadership and management.

A Wide Variety of projects, Companies, locations, industries, people and cultures means project management is a portable discipline. Particular industries may require specific knowledge or expertise however the underlying fundamentals of good project management are the same. Because organisations use projects to achieve lower costs, increase revenue, meet market demands, be competitive, and respond to the ongoing ever present financial pressures of doing business today, those experienced in the disciplines of project management can enjoy a variety of projects staying fresh and interested in the work they choose to do.

There's a Sense of Satisfaction derived from moving things forward, achieving tangible results and showing the targeted benefits are actually being achieved. Coupled with that is a Sense of Frustration when decisions are delayed, agendas clash and projects go haywire for a multitude of reasons. This double edged sword is not unique to project managers; it's felt by companies too.

It's a Global Community that offers in person and virtual interaction with peers, constant learning and access to a worldwide knowledge base of viewpoints, expertise and experience. Whether you're a credentialed project manager or accidental, the project management community is a place to share, empathise, sympathise, learn, teach, laugh, mentor and be mentored, grow, understand and appreciate diversity, commiserate and celebrate. Project management is constantly evolving with

participation both welcomed and encouraged. There's the Association of Project Management, Project Management Institute, LinkedIn groups, Twitter communities [eg: #pmot (project managers on twitter), #PMChat (project management chat), #ftpm (first time project managers)] and of course this, #PMFlashBlog.

I rest my case! Now it's your turn. Comment below and share what project management means to you.

Footnote: This post is published as part of a first ever project management related global blogging initiative to publish a post on a common theme at exactly the same time. Over 70 bloggers from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and the USA have committed to make a blogging contribution and the fruit of their labor is now (literally NOW) available all over the web. The complete list of all participating blogs is found here so please, go and check them out!

Name	Toby Elwin
Blog	http://www.tobyelwin.com/blog
Twitter	@TobyElwin
Bio	Sacred Cow Tipper

What does project management mean to me — a project manager's sermon

By Toby Elwin 8 Comments

In the beginning was change. Well, the beginning, itself, was change. From the beginning, however, change challenged. Some wanted change, some preferred more of the same.

Change versus same creates confusion.

To clear up confusion, someone powerful stepped up and said, "change must be" looked around said, "make it so", then retired to a local watering hole for results.

Things were suddenly interesting, now there was expectation, not just option, but anticipation.

With necks on the line, our early kin debated what to change, when, and, in the early days very firm delivery dates, of what was at stake.
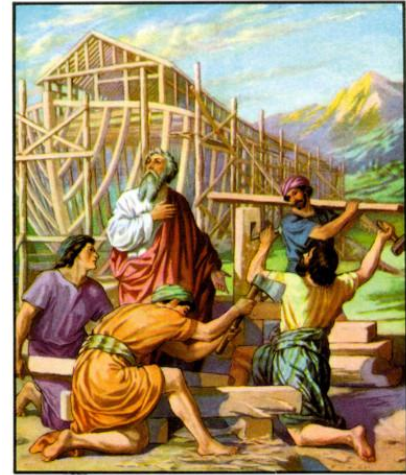
"Right, what's a cubit?" Noah, PMP*

People accountable for change generally:

- Embark on a cattle drive and hope most of the herd arrive;

- Plot trajectory towards something you expect is over there;

- Engineer a process map of what should be;

- Harass others with verbal, mental, or physical threat;

- Pitch a horseshoe for luck; or

- Devise a plan

Flash forward a few millennia to this project manager's journey through the valley of death (well more a trail of tears through a valley of despair) and what project management means to me.

Though intended as a sermon, I come as a repentant sinner to share my humble station of divine grace of what project management means to me through countless projects, emotions, and nerves saved.

Return to Change

My journey began in strategic planning. My function: facilitate and design strategic plans.

Implicit in strategic plans is a complicit adoption of said plan. But prior trails lay littered with dusty, 3-ring binders and the hollowed-out souls of those who planned before. Early in planning, many stakeholder conversations included:

- "Not this again ... "

- "We tried this before ... "

- "We never implemented the last plan ... "

- "Why is this any different from the other efforts ... "

- "I have better things to do, like run my organization ... "

- "Let's just skip this effort and pretend we never met, they never follow through anyway ... "

- "Who cares what we plan, they end up telling us what to do anyway ... "

The not-too-subtle message: why get excited when nothing changes? People were tired their prior commitment went unrealized, efforts fizzled, and the prior state returned to rule.

Change comes as either incremental improvement or a launch of something new. However conceived, something different this way comes. The solution was not just planning, but planning for change in people and around what to learn for competence needed to contribute. Whether new product or new process, if people do not know what it looks like, than they will not know they got there.

Some react to change and some plan to change, the difference reveals project management to me.

There's a Process for That

Early in consulting, I was surrounded by professionals who created a lot of documentation. This den of vipers spoke of logic and presented rational process flow diagrams and reengineering process maps. These fork-tongued, serpents heavily-weighted plans with process models and slightly amused themselves with people pacts within process.

To this confederacy, change meant process, not people; technology over competence. People and behavior rarely entered discussion until "as-is" and "to-be" process mapping finished.

Maps intended to satisfy people need, but people need to experience the journey to really understand what happens at the destination.

I could not count project success without end-user adoption and utilization of the project objective. Too many projects with too many failures. Too many times getting it done went against getting it accomplished.

Costello: All I'm trying to find out is what's the guy's name on first base.
Abbott: No. What is on second base.
Costello: I'm not asking you who's on second.
Abbott: Who's on first.**

Luck is not a reliable substitute for a plan. However, I could not expect a change if I was not prepared to change.

I saw their exercise of project management and thought to join their cabal, speak their language, communicate change, and measure progress of where to start and what to account for.

Who's On First

What project management provides me is an intentional plan for change and a shared perspective of what change will look like.

What project management means to an organization: competitive advantage.

Project management provides a body of knowledge to understand how to plan end-user adoption and utility. There is no process that assures success, but there are options in project management that help articulate success:

- Identify scope,

- Understand risk, and

- Plan how to modify and align expectation

Rolling out a process to change is not a plan to change from here to there. Project management is about getting the most people from where they are to where they need to land; style points are deducted for losing people along the way.

To me project management means there is a toolkit to dig into at any point you say, "what a minute, this is crazy".

The direction laid out includes what to start, what to stop, and what to continue, but if no adoption plan exists than you do not have a plan.

People Over Plan

What project management means to me: there are people here that need motivation to succeed over there. Plans are rational people are emotional. Change is a constant cycle to plan for. If you get to the destination, but no one was willing to move with you, you lost.

People may find comfort in a plan, but a plan is not a prescription for success. There is no prescription to set something up for success, but there are options and project management provides engagement guideposts to understand what people need to stop doing and what they need to start doing.

Project management provides me a sense of confidence to review a project at any phase and understand what is working, what is at risk, and what needs to change. As an accountant would look at financial statements to deduce the financial health of a company, project management provides signals of the project start, the project under way, and the project delivered.

I do not consider myself a project manager. Project management is not one-off, but repeatable. I consider myself someone who adopted project management to better work a plan for change.

In America we have a comment: "It's the economy, stupid". Project management to me means: "it's the people, stupid".

Project management is not a process, but a promise.

Project management is not about the plan, but about the people.

Project management can deliver you from hellfire and eternal condemnation. Clemency is yours, release yourself from process and walk with people towards a projected shared future.

* for more on above Noah *reference*
** for more on above Who's on first *reference*

Name	Cheri Essner, PMP, MCPM, MCBA
Blog	http://korebuilders.ca/category/blog/cheris-blog/
Twitter	@cheriessner
Bio	Married with 4 children and 6 grandchildren who I love spending time with. I love to garden and generally have great success. I have been a yoga enthusiast for 12 years. When not at the studio I am an engaged volunteer my local PMI Chapter.

What is it that attracted me to Project Management? I have always lived with the philosophy that we are the masters of our own destinies. Hopefully, the choices we make in our lives lead us to a positive, happy life, loving what we do and receiving satisfaction from our efforts.   Life is a path of choices taking you down different roads, as your choices evolve with your growth and maturity. I am lucky enough to live in a part of the world (Canada) where choices are abundant and you are able to plan and choose your own life path. I understand that these opportunities are not available in every part of this beautiful planet and that is what makes Project Management so important and why it resonates with me.

  We Project Managers can help the developing nations to upgrade products and services using the same global standard, the PMBOK, as the more developed nations. Using our craft, we can help this world become a better place through the projects we undertake and the value of successfully completing them.

Wherever we go in the world as Project Managers, we are speaking the same language and using the same definitions. We are masters of the same tools and techniques. We are learning and sharing together globally. Very few professions are designed to be used the world over. With all of the new technology now available, we are able to reach out to people and places as never before. We identify who our stakeholders are and we not only listen to them, we hear what they have to say.

I love the standard! It is practical, ever evolving, recognized globally, and providing you with life -long learning. Best of all, the most collaborative community I have ever found. We do not like to re-create the wheel if we do not have to. We will leverage what is available, resulting in a good Project Manager who loves to share. We learn lessons, we do not point fingers and move on with a little more knowledge added to our tool belt.

I gravitated toward being a Project Manager as a young woman because I liked being on the front lines. I loved knowing what was happening, when and why. When something went out of sync I was able to get it back on track. I could see the big picture, envision the project from the end date. Planning backwards can actually be better! Most of all, I loved working with people.

Many of us are accidental Project Managers who grew to love the rush you get when you see a good plan come together. I ran generic clinical trials for years under strict guidelines and in accordance with copious government regulations. We followed a lot of the PMBOK methodology, albeit using a different terminology, not understanding that we were part of the beginning of what is now a popular growing profession. In those times, it was not something you could go to school for. If you were smart they would take you as a subject matter expert and give you the responsibility of the projects.

I left clinical research, as I wanted to get some education under my belt, a choice I finally made at 39 years old. I was not really sure what I wanted to be when I grew up anymore. I started taking night classes and temporary job assignments in various areas. I remember taking my first Project Management course. I was overwhelmed by all of the information but in love with the whole concept. I realized that I had been doing this most of my working life and now I would be able to apply it anywhere. My goal was to write and obtain my PMP credential and I have never looked back. I finally knew what my future held.

What do I find so attractive about it, and why was obtaining my credential one of the biggest milestones of my life? How did I find my community? I joined my local PMI Chapter. Before too long I was volunteering. The reason PMI works is they have developed a community of dedicated volunteers to promote project management and provide value to their members. This year I am serving my first term as Chapter President. I have a great team of volunteers that want to provide an outstanding value for the membership at our growing chapter. Working with these like-minded individuals is a labour of love. We have the same goals, values, vision and the learning is phenomenal.

A construction worker who I was teaching told me, "we are nobody, we are just construction workers." He did not understand the value that his work and dedication provides is what builds our roads and communities, and really, where would society be without them? He had never looked at himself that way. He actually sat a little higher in his chair. We should love our work as well as our home. Both should both be a reflection of who you are. You need to be able to be a leader by example, by walking the walk and talking the talk.

We need to embrace this wonderful planet and plan our projects to go full life cycle. The best advice I can give is to be transparent from the beginning of a project until the end. Be yourself and remember you are an example to others. The best part of our job is communicating with people and empowering them to be the best they can be. Remember that enthusiasm is infectious, so spread it around. Trust is an essential in maintaining integrity and respect from everyone you touch. Use it wisely and do not lose your sense of identity as you guide your team to successful project completions. Use the tools and techniques in a way that fosters growth throughout your company. Be the change agent, because change is good and it should be celebrated not feared.

My Project Management Sermon to you is that I love my work! I am gratified by helping people bring out the best in themselves. One of the hardest things you can do is to take an honest look at yourself. Understand who are you are and what you stand for. It is important to know yourself, because before you can understand other people you must understand yourself. Know your strengths and capitalize on them. Do not overlook your weaknesses. Identify them and develop a strategy to help yourself to achieve success in your life.

Remember Knowledge Offers Renewed Empowerment!

Name	Ralf Finchett
Blog	www.pmoplanet.com
Twitter	@pmoplanet
Bio	Consultant in setting up Portfolio PMO's and Large Programme PMO's. Regular blogger at PMO Planet. Ralf has worked in Government, Financial Services, Retail, Logistics and Telecommunications organisations, and also with IT and Business / operational environments with both Agile and Waterfall delivery environments

Three Christians are arguing over who has the oldest profession in the world. A Doctor, an Engineer and a Project Sponsor were all arguing...

The Doctor stated that God removed a rib from Adam, and therefore must have required a surgeon; surely his was the oldest profession in the world?

The Technical Engineer shakes his head and says 'no, no, no!'; the bible states God created the world out of void and chaos, and therefore engineering is the oldest profession in the world....

Then the Project Sponsor says, that God would have sponsored the Project, and who do you think created the Chaos?

Finally, there is a small voice from the corner of the room, and the PMO moves from the darkness into the light, and says 'This world is one of many in the Portfolio, and who do you think facilitated the sanctioning of the project in the first place by aligning it with the overall strategic objectives? Oh and by the way, you lot never delivered it right in the first place, because we are all still trying to fix the bloody thing, and the benefits have yet to be realised!!! and one last thing.... Where's all the change request forms for all the changes you have made to the planet?'

So what does project management mean to me?

It shouldn't be this complicated; projects are becoming more relationships and politics rather than delivery. When did we all change these rules????

I have now been involved in project management or 20 years, 15 of this in a leading role, and 10 years as a PMO; I have been privileged to have worked many organisations, I have worked with over a 1000 people and over a 1000 projects, yet over these years, with all the training courses, we don't seem to be getting any better at delivering projects?

Complicated?

One common trend I regularly see is that the vast majority of projects are not complicated, yet people make them complicated.

Many, many, years a go, I studied for a degree in Project Management at university and after 3 very long years, graduated with an honours degree. I came out of university feeling full of optimism to join the masses, expecting we would all be fully trained to tackle most project related situations; I also felt others with experience would be just as well trained, through their experiences.

From planning, to business cases, project financials, risks, issues, change control, configuration management, requirements definition, quality management, lifecycle and methodology, tracking and reporting, team building, stakeholder management, value management, earned value, PPM enterprise software, contracts and legislation, health and safety, governance boards, resource management... is it any wonder that we sometimes get it wrong?

As an industry we have all become fixated on training people on project management; yet, most

people don't apply the very basics.

Over 30 years ago we designed and built nuclear submarines and power plants, built sky scrapers, designed and built Concorde... we put a Man on the Moon!!!

All without Project Management Software or any Project Management training courses.

For some of these projects, I'm sure there were complications and delays on the way, but my point still stands, they all used the basics.

Should Project Managers become more..... simple?

Project Management to me, means avoiding the current trend of turning a project managers job from what could be seen as a pure relationship role back into a project management role; doing the basics and doing them well.

I'm not saying that relationships and politics are not important, or managing stakeholder expectations should be ignored (and at your peril!!), yet so many projects seem to be just about this, and have less focus on leading a team to design and deliver.

In my PMO role, I am responsible for mentoring and coaching Project Managers, and too many times, I ask the very simple questions and often get a complicated answer, and sometimes I don't get an answer.

Projects should be able to tell a simple story:

- 'Why' are we doing this?

- 'What' are we delivering?

- 'When' and 'How' are we going to deliver this?

- 'How' are we doing?

Now over play some project techniques:

- *Business Case* – 'Why' are we doing this?

- *Project Initiation Document and Requirements Captured* – 'What' are we delivering?

- *Plan, Risks, Resources* – 'When' and 'How' are we going to deliver this?

- *Tracking and Reporting* – 'How' are we doing?

Isn't this what stakeholders want to know?

So, if a Project Manager does the basics, and does them well, surely this makes the relationship and stakeholder management situation easier?

When a Project Manager has to report on potential issues or problems, the same message applies:

- What has caused the problem?

- What is the impact?

- What can we do about it?

- When can this be done by?

-     What decision are you asking me (the project sponsor) to make?

Project Management is all about Managing Deliver

Most stakeholders want a project to deliver.

Project Managers should be able to cover the basics e.g. agreed design of the products, how much has been spent? How much is forecast to spend? When will the products get delivered? Any potential problems?

My old Martial Arts instructor used to say to me when I was competing in tournaments…. (think Micky from the film Rocky) "Stop doing the flash and fancy stuff, you're getting caught out… do the basics and do them well, that way you won't get you're ass kicked!!!"

Project Managers – do you want to avoid getting you're ass kicked at work? – do the basics and do them well!

Project Management is capturing all of these essential points and displaying them in a simple and effective message, then leading a team to build really great and cool stuff……. afterall …

…It ain't rocket science 😊

Name	John Goodpasture
Blog	http://www.johngoodpasture.com
Twitter	
Bio	Program manager; online instructor

This posting is my contribution to today's "flashblog" organized by Shim Marom who hangs his hat at Quatmleap (actually, his hat hangs upside down since he is in Australia). The common theme: "What project management means to me"

Well, hopefully it means to mean what it means to the business:

A leadership and management wrapping around project activity that adds value (to the business) by delivering predictable results for the business.

If PMs can't deliver results to the business -- pretty much the way the business expects them -- what purpose do we serve -- really?

I always think first in terms of mission -- and so, the PM mission is simply this:

The project manager's mission is to manage assigned resources to deliver the value expected, taking measured risks to do so

And, I think second about why we do projects at all:

We do projects because they are an important means to extract value from opportunity ... by managed application of resources, taking measured risks to do so.

And so what is value?

Project value is equal to, or greater than resources committed to the defined scope and risks taken to achieve favorable accomplishments. The cost of the project is not it's value; it's value is what difference it makes to the enterprise, either on the balance sheet or the mission scorecard.

And so this is it for me... there's another 40 to read on this same subject today!

Name	David A. Gordon, PMP, GPHR
Blog	The Practicing IT Project Manager http://blog.practicingitpm.com/
Twitter	@PracticingITPM
Bio	Experienced portfolio, program, and project manager, mostly for human capital management and payroll system implementation projects. Also husband, father, grandfather, and musician. Curator of the weekly Practicing IT Project Manager "reader's digest."

I've been working on information technology projects since 1985. For the first few years, I was a programmer / analyst. Then I started managing projects. Then I managed programs, and then project portfolios. These days, I'm back on the road as a migrant computer worker, managing consulting engagements. But for some reason, the trip has felt neither long nor strange. Because I'm managing projects, it's never been about me. It's been about the products, the process, the customers, the team, the stakeholders, and the outcomes. It's been about the future. And ultimately, that's what project management means to me: an opportunity to help create the future.

Daniel Burrus is a Futurist, meaning he looks at trends and tries to systematically project them out to realistic expectations for his corporate and governmental clients. He addressed a conference I attended many years ago, and spoke about digital cameras. In those days, a digital camera was a large, bulky, expensive, low-resolution device. But Burrus talked about them as future consumer products. He said people would use them to take photos while on vacation, and then use software to insert their friends into the picture, so they'd feel like they had been along on the trip. I thought the idea was silly, but someone developed Photoshop anyway. Meanwhile, project teams removed most of the molecules (Burrus refers to it as "dematerialization") from the old versions of those big, heavy digital cameras, so they now fit in all sorts of places. They're also several orders of magnitude cheaper, higher quality, more reliable, and far easier to use. And many of them also make telephone calls.

Abbie on Skype with Grandpa

A couple of years ago, I wrote a blog post asking, how would you explain the iPad to Benjamin Franklin? The premise was that simply being incredibly smart was insufficient; one has to understand the context in which an artifact is used or a process performed. Our context is changing. Project management is quickly becoming driven by change management, risk management, and stakeholder management. Instead of managing to cost, we're trying to focus on

delivering value. Instead of delivering a fixed scope to a fixed schedule, we're iterating, focusing on time to value or time to market. It's not just Agile; we've embraced the Lean movement, minimum viable product, and "fail fast." In order to keep up, and give my fellow practitioners a useful resource, I read as much as I can get my hands on, and curate a weekly list of summaries on this blog. Because simply being incredibly smart is insufficient; we have to continually refresh our understanding in order to remain effective.

As I write this, a few million project teams are scattered all over the globe, creating the future. They work in every knowledge domain known to man, including a few that don't have proper names yet. Some will create the next iPhone, and some will create the next medical imaging device. Some will build a new power grid, or air traffic control system, and others will organize disaster relief. Some are working on things that are as utterly impenetrable to me as the iPad would be to the late Ambassador to France. And they create these outcomes, these products, these new bits of our ever-evolving culture, in collaboration with people they might never have even met, had not some earlier project teams delivered the means for them to do so. We stand, every day, upon the shoulders of teams of giants. As a project manager, I am humbled by the opportunity to offer up my shoulders to the future.

Name	Michael Greer
Blog	http://michaelgreer.biz
Twitter	@michael_greer
Bio	PM Author, Consultant & Trainer – Most recent book is The Project Management Minimalist: Just Enough PM to Your Projects! (w/supporting media, freebies, etc.) My mission is to simplify project management for newbies & PM veterans who would rather rock their specialties than fiddle with Gantt charts.

Sometimes it takes someone on the outside looking in to provide you with that "whack on the side of the head" that changes the meaning of what you are doing. Such was the case with this simple email from a student.
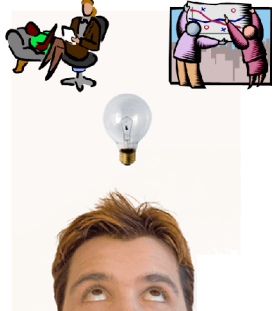
A while back I taught an online class based on my Book, The Project Management Minimalist. After the class I received this email from one of the attendees:

"Thank you for your class, 'Become a Project Management Minimalist!' The practical tools and skills-in-attitude you teach are a source of inspiration and clarity for me. As a young project manager with a passion for social impact, I'm clear that the tools you share will help me become an effective presence for my community and teams. Project management as you teach it is truly a technology of manifestation!

-- Best Wishes, Soheil Majd "

As you might imagine, I'm always glad to get good feedback from a class participant. Most of the time, when I teach one of these online classes, I feel a bit like The Maytag Repairman: I'm fairly sure I provided a useful product, but I seldom hear much feedback from the attendees. But beyond the fact that someone took the trouble to thank me, Soheil's email really stuck with me. I found myself going back and reading it several times, largely because of the unusual perspective he expressed about my session. Here are some of his unexpected insights that stuck with me:

"... practical tools and skills-in-attitude... are a source of inspiration and clarity..."

Now I am well aware that my classes focus on practical tools and skills. That's no accident. I value the practical and the useful above all else. I've always believed that all the esoteric and complex PM theory is of absolutely no value if isn't embraced and easily put to use. So, the litmus test for me of any PM tool or practice is "Is this practical and useful in the real world?"

However, the phrase "skills-in-attitude" is a fascinating one! I am conscious that I try to share with my PM newbie students the attitude of "project manager as facilitator." And I'm also aware that I encourage PM newbies to apply all PM tools and processes gently and respectfully, so as not to get in the way of the smart people on their teams doing their jobs according to their professional best practices. But this phrase, "skills in attitude" was a wonderful leap that Soheil made -- a real insight. The PM practice of an attitude of respect and deference toward the professional skills brought by the team, when applied repeatedly to each of the "nuts and bolts" tools I shared, turns out to be essentially a "meta skill." In other words, it's truly a "skill in attitude." Wow! Who knew?

"... will help me become an effective presence for my community and teams."

Now translating this concept of "being a presence" in the real-world while inside a whirling, activity-filled project is difficult. The best a new project manager can do is simply be vigilant for

opportunities to help... be alert to potential obstacles and remove them... be ready to fight for your team so they can do their work unencumbered by administrivia. I now see that all this translates to "become an effective presence for my community and teams." Well, said, Soheil!

"Project management as you teach it is truly a technology of manifestation!"

Now, to be honest, it is the sentence above that truly blew me away and caused me to re-read Soheil's email several times. As the years of my life accumulate and the miles traveled on the PM road pile up, I look back on all the folks I've tried to guide as they join me on this road. And what stands out above everything I've seen and done is that no matter how accurate we are in applying our official PM guidelines... no matter how religiously we apply our official PM best practices... we are in the business of manifestation!! New products, new processes, new events... all of these come into existence as projects. And to the extent that the soft technology (i.e., management practices) of PM support the birth of any of these new entities, they do indeed form a "technology of manifestation."

Reading Soheil's insights above, culminating in that incredible vision of PM as technology of manifestation, gave me a bit of a thrill! Think of it! If we practice this pursuit we call PM in an effective way, we manifest visions! Dreams of what might be are transformed into reality by our PM teams!

I've always been passionate about teaching my unique PM vision in my own peculiar way. And now thanks to Soheil's insights, I have been consciously connected to a formerly unseen, yet profound, theme that has been running through this vision all along! Wow! Who knew!

So the next time you're putting together a project charter or revising a project budget, take a moment and reflect on how you may be a bit like Leonardo. Think about how you might be manifesting a dream!

Thank you, Soheil!

_____

Addendum: Cleaning Up Elephant Dung & The Thrill of Helping Smart People Make Beautiful Music

While PM at its most transcendent may indeed be seen as a "technology of manifestation," the PM practitioner should also be ready to grab a broom now and then and do the mundane work of keeping the team's path clear! (As you'll see below, this can have its own rewards.)

In my classes, as well as in the occasional interview, I love to make this analogy: A project manager should frequently behave like the guy in the parade who follows the elephants with a shovel, broom, and wastebasket.

Picture this: A parade is in motion and features a marching band that will share their uplifting music with the crowd. Preceding the marching band is a beautifully-decorated group of elephants who, unfortunately, have no sense of propriety and release their waste somewhat at random. Now unless this voluminous elephant dung is quickly removed, the marching band may step in it and slip, fall,

and ruin their performance.

It comes down to this: No matter how talented the band, they are going to need all the nasty elephant droppings removed from their path so they can keep marching and so their music can ring out and inspire the crowd. Without this humble street cleaner, all their musical talent and rehearsal could end in a discordant trip-and-fall disaster! It's a dirty job, but an important one -- and someone's gotta do it!

So it is with project management. Now matter how talented, how creative, how burn-the-midnight-oil your team is, if they are encumbered by obstacles, all their talent and creativity may never have a chance to shine. They need someone to "sweep the dung" out of their path! And when you, as project manager, are willing to jump in and grab a broom and start cleaning, you are likely to be rewarded with the thrill of seeing your team soar and dazzle with their work products.

The truth is I knew I was a true project manager when I realized that my sense of gratification and pride had shifted from doing great work myself to seeing great work created by a team whose path I had carefully tended.

My wish for you, project manager, is that you become comfortable with a broom and learn to thrill at your marching band's great music!

Name	Kelsey van Haaster
Blog	www.betterprojects.net
Twitter	@kelseyvh
Bio	Kelsey is a career business analyst and passionate Agileist with around 15 years experience across just about every role in software development. Kelsey is currently working as a Product Owner on an Agile project which will deliver enterprise research administration software. In her spare time Kelsey, teaches research skills at Charles Sturt University and is conducting research towards a PhD into the adoption of Agile approaches to software development in a commercial context.

An open letter to project managers

Dear Project Managers

Firstly, this is not a sermon, I'm not a follower of any particular system of religious belief, what I say is not grounded in any theology, but is an open letter, based on my own epistemologically empiricist view of the world. Secondly, I am not a project manager; my business card and CV suggest that my discipline is business analysis, so I will begin by setting out the background material that has informed this post. To provide some context, after a quick count up, I have worked on (roughly) 30 software development projects over 20 or so years. Mostly my role has been business analyst, these days team member is the best description. I have often needed to perform duties that could be described as project management, but I have never worn your hat or walked in your shoes. I have, however, had the opportunity to work closely with quite a few of you over the years, so it is from this perspective that this post is written.

My background as a business analyst could best be described as traditional and formal. I cut my BA teeth on, business requirements specifications, functional specifications and traceability matrices. My place in the software project world was defined by a line, (or several) on your Gantt chart and my definition of done, was met when 100 percent complete and a milestone due date coincided. Then I was off your project and ready to meet my next PM and do it all again. In the meantime, perfect software would be churned out by a development team, tested by a QA team and delivered as a *fait a complet* to delighted customers.

This scenario assumes that the business is able (in advance) to accurately define the right functionality for a given product, such that the time and resources required to develop this functionality can be specified. Further, it is assumed that it is possible to accurately record this information in a plan and track progress against that plan. This leads to the underlying premise of project management, that the effort required to deliver a project is reliably estimable regardless of the product or service to be delivered.

The result of the assumptions described above is that software development project manager has an unenviable task. The essay, The Tower of Babel Did Not Fail (Adamczyk & Hafiz, 2010) discusses the challenges associated with attempting to succeed at something, which (historical evidence suggests (Larman & Basili, 2003) has around a 70% chance of failure. This essay argues that software development projects are distinctly

different to civil engineering projects in several fundamental ways. Some of the key differences are that there are few known or fixed variables, such as the strength of materials or the impact of gravity and that much of what is developed is completely novel to those developing it. In particular, software products are expected to be modifiable, scalable and reliable, (over an unspecified period of time) regardless of the domain and environment in which they are asked to operate.

In response to the challenges described above, the development of iterative and incremental approaches to software development (Larman & Basili, 2003)and the development of formal *software development governance* (SDG) models (Bannerman, 2009) have been credited with some modest improvements to the dismal success rates of software development projects. More recently however, in his discussion of the 2012 Standish, CHAOS report ("The Standish Group," 2013) Mike Cohn, claims that use of Agile methodologies (rather than those classed as iterative and incremental) offer even greater advantages, with reported success rates for Agile software development projects of up to 42% (Cohn, 2013). This has led to an increasing number of organisations experimenting with or formally adopting Agile approaches to the implementation of software development projects. Particularly in the last 3 years, Agile approaches, tools and techniques have made their way, to some extent or another, into just about every software development project, commercial or otherwise. If you haven't come across it yet, it is probable that you will.

If your discipline happens to be software development, you are well served; much of the discussion around Agile has been focused on the actual process of designing, coding and testing software, that's where most adoptions start and where there is the most expertise. However, if your discipline is business analysis or project management the story is different. Not only is your role not described in the Agile manifesto, there are no practices to support it either. This means, that for those of us who find ourselves working on a project using scrum, Kanban, XP or one of many other Agile methodologies we need to reinvent and rethink our role. Having been a little way down this road now, one of the key lessons for me has been that as a member of an Agile team I value different things from my colleagues than I did before and that I have different expectations of my project manager.

Whilst the set of principles and values, which underlie Agile, are simple, fully adopting them is not. This is because Agile is much more than a set of practices; it is a philosophical lens, through which to see and think about the work we do. Making the shift from the thinking style required by plan based approaches to project management to Agile, change driven, approaches has a far greater impact on the success of otherwise of Agile project than the adoption of a daily standup. This is where the strengths and skill set of the software project manager can really make a difference if you do the following things;

- Learn about Agile, by this I mean, get to know the underlying philosophical theory and support your team in their attempts to internalise it. Understand that Agile requires more discipline and more rigor than a traditional approach primarily because it demands transparency and accountability. You actually have to produce some software at the end of each iteration/sprint; you really cannot ship a document.
- Hire an Agile coach, listen to them and let them do their job, which is to help the team to become high performing and self organising. This will mean that at a minimum you can stop spending your time trying to manage other people's (developers/testers/BA's) time.
- Understand the purpose of each practice, respect it, and use your skills to facilitate the team's ability to apply their practices, You can only gain from doing this, for example attending the daily standup (in a scrum team) or facilitating the use of a shared information radiator means you will have a far better understanding of exactly where your project is at.
- Teach the business about Agile, if this is their first Agile project, they will see it as inherently risky. Understand that the business has probably learned to take comfort from a progress marker on a Gantt chart and will take time to understand that a demonstration of working software is actually more useful as a measure of progress.
- Think about how you can serve the team by removing obstacles and bottlenecks; resourcing to support concepts like continuous integration and automated testing, reduce your risk significantly.
- Hire intelligently, think about your team as a complex adaptive system, new resources need to either understand Agile or be willing to develop their understanding of Agile.
- Ferociously protect your constraints, if for example you have a team member with a critical skill set, do not allow that person to be pulled in a million and one directions as every project's goto girl/guy.
- Have a shared, respected and immutable definition of done
- Be prepared to roll up your sleeves and pitch in, Agile teams do not have demarcation disputes.

There are a couple of important don'ts

- Don't hijack, or allow someone else to hijack a sprint and then complain when the team does not meet it's commitment.
- Don't tolerate an individual who undermines what the team is trying to achieve, no matter how senior ("special") they are.
- Don't attempt to use team velocity as a measure of performance or a comparison between teams .

As a project manager on an Agile software development project, your job is not command and control, but is truly that of the servant leader, you play a key role as a facilitator between the team and business and are an integral enabler of the team's success. If you are lucky you will be able to keep a team together over a long project or over multiple projects; when you have sprinted 20 or 30 times with the same group of people, you develop a sense of community, commitment and mutual respect which transcends the mundane and makes the process and the product better for everyone.

Yours sincerely

The business analyst

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Name	Elizabeth Harrin
Blog	http://www.GirlsGuideToPM.com
Twitter	@pm4girls
Bio	Writing, projects, crochet, family. Not necessarily in that order.

Project management. It's what I've been doing my whole life, some of the time without realising. It's how I planned my studies. It's how I planned my wedding. It's how I survived relocating abroad for work, and it's how I stayed sane moving house with a 6 month old baby. And it's my job.

So it means a lot to me.

It's the ability to get things done, but in the nicest possible way.

It's understanding how to break down tasks into manageable chunks. It's working out how to get other people to do those chunks for you, even if they have never met you before and don't care at all about your objectives.

It's how to deal with problems when they arise – because they always do, and how to make other people see that it isn't the end of the world.

It's being able to think quickly and say sorry, and most of the time, it's about putting other people's and company goals above your own professional ambition. But it works out well when the two things align.

I didn't realise project management was a job, until I spent 3 months working in the Business Engineering department of American Express as part of a graduate trainee scheme. It was there that I met some wonderful people who got things done every day and helped deliver improvements and new projects.

Once I knew that I could be paid for something that I was very good at, I decided to make it my career.

The funny thing about project management is that it turns into a way of life. If you are a chaotic, flustered person in your personal life, I imagine you are probably like that at work too. If you are calm and organised, with little lists stuck all over the house, you're probably like that at work as well. And while both of those people could be good project managers, personally, I think the latter is always going to have the edge.

But then, I'm biased, because I have little lists stuck all over the house.

The way you manage projects at work is a pretty good reflection of how you manage the rest of your life, and it doesn't take long before Gantt charts start appearing on the fridge with key milestones marked on the family calendar. You plan backwards from Christmas to make sure everyone gets their cards in time, even the friends in remote places overseas. And of course, you start Christmas shopping when you see the perfect gift, even if it's July. Then you store it away neatly, marking that person off on the list with a little note of what you bought and how much it cost.

So for me, there is a cross-over between running a project and running a home. I use the same project management skills and the same people skills. I expect I'll teach my son how to plan so that he gets his homework done on time, and I'll do that because project management isn't taught in enough schools, although I think it should be mandatory.

To answer the question, project management to me is a life skill. You don't need to know how to manage time and control a budget to get through life as a success, but it has to help. But then, I

don't know any other way so I don't have anything to compare it to. I've been managing projects my whole life, and I expect I'll continue to do so.

	Name	Barry Hodge
	Blog	http://www.projectnewstoday.com/
	Twitter	@BarryHodge
	Bio	An IT Project Manager with a degree in project management and over 15 years' experience of delivering projects in housing, pharmaceuticals, distribution, defence, retail and travel industries.

My passion is delivering projects that make a really difference to the organisations that I work for to enable them to deliver better services to their customers. Away from projects I am an avid Formula 1 fan and follower of Plymouth Argyle Football Club.

Being a project manager is the best and the worst job in the world all at the same time.

The feeling of excitement that you get when you are assigned a brand new project that has not been touched by anyone is fantastic. It is like the Zamboni (ice rink resurfacer) has just left the rink leaving behind a perfect layer of ice with no marks on it.

The excitement that something new is going to be created is a fantastic feeling and this stays with you throughout the project as you focus on the completion. This combined with the achievement of finishing a project makes being a project manager the best job in the world. However it is always never straightforward and the project will inevitably run into trouble and require great project management skills to keep it on track. These stressful times can make it the worst job in the world. That said project management is exciting, challenging and rewarding which is why I could never imagine doing anything else.

If you think about anything that mankind has ever achieved it has been as a result of a project. From the pyramids of Egypt through to the London 2012 Olympics project management has turned great ideas into reality. Even something that is mass produced like a car started life as a project. From the requirements and design right through to the creation of the prototype.

To give you an idea of what has been achieved as a result of project management look at the picture below of some great projects that have been delivered.

CONCORDE

MOVIES

FORMULA1 CAR

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

OLYMPICS

HADRON COLLIDER

Name	Francis Hooke
Blog	http://qualityprojectdelivery.com/blog
Twitter	@QualProjDeliver
Bio	Managing Director of Quality Project Delivery Ltd, passionate about project management, husband, petrol head and barbecue host.

A flashmob is where a group of people arrange to meet at a specific place and time to perform some unexpected activity. For example, I once saw a flashmob in Liverpool Street station in London, near where I used to work. People were dancing along to Rick Astley's pop song Never Gonna Give You Up. Of course, the song wasn't being broadcast over the station's public address system. So instead, the flashmobbers had the song loaded on their iPods. When the station clocks struck 7:30pm all the participants pressed, "play" at the same time. It was very strange to see loads of people dancing in sync with each other, but no music, and in an unexpected place.

The following image is from another flashmob at Liverpool Street Station. This one was organised by T-Mobile as an advertising campaign that featured dancers, actors and loud music. That was cheating, but it did look pretty cool! Click here for a link to the YouTube video.

So now you know what a flashmob is, you can probably guess what a flashblog is going to be. A flashblog is where a number of internet bloggers agree to blog about the same topic, and publish their blogs at exactly the same time.

A chap called Shim Maron had the idea of organising a project management themed flashblog, and this post is my contribution. You can imagine this post as being one of the dancers in the above picture. Around the world there are 70 or 80 other project management bloggers who are also publishing their posts at exactly the same moment! And here's the title we've been asked to write to, "What does project management mean to me – a project manager's sermon."

On this blog I like to try and have a bit of fun and entertain my readers. Project management can be

a dry subject at the best of times, so I try and use an amusing angle to get my points across. Today is no exception. I hope you enjoy it, have a little laugh and pass it on! As always, let me know what you think.

A Project Manager's Sermon

My question for you this morning is, "Can The Methodology trust you in the face of risks and issues?" I'll say that again, "Can The Methodology trust you in the face of risks and issues?" You need to think carefully about that.

My suggestion is this. If you cannot be trusted in the face of risks and issues, you cannot be trusted with the project. For one thing is certain, projects are full of risks and issues.

Project Principles, I know you can hear me. I ask you to move in this office. Touch, and heal and minister in this workplace now. Let The Methodology saturate this meeting room and fortify your project staff. Move, as only you can move. Touch us, and inject us with the strength needed to stand and deliver our projects. We are children of The Methodology and I know you are going to do great things in this place. In the name of The Project Processes, somebody shout, "Project plan!"

You may be seated in the presence of The Methodology.

Let me tell you a story. My Development Lead and I have been talking in recent months about the different ways in which project managers see the project, and how developers see the project.

We were working on a software project together. People had been working hard and I thought we had everything under control. The developers seemed to make quick progress and the application was put into testing very soon, mainly at my request. I wanted to report some early success to my

project sponsor, but then we found bugs. There were more bugs than I have ever seen before in my life! I looked to The Methodology for guidance on what to do, and He told me that if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing properly. It took us six weeks to fix all the bugs.

Then we had this moment that I'll remember for the rest of my life. Everyone was gathered around a computer. My Development Lead started running the application we had fixed, and he said, "I can feel the customer focus again!" All the developers started whooping and hollering! The whole room was in tears because it was the kind of customer-centric experience that The Project Principles demand from us! It was the kind of customer focus that pre-existed the first build, the kind of customer focus that pre-existed the first requirements document, it was the kind of customer focus that the BUSINESS CASE talked about! I was in awe. Oh, somebody ought to say, "Project plan!"

There are times when I, as a project manager, am insensitive to the needs of the development team, and the developers will need to educate me, and they become the teacher and I become the student. They'll say, "That's important to a developer for so, and so, and so reason." One of those things is the whole notion of writing code, wanting to write code, and the whole process of compiling an application. It is something that I have never wanted to do! The idea of all those lines of code, all that logic, and all those possible defects does not appeal to me. I cannot see what would be wonderful about a broken build! And then they educate me. They explain that there is an excitement there, in the moments before compiling the software. That's true. I mean, I was there, willing it on, cheering it on, and I told everyone we were compiling TODAY! You know, I said "we" were compiling the software, but really, "they" were compiling the software, not me. Yeah, expectations are everything, and it's an exciting moment.

That's just one project that didn't go according to plan because of not following The Methodology. We didn't listen to what He had to say. The Methodology will interrupt your plans too, if you don't follow His good advice. He doesn't care how much money you've spent on your project, how long you've dreamed about it, how hard you've worked at it, how you've envisioned it, and how you think you've got every little thing lined up... He'll knock it all over on the floor if you have not followed His way.

The Methodology says stuff that makes you think. He takes you through things that you don't want to talk about, but you ponder them in your heart. Why at this stage of the project do I have so many defects? Why at this stage of the project is my funding under threat? Why at this stage of the project am I thinking about revising delivery dates?

But here's the thing. If you only think about recent events you will always be confused by what The Methodology is doing to your project. However, if you think about the project as a whole it will make sense.

Sometimes you might encounter an annoying tester who you wish would stop finding bugs in your software. You think he is a bad person for making sign-off so difficult. However, you can be surprised. He is doing his best to help you. He knows The Project Principles. He knows that the customer expects quality. He knows that calling the defects out sooner rather than later is the only route to Project Management Heaven.

You will learn not to be so premature in your thinking, not to judge, not to jump to conclusions, not to be so cynical. Only when you have finished your project will you be able to figure out your project. Have you ever found that the thing you were most excited about in the project brought you all kinds of Project Management Hell? And the things you didn't expect brought you all kinds of Project Management Heaven? I'm just saying, I'm just saying... Wisdom works slow. Project experience comes slowly. Don't be so quick to tell the project team what to do, because you might not be as smart as you think you are. You may have misdiagnosed a moment. You might think development has gone smoothly, but testing will put you right! Whenever The Methodology takes you places you don't understand, you might be tempted to take a short-cut.

But the real truth of the matter is that The Methodology tests your staying power. Projects are complicated. If The Methodology one day came down from Project Management Heaven and showed you the life story of your project what would you think? Most project managers say they are strong! You might be able to say to The Methodology that you were strong 70% or 80% of the time. But were you strong 100% of the time? The Methodology, looking you straight in the eye demands you to be honest with yourself.

The Methodology teaches us how to follow The Process when the project is complicated. He teaches us how to be steadfast in the business case when you are pondering, "What can I de-scope?"

Sometimes I ask The Methodology, "If The Project Processes are so important, why were they not born in a palace, surrounded by loving Project Sponsors? Why did you choose the opposite?" The Project Principles were born in a messy project, by a project manager on the run, and an un-unified development team who didn't unit test their code. How is this so? This was back in the day before MS DOS had been invented! The Project Processes were born on paper, probably in an office somewhere before air conditioning. The Methodology chose this moment to make His entrance. But He knew best. He knew that from humble beginnings The Methodology would spread, evolve and grow into something beautiful, something tried and tested that project managers can depend upon.

Now, don't you sit there for one moment thinking that your project was an unchallenged line of success? How dare you sit there, beside your talented Development Lead and act like you are always right!? I've heard it all before. "We're right, and the business are wrong!" You project people have pre-determined scripts. Everybody thinks they are right. But when you unravel it, both of them are a little bit right, and both of them are a little bit wrong. The Methodology teaches us that you can have a lot of love from a project sponsor, but might still be cursed with unreliable test environments. Your job, as project manager is to survive it all. Do you hear what I'm saying to you? We don't drop the project, just because it has gotten tough! I know The Methodology can hear me!

Can The Methodology trust you with risks and issues? With chaos and unexpected events? The Methodology has given you His son, the Project Processes. He has given you the tools to keep standing, come Project Management Hell or unforeseen event (e.g. high water). The Methodology doesn't tell you exactly what is going to happen to you on your project. He doesn't tell you about programme funding decisions that you don't even get to make! He doesn't tell you that the business might have a change of direction! He doesn't tell you that one day you might find yourself running a project that NO LONGER MAKES BUSINESS SENSE! YES! INDEED!

Whatever might be going on in your project, maybe The Methodology chose you for this assignment. Maybe He thought that a lesser project manager might have caved. Yes you got frustrated. Yes you thought about throwing in the towel. All hell might have been breaking loose. But you did it when you felt like doing it, and you kept on doing it when you didn't feel like doing it. You did it when you had passion for it, and you did it when you had no passion at all. You just kept on demonstrating your love for The Project Processes, and delivered this project on time, on schedule and ON BUDGET! Somebody say, "Project plan!" OH YES!

I am not a quitter! If you want a quitter you need to look some place else! I am not a runner! If you want a runner you better look some place else! I am gonna keep on fighting because The Methodology trusted me with this project and in the name of The Methodology, The Processes and The Principles, I am going to GET THIS PROJECT DONE!

When you're not happy in your own skin, you gotta ride it out! When you're in pain, you gotta ride it out. When you got tears in your eyes you gotta ride it out. You gotta ride, ride, ride, until THOSE BENEFITS GET REALISED!

Bless The Methodology, bless The Processes and bless The Principles. I can feel corner-cutting getting real nervous now! I can feel a lack of project discipline running scared! It doesn't matter whether you're waterfall, whether you're agile, whether you're scrum, whether you belong to the APM, PMI, or IPMA, we are all children of The Methodology!

Join hands with somebody, and leave no one untouched. I feel the spirit of The Methodology in this office. He is saying to me, whatever pain you feel in the short term, in the long term you will reap the benefits. Don't bail, don't run, don't jump, just hang on in there. You got to trust The Methodology. Squeeze the hand of the project manager you're touching right now. The project manager you're touching has been trusted with risks and issues just like you. They have faced project risks and issues. It's complicated. It's difficult. There are potholes. There is tough stuff. Squeeze their hand because sometimes it is hard to be a project manager.

This morning, may The Methodology renew your strength. May you manage and not be weary. May you direct and be bold. May you lead with a vision. May you project manage again!

The Methodology trusts you. You have learned to follow The Processes and The Principles in spite of complications. Squeeze that project manager's hand. Infuse them with encouragement, with strength, and press it in. You don't know how hard their project is. You don't know what it is like to be them.

Methodology, I call on you to speak to the project managers gathered here today. Minister to them, embrace them, and help them become victorious in their projects. In the name of The Methodology, The Processes and The Principles. Say, "PROJECT PLAN!"

Credit to the highly charismatic Bishop T.D. Jakes whose style I have ripped off here! I can only hope he forgives me!!

What Do You Think?

I hope you enjoyed reading this blog and it has given you something to think about.

Did you enjoy it? Do you agree with my arguments? Do you disagree with me? Do you have anything to add or any experiences to share?

Whatever you think, follow me, leave a comment or get in touch. I'm very interested to hear!

Thanks for reading.

Francis Hooke

Managing Director – Quality Project Delivery Ltd

http://www.qualityprojectdelivery.com

Name	Christian Pfeiffer Jensen	
Blog	http://freakyprojects.com/	
Twitter	@pfeifferjensen	
Bio	Project management, retro computing, IT and daily life - it's all here. I'm a PMP and Certified Scrummaster – and a devoted trekker enjoying life.	

Ten-fifteen years ago, when I was a younger and hard-working project manager working with product development, I was often asked "What's this project management thingy all about?" by those people I told of my occupation. This was the days before there were project managers everywhere, and it was a bit vague what we really were doing there behind our desks.... My answer was usually the same and something in the line of:

"It's about finding alternatives when things go wrong. We make a plan for the future and try to implement it - and thus shape the future for the products, people and society, but we're really needed when stuff goes wrong. And they always do. In those cases, we stop the crisis, find alternatives and make hard decisions – of course consulting those paying for the project. So finding alternatives, figuring out how we can get past the obstacles and how we can cross the rivers of opposition is what project management is about."

I consider myself a bit smarter today, but I was onto something right back then!

However, my old answer is related to the product, the deliverable of my projects, and I'm not sure that it is what project management means to me anymore as the primary answer – don't get me wrong, the deliverables are still important!, but there's more to it today.

To me – to me personally – it's about self-actualization!

You surely know Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and that is precisely what I use as a frame of reference.

By working as a project manager, I feel on top of the pyramid! Sure, the steering committee and the stakeholders sets the triple constraints for the project, but from there on, I get the opportunity to create something, work with great people and make them function as teams. I get to influence and work with lots and lots of talented and intelligent stakeholders and create their dreams, ideas and requests into tangible stuff – meaning that I help THEM reach their level of self-actualization.

But the pride in the deliverables is still there. When I walk around in the world, I see things I've helped create and I re-meet people I've helped develop – and we tell tales of the good stuff we did together and the hard times we overcame.

As you can see, the pride of the product itself is only the first pillar of why project management is self-actualization for me. The second pillar is leading people – getting to know them, motivating them, working with them, getting them to function as a team and having fun doing it! Let's just call it the leadership side of project management – it's even often enjoying the dilemma of not being their manager, but having them work for me!

And the third and last pillar is the stakeholders – they are the ones accepting the products and they are the ones with the dreams I try to fulfill. They disagree, they don't know what they want, they are

unrealistic about their requests and they will do anything to achieve their dream – and I'm a big part of making it happen! So talking to them, working with them and basically handling them for "my" project to succeed is the third part of what project management mean to me.

So there it is.

"Self-actualization – that's what project management means to me. And I get there by leading teams of talented individuals to create the right deliverables in order to fulfill the dreams of the involved stakeholders."

Still sounds quite simple, when I come to think of it – but I now know by experience that it isn't simple to do!

Christian Pfeiffer Jensen

Name	Venky Krishnamurthy	
Blog	http://www.agileworld.blogspot.com	
Twitter	@venky_nk	
Bio	continuous learner, an avid reader, blogger, passionate Agilist, lean thinker, trainer and a delivery coach	

As part of #PMFlashblog, I am excited to share a pragmatic view of state of Project Management in the IT industry. This article is about "What does project management mean to me ?"

The tasks related to Project Management (PM) haven't changed much since the last two decades. I have been in the industry since the last 17 years and seen both Agile and Waterfall era. I see that at a broader level most of the PMs effort is spent towards staffing projects, invoicing and reporting. However, a key observation has been that PMs are no more the center of attraction in Agile *projects!*

I am sure you would have heard about the Iron Triangle. Most of the projects I have across have some constraints of Scope, Resource or Schedule. Most of the time the Scope keeps increasing but the cost, budget and Schedule remain the same. During these situations, we agilists keep saying this is the wrong way of doing things and we need freedom, flexibility and sustainability. Guess what, this is when stakeholders and business people introduce Project Managers to "get things done"
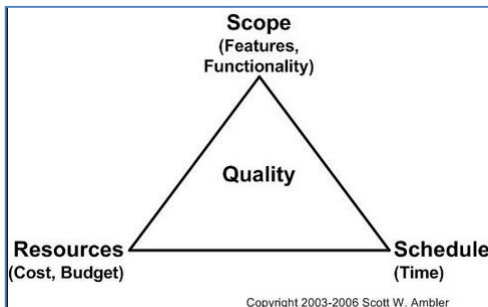
For me, the Project Management is all about delivering what the customer wants in challenging environments. I have consciously tried avoiding the typical Agile terms like "Business value" or the "Customer value". The reason being many a times the stakeholders or the business people themselves have tremendous constraints and demands from the investors that they ignore the real "value". During these constraining situations, they want someone to "Get things done" rather than talk about "Values and Principles".

Project management is all about "Getting things done" in complex and constrained environment, and whoever has the ability ends up becoming a project or a program manager. Since the PM work involves handling difficult stakeholders leading to a lot of stress,and this role is not for faint hearted. As the PMs need to be strong willed, and their focus is on "Get things done", they end up becoming the bad cops all the time.

During the waterfall era, Project Managers were the final authority in deciding the fate of the project. Whether estimating projects, staffing or handling budgets. They always used to steal the thunder. With the popularity of Scrum, the center of gravity around projects has moved out of PMs. In Scrum projects, theoretically the PM tasks are split between the team and the Scrum Master, but the ground reality is, most of it is still managed by the Scrum Masters.

During early days of Agile, there were debates challenging the role of a PM in Agile projects, however, now it has become a reality that PMs are needed to handle the "admin" tasks. The prime reason being, they know how to "get things done" in any situation. Large companies implementing

complex Agile projects still have dedicated project managers, but they don't interfere much with day to day running of projects.

Here are the common things I have observed with all the project managers. I am sure if you visit this list and compare with your PMs, you might find most of them.

Experienced: They typically have a lot more industry experience as compared to rest of the team members

Delegators: They are very good at delegating the tasks to the team

C2 Style leadership: Command and control leadership style. It is very rare to see a PM who is like a servant leader.

They like meetings. At the drop of a hat, they schedule meetings and they have this uncanny ability to keep eyes open during post lunch meetings.

They are good at reporting. They can create very good power point templates, and spreadsheet reports. You just hand over them the data, and they know how to massage it before sharing it with their leaders.

Process neutral: Even though all the PMs still have a lot of affinity towards Waterfall brethren, they can adjust to any new process without losing waterfall thinking.

Crystal ball: All of them have some sort of crystal balls using which they get to hear all the gossips and rumors before you do.

Irrespective of whether PMs are the centre of attraction or not, they know how to "get things done".

Name	Brian Leach
Blog	http://www.steelray.com/blog/
Twitter	@steelray
Bio	Founder and CEO of Steelray Software. At Steelray, we make better project managers. We also make business intelligence software for project management.

I'll start this "sermon" with a question for you: suppose you were hiring a leader and a team for your next project, and you had to choose between these two options:

Great leader, mediocre team

Mediocre leader, great team

Which choice would you make?

I started my project management career as part of the "B" answer. I was still attending college, working as a programmer in a makeshift office in the basement of a camera store. My boss (the owner of the company) sold point of sale and accounting software which existed mostly in his head, and when he made a sale, he would sketch for us a rough idea of what the screens should look like, and those sketches served as our design documents.   He spent the bulk of his time hustling for more sales, and would rarely check on us to see how the software development was progressing. This was okay; the developers worked very well together and we produced high quality code fairly quickly.

Looking back, I can see that we were a great team with a mediocre leader. He scoffed at us for staying in college and studying computer science, saying real education was gained in the workplace. In hindsight, I can see that there was a project management "system" in place, albeit a horrible one. I probably learned as much from him as anyone, even if it was lessons on how not to lead. Of course, with no real purpose or direction, the company was never successful and made no significant impact on the world. Our "projects" led us nowhere. It was my first experience working hard on something with nothing to look forward to and very little to show for my efforts.

After my college graduation, I got serious about software development and decided to attend graduate school and get a Master's degree in Computer Science. Over the course of my studies, I fell in love with 3-D graphics and operating systems, and after my graduation in late 1986 I jumped at the chance to take a job where I got to work on operating system internals (Unix) after graduation.

Fate had other plans for me. For whatever reason, I was given an assignment to develop a project management application to be used in-house by the Software Development department. I was given a set of requirements and asked to develop software that met those requirements. Essentially, the managers wanted a tool to schedule people on projects and balance things so every project had enough people and no one person was over-scheduled.

I was also told to research the commercially available project management applications, and soon I had in my possession a copy of Microsoft Project Version 3 for MS-DOS and MacProject version 1. Although we ended up using the software I wrote (called balance), I played with both commercial applications enough to get hooked on project management. Later in my career, I ended up writing the world's first viewer for Microsoft Project.

27 years later, I'm still hooked on project management.

The reasons are very simple:

I believe that project management, when done right, transforms an organization.
When applied on a project with a powerful vision, project management can change the world.

For all of the volumes of books about PM processes, best practices, and methodologies, great project management begins and ends with great project managers.

Few things are more challenging and more satisfying than helping people become great project managers. I started my own project management software company 13 years ago with this purpose: making great project managers. Great project managers are often great leaders and coaches, and this brings me to my favorite quote about a coach.

Don Shula, former coach of pro football's Miami Dolphins, holds the record for the most career wins and is considered one of the greatest coaches of all time. Bum Philips was the coach of the league's Houston Oilers (before they moved to Nashville and changed their name to the Tennessee Titans). This is what Coach Philips, born and raised in the state of Texas, had to say about Coach Shula: "He can take his'n and beat your'n and take your'n and beat his'n." I'll translate that from "Texan:" he'll coach his team against your team and win, and he'll coach your team against his team and win.

If you see truth in the quote, I can predict how you answered my question at the beginning of this sermon.

I love that quote for two reasons. First, I grew up watching Shula's Dolphins win against opponents who were sometimes bigger and faster but never better coached. Second, it illustrates the power, influence, and importance of coaching and leadership in an organization. For the all the humble praise great leaders bestow upon their teams, I know how big a role the leader plays in their team's success.

I've seen great teams fail miserably under mediocre leadership. No vision. No common objective. No credible plan. I've also seen a great leader turn average teams and make them great. I'll choose

Great leader, mediocre team

every time, because great leaders build great teams, but I've never seen the opposite happen.

So, what does Project Management mean to me? Very simply, it gave me my professional purpose: making better project managers.

Why do I care? Great project leaders make great projects. Great project management makes the difference between victory and mediocrity, between making history and wasting time and money, between just doing your job vs. fighting for a cause. Nothing else in my professional life has been as satisfying as leading successful projects and being on successful project teams. If you've been a member of or led a successful project team, I think you'll agree with me.

Can I get an "Amen?"

Name	Susanne Madsen
Blog	http://www.susannemadsen.co.uk/blog.html
Twitter	@susannemadsen
Bio	My mission is to help project managers become leaders and great role models for others to follow - something which our industry badly needs. To this end I provide project management leadership training and coaching and I also consult with organizations on how to improve their project management capability.
	I have 17 years experience in managing and rolling out large change programmes and am also a fully qualified Corporate and Executive coach. I am the author of "The Project Management Coaching Workbook - Six Steps to Unleashing Your Potential" and am in the process of writing my 2nd book on Project Leadership.

It is ironic really, that in spite of more tools, techniques and processes being available to the project management profession, up to 40% of all projects continue to fail. And that is in a period of economic uncertainty and increased competition when we should be spending our resources carefully and deliver more value at a lower cost. Instead, it seems, financial and human resources are being wasted on failing projects. If you look around you and observe the kinds of projects you have been involved in, would you say that time and resources could have been better utilized?

Figure 1: Free Digital Photos

The world is changing at a faster and faster speed and the project management profession needs to change with it. New technologies, agile methods and global teams are just some of the factors that impact us. In addition the global economic crisis means that funding is limited and that we to a greater extent have to justify our projects, and look for new and better ways in which we can deliver the same outcomes and benefits in a cost-effective manner. There is a constant need to grow and to adapt to these factors – and that is exactly what project management means to me; the opportunity to learn and develop as managers and leaders with a view to delivering the most valuable projects to everyone involved.

As Charles Darwin famously said; "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change". The project management profession needs to up its game, learn from past mistakes and deliver better quality projects. For that to happen we have to question, innovate, take risks and change old working patterns that are no longer serving us. We must learn, grow and develop and utilize the most effective project management and leadership

techniques available to us. We must sharpen the saw as Stephen Covey put it.

Our industry is in need of more project managers who want to learn from past mistakes and who have a real desire to develop and become great leaders and ambassadors for better ways of doing projects. And we need more senior managers who acknowledge the importance of this and who are willing to support it. Imagine what a difference that would make. Imagine if all project managers and their teams were working towards a common goal of continuous improvement and innovation, and if they shared the same enthusiasm and understanding of how to go about delivering the best possible product to the customer with the least amount of resources. That would be a dream come true! But dreams and dream teams only come about when someone takes the lead and has the vision and insight to show the way.

Our society needs project leaders more than ever before and our more-for-less culture demands it. Given the right environment, the right mindset and the right support I believe that all project managers have the potential to be great leaders. Being a leader is not something which is limited to CEOs of a large company. Anyone can be a leader within their field as it is dependent on the attitudes and behaviors that you possess more so than the job title you hold.

My vision and desire is to see more project managers transform into great project leaders; project leaders who continuously improve and innovate; who partner with their clients with a view to delivering what they need rather than what they want; and who maximize human potential by motivating and inspiring everybody around them to contribute to the project's overall goal. My mission is to assist project managers with this transformation. To see them become valuable mentors to others and be part of a new culture in the workplace.

The world needs your genius and it needs your leadership.

Figure 2: Free Digital Photos

Name	Shim Marom
Blog	www.quantmleap.com
Twitter	Shim_Marom
Bio	Shim is a Melbourne based project manager. Husband, father of 4, critical & free thinker. Enjoys good debates and controversial topics but would put it all away to watch a good AFL or 20x20 cricket game.

Peculiar creature is the practice of project management. One can be a geologist, an economist, an engineer, a biologist, a physicist, or - in fact - a master of any domain knowledge imaginable, and yet - at the same time - be also called a project manager. As a matter of fact, you don't even need to have a team to execute a project. You can very well manage and execute the project on your own. You can manage a project for a large multinational organization and you can manage a project as part of your school assignment. It does not denote size, it does not denote money and it does not denote consequences. It only means a concrete effort, over a prescribed period of time, to achieve a desired output.

Such a short-term that encapsulates so much.

There are many facets to project management. People in the know tell us that project management is a well-defined and well codified discipline. The Project Management Body of Knowledge - the PMBoK - for example, identifies ten knowledge areas, all used in the context of project management. They include Integration, scope, time cost, quality, human resources, communication, risk, procurement and stakeholder management. That's a mouthful, but is this what project management really all about?

Different people, no doubt, will ascribe different meanings to project management, thus reflecting their personality and life attitudes. For some it might be about SUCCESS. For others about LEADERSHIP. And don't forget GETTING THINGS DONE, MEETING OBJECTIVES, exercising AUTHORITY and then some.

For me project management is about the JOURNEY and the DESTINATION. It is about the spirit of exhilaration that comes to a climax when attending a well rehearsed play or a wonderfully played music by a well trained orchestra. It is about the build up of emotions that come as a result of the effort associated with building something from nothing. It is the sense of achievement that one feels when, despite all odds, a disaster is averted, issues are being resolved and risks are being thwarted.

But wait, there's more...

Project management for me is about remaining true to my own values. Resisting the temptation to always swim with the flow. Respecting people's dignity. Trusting team members to do the right thing. Empowering professionals to do their job. Listening attentively and responding respectfully. Applying due judgement while avoiding procrastination. Demonstrating willingness to compromise my ego in order to learn from my own mistakes. Exhibiting patience and tolerance when mentoring and coaching others.

"Hang on", I can hear you say, "project management - for you - is just too much. Keep it simple and tell us in one sentence, what does all this mean? What does project management really mean to you?"

(dramatic pause)

"Well", I would say, "for me, project management is the journey required to remove the friction between doing the right thing for my client, the right thing for my team and the right thing for my conscious and to successfully bring the members of this iron triangle to their respective destination."

Think about it!

Name	Linky van der Merwe
Blog	http://www.virtualprojectconsulting.com
Twitter	@virtualpm
Bio	Founder of Virtual Project Consulting. Love to blog about project management best practices and to recommend resources to aspiring and existing project managers. A certified project management professional (PMP).
	Blessed with 3 children and living in beautiful Cape Town, South Africa.

When I was young, a good friend made a prediction to encourage me about finding a job: "you'll find something that will fit you like a glove".

That statement became true, once project management found me and I chose to become a project manager.

I want to be a project manager when I grow up

When looking at project management as a profession, little used to be known about what a project manager does and what the typical work day of a project manager looks like. Children never use to say: "I want to be a project manager when I grow up."

Where it all started

Years ago I started as a project administrator. Then I moved into IT support and I was always chosen to manage all the projects in our division. This is something I enjoyed because it was a natural fit.

As a project manager I'm in the fortunate position to be doing something that suits my abilities and temperament and which complements my core talents and skills. I enjoy the variation provided by being involved in various different projects and teams. It brings excitement when starting something new, as well as satisfaction when bringing a project to successful completion and having formed lasting relationships with the team members.

Being a strong communicator and a person who cares about people, project management has become my destined career where I feel comfortable and I believe that I am making a difference.

A Mature Profession

Today project managers are making a difference in every aspect of society whether it's in IT, financial sector, retail, engineering, mining, welfare organisations or public sector and plenty of other industries. A thriving industry in itself has developed around the project management profession with companies providing products, software, training, recruitment and consulting; all with the main objective of making projects more successful in terms of how well they are managed and to provide the outcome and benefits as intended. Project management as a profession has matured.

In recent years young people are actually considering project management as a career with plenty of University and online training being available and offering a relatively well mapped out career path that offers growth opportunities and good compensation.

Blogging as my contribution

As part of my mission to give something back to my community, I have been blogging on Virtual

Project Consulting about project management best practices, processes and tools in order to reach out to existing and aspiring project managers.

Let's continue to develop, grow and contribute as this is how we find meaning and where we can continue to make a difference where we are.

Name	Ugo Micoli
Blog	http://micolipartners.wordpress.com
Twitter	@micolipartners
Bio	Top management consultant, based in Turin, Italy.

What does project management mean to me – a Project Manager's sermon

I have a friend, his name is P.M.

I call him like that, because Project Management is too long. In my address book I wrote "P.M." and I know the meaning.

We met when I was very young, I don't remember where. He was a sly and a well organized guy. On my part I was fascinated by how toys were functioning, and why. Strangely enough, we made acquaintance but we did not know our names for long. We talked about serious topics such as history, different peoples and countries, how persons act, things for teenagers you know, we were smart students and we liked to read very much. But we liked fun, people, girls, sports, cars, airplanes and spacecrafts as well …

Fun plus seriuosness was the trademark of our friendship.

I remember when I had to decide my path in the future. I liked many things and I was very doubtful. He said: "Hey, Ugo. Remember that your Scope is the most important thing. Set your objectives, then organize. And, given the scope, always people first! You will find the right procedures."

Thinking about it, he was a wise guy.

When I decided to became an Aerospace Engineer, he come to university with me. While studying, he helped me to create a think tank about how people interact in science and technology, the importance of teamwork. It was our first business together.

I loved the fact that, in ancient Greek, the word τέχνη (téchne) means art.

He was enthusiastic about Aristotle. We talked often, in the spare time after studies and some fun and work, about the so called principle of no-contradiction, or the importance of roles and authority by competence. He said that philosopher was his ancestor.

One day he decided, I don't know why, to tell me his name. I remember very clearly. We were attending a lesson about aerospace projects.

And then he introduced some relatives as well. I remember a guy, called PERT. I thought he was absurd. He took the critical path very easily, you know.

But I felt comfortable with those people. We started to collaborate soon. I fell in love with a blonde, her surname in the gang was WBS. Well structured… if you know what I mean. And in control of every possible breakdown, not the hysterical doll type…

I did strange works as students do, I got my Masters' Degree, had various experiences and decided to be an independent professional in the end. On my LinkedIn profile you can see the details of my story, but you can see I worked with P.M. soon as well, in many successful initiatives we built.

And anyway, always "people first!".

My friendship with P.M. was a datum in my life and I must say that in many occasions he got me out of serious troubles.

There are times when I help him too, because he is the kind of role model and today everybody wants to be him or pretend to know him. Someone says he will save the world and asks him to certificate they are clever guys.

Someone, instead, says he is old, we are in the complexity era and all is relative and goals are found along the way and so on.

We laugh at these things. There are nights when we ponder on everything we shared in the past and make projects for the future. We have no regrets. But many goals to accomplish. Our fellowship can't be broken.

So, what is the moral of the story?

Discover it by yourselves, my friends. But because you are my friends, you are friends with P.M. as well.

Remember, when you close this page, do not think friendships are cheap. Take care of them, there is always something to learn, and you will be rewarded.

As far I'm concerned, there are times when I see my friend's face, recently, and I am confused. He looks like me, in the mirror.

Name	Chris O'Halloran
Blog	http://strikingprojectmanagement.com
Twitter	@strikinggroup
Bio	Passionate about helping small business to smash their competition with effective project management

This was a tough article to write, considering that this article on the topic "what does project management mean to me" is being published with another 71 of the leading project management bloggers around the world, talk about pressure...

I sat for a couple of weeks mulling over the topic for the post, what does project management mean to me? Really, how do I write about that, who should I target it for? In the end, I reached out to my wife and asked her what I should write about, her response as why lay in bed that night was, "well what DOES it mean to you"? and then it hit me...

Project management means everything to me, it is my life. Not only have I dedicated the last 15 years to the craft, spent countless hours and money on training, certifications, qualifications, attending conferences and other industry events, all to improve myself as a project manager.

Not only is it my career choice, but it also puts food on my table every night and pays the mortgage. Yes it takes me away from my family when I need to travel, but it also gives me the opportunity to see the world and meet great people.

My father, a Carpenter instilled in me very young the importance of creation and the satisfaction it brings, I could see in his eyes that he loved every last bit of Carpentry, most days after he had backed up, he would glance back at what he had created for the day... I never really understood that as a youngster...

Like any good son, I learnt Carpentry with my Dad and after spending years on the tools learning that craft, something was missing.

I moved into supervising and really enjoyed the fast pace environment in which that demanded, but it was still not fulfilling. I eventually found my way to Project Management, not really knowing what it was, I studied project management at night and managed to move myself into a Project Management job and immediately felt a sensation of satisfaction. The job had it all, financial control, operational control, leading teams, creating and yet still in the executive environment that I enjoyed. This was it! Hallelujah!

I have never been tempted to change career, I have been content in this profession and striving for perfection in it from day 1, sure I have moved across industries, but always staying within the scope of project management. I distinctly remember sitting through the Advanced Diploma in Project Management and I had a sudden understanding, the most enjoyable roles that I held many years previous, were enjoyable because I was really managing projects, internal strategic projects and external client facing projects I just didn't know it at the time.

I remember the time when I realised, I was actually doing project management all those years ago... My mind spun with my new found knowledge of project management, what I would have done different and what I could have done better and how much dumb luck got me through! I vowed never to be in a position like that again and since then, I have continued to take courses, attend and speak at conferences, industry events and blog, all in an effort to expand and increase my

knowledge of this amazing profession.

In a sense, I was both an accidental and deliberate project management. I accidentally fell into the craft, but quickly and deliberately aspired to dive into the deep end, I now Consult on project management and lead PMO's.

From a professional sense, project management to me is akin to a road, it's a mode of transport to get from point a to point b. There are many paths we could take that will lead us to our end goal, some will take longer, others will cost more. Project Management allows me to plan the optimal route and understand the signs and signals along the way, giving a clear direction and warning of going the wrong way or moving outside of the design limitations.

Project Management is not just about building a road, managing software, but a real means for business to deliver. Deliver for their customers. Deliver for their staff. Deliver for their shareholders. All of the greatest achievements in the world were delivered as projects. Nothing in business adds as much benefit or real world outcome as a well executed project and this is why I today am happy as a humble project manager.

The topic of this blog post is "What does project management mean to me? I think that is best answered with a rhetorical questions, "what doesn't it mean to me?"

How often do you look back on your projects at the end of the day in awe at what you had created?

What does project management mean to you? Please leave your thoughts and comments in the comments below.

This blog was written in conjunction with over 70 other project management bloggers around the world, released at the exact same time on the exact same topic. The first ever #PMFlashblog.

Name	Michel Operto
Blog	http://dantotsuPM.com
Twitter	@moperto
Bio	Blogger @ http://leblogdumanagementdeprojet.com Specialized in PM, Leadership, Program & Portfolio Management, PMO, PMI, Prince2, Agile... [Valbonne, France]

Comment as-tu commencé ta carrière dans le management de projet ?

1er #PMFlashBlog

Une des questions que l'on me pose souvent est "Comment as-tu commencé ta carrière dans le management de projet ?".

C'était en réalité par accident. Je dirigeais une équipe d'informaticiens et d'analystes business chargés d'adapter et déployer un progiciel sur étagère dans les services de support clients de chaque pays européens chez un grand constructeur informatique.

Or, en sus du rôle de manager de développement de programmes informatiques (analyse des besoins, intégration avec les systèmes existants et localisations nécessaires dans chaque pays), il est très vite apparu qu'il s'agissait davantage d'un programme de changement fondamental dans les manières de travailler et processus associés, voire organisationnel, que de développement informatique.

Cela a été un voyage passionnant vers le réel management de projet et de programme qui n'a cessé de me fasciner depuis.

J'ai donc décidé de me concentrer sur le métier du management de projet en commençant par préparer une certification au management de projet.

Je suis aujourd'hui convaincu que ce fut la bonne décision car le métier de chef de projet est au cœur de toutes les transformations et à au moins trois titres.

1. Au niveau personnel, tout d'abord passer une certification professionnelle en management de projet fut intéressante car elle me permit de poser mon expérience acquise sur le terrain sur des bases théoriques solides.

Ce étude me força aussi à élargir ma vue du métier de chef de projet à des aspects jusqu'alors quasiment ignorés dans mes jobs et qui me furent par la suite fort utiles. De plus, les certifications, en particulier en management de projet, sont un appel à s'engager dans une démarche de développement continu de ses compétences, de travail sur son réseau relationnel, de contribution à une communauté de pratique de professionnels du métier, trouver les pointeurs vers les bons outils et documents... Ce fut donc pour moi le début d'une aventure et d'une quête constante de nouvelles rencontres, techniques, expériences et processus. D'abord en créant un chapitre du PMI dans le sud de la France puis en créant DantotsuPM, blog dédié à cette passion du management de projet et du leadership. De surcroît, le management de projet est un métier dans lequel la crédibilité est

particulièrement importante et une certification reconnue pour moi dans ce domaine. Elle m'a déjà prouvé toute sa valeur lors de mes 2 derniers changements d'employeur !

"If you don't have a theory, you don't have an experience."

"Without theory there is no observation, there is no experience."

W. Edwards Deming

2. Au niveau de l'équipe, la certification en management de projet fournit un langage, un référentiel, des méthodes communs à tous et toutes.

En effet, je me suis vite aperçu que le management de projet réussi repose pour beaucoup sur une bonne qualité des communications et une compréhension réellement partagée des rôles et responsabilités. Avoir un référentiel et des méthodes communes m'ont largement aidé à installer ces deux aspects dans les organisations avec lesquelles j'ai travaillé.

3. Au niveau de l'entreprise, des qualifications reconnues permettent de garantir un niveau élevé de compétences au service du client, donc une crédibilité et une valeur commerciale accrues.

En effet, le management de projet professionnel c'est aussi la garantie de dormir tranquille pour les responsables de l'organisation en sachant qu'ils se reposent sur des techniques qui ont fait leurs preuves et des personnels qualifiés qui géreront et remonteront tout problème rapidement. Dans certaines industries, la certification en management de projet est même exigée de toute personne proposée pour exercer le rôle de chef de projet dans un contrat de prestation de services.

Alors, qu'attendez-vous pour rejoindre les rangs des managers de projets et préparer votre prochaine certification ?

Name	Carlos J. Pampliega
Blog	http://www.salineropampliega.com/
Twitter	@CJPampliega
Bio	Seeking Excellence by Design.

#PMFlashBlog from the reality of Project Management in Spain.

What does project management mean to me, and why I think it is a profession as important in Spain at the moment?

I would ask you to take time and think about the topic while having a coffee and go over the state of the Project Management in Spain, particularly in the building construction sector.

Over the last few days, a lot has been written about the failed candidature of Madrid to organize the 2020 Olympic Games. The candidate cities were Madrid, Istanbul and Tokyo, where in the end, will be held. Congrats Tokyo! I use the word "failed" because for a lot of the Spanish citizens it was a very big disappointment that Madrid has not been chosen to organize such an important worldwide event.

On the internet, the failed candidature was summed up in a sentence spoken by the Mayor of Madrid during the presentation of IOC: "There is nothing quite like a relaxing cup of Café con Leche in Plaza Mayor!". For a lot of internet surfers, the work and preparation prior to the election wasn´t Olympic standards, except the magnificent speech from the Prince of Asturias and Pau Gasol.

However , for analysts, the most important factors for the failing the candidature for Madrid 2020 were the economic recession, the bad news about political corruption, and doping in sport. The Spanish Brand doesn´t exist the way the Spanish understand it, and outside the "Planet Football", Madrid is a place to set the epicenter of financial downfall and political corruption.

In this, not so motivated environment in which we work in Spain, without a lot optimistic future or traces of an economic improvement, the Spanish candidature was, for a lot of Spanish citizens a cause of national pride, rather than a ray of hope.

But that Madrid lost an Olympic candidature for the third consecutive, affected by the recession and corruption is only a symptom. The illness is worse. We have got used the mediocrity, lack of excellence, lack of competitiveness, and this illness affects the conditions in which the Project Managers do their work in Spain.

State of Project Management in Spain

The economic sector that stand out in Spain for the use of PM is Information Technology, with multinational Anglo-Saxon companies which work on projects.

The Spanish construction companies, most of them small and medium sized, are not used to the PM figure. In the best of cases, they have been using the function of "controller" (project monitoring). The so called professionals which were called "project manager" and which were not trained to be so, were just spectators, middle people or simple commission holders. This was seen as a great disadvantage for the Spanish construction sector and was a burden on the qualified and trained PMs.
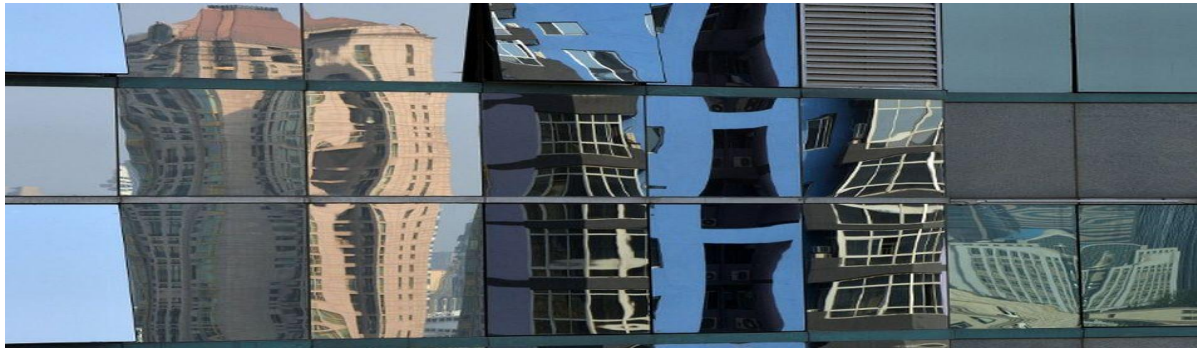
With the real estate bubble, the building sector has been reduced vastly. The majority of working companies have had to let off a big part of their staff, PMs included, which the professionals that are left are centered on limited aspects of Project Management: scope, schedule and costs, without having time for developing the rest of processes involving a project. Under these circumstances the companies opt for reducing expenses and consider the figure "project manager" without training, dispensable, while adding no value to the end project.

In this bad situation we are coming across recent unemployed workmates or working under pressure in a "just about running companies". It´s very difficult to ask these PMs to have a positive attitude in meetings where they are talking about stopping projects in kill point time. It´s also difficult to find professionals who worry about the use of their language most often causing complaints which lead to their workmates job performance. The PMs influence their team workers who are programmed to mediocrity and fail.

I coincide with Alfonso Bucero, who describes in a personal way in his book "Today is a Good Day", that it´s difficult to find PMs who confront this unknown situation, finding braveness to confront their fears and develop their potential as a team leader. We are in lack of professionals who can maintain a positive attitude and have passion, are persistent and patient so the project turns out well. Not because they are bad professionals but are part of organizations which have no get up a go, and is more worried out becoming bankrupt rather than doing the project in the correct way.

But let not get used to this situation, nor fall into despair. We can see a ray of hope for the Project Management, even in these difficult times. Pushed, among other things, into this real estate recession, a lot of professionals have discovered with the help of international organizations like PMI, a career like PMs which allows them to stand out and helps them to look for jobs both in and outside our borders. In this aspect the PMI Madrid Spain Chapter is one of the biggest growing in number of members which is registered in the world.

This fact has another side to Spanish companies. They are asking for qualified professionals on international standards, such as PMP, which helps to compete overseas. The PM should be, and is now showing, that it´s a good tool to have to go overseas and get closer to well know ways of working in Anglo-Saxon areas. The Project Manager is starting to be seen as an extra, who is not just a controller, and starts to manage a full project. The PM is beginning to have its impact on company strategy.

It would be naive to think that Spain will come out of the recession thanks to Project Management. But I´m convinced that at least it will make us change our outlook, and demonstrate that our companies are above political improvisation.

As PMs we cannot avoid the inevitable, or avoid events in the projects. However, we can change our attitude to reality. In this, each and every one of us as PMs are responsible for our attitude. Each and every of us have an opportunity every day to confront reality with a construction and positive attitude. Thanks Alfonso!

I Think that the PM attitude reflects on all the team. It determines the results of the team. As leaders we should have passion, be persistent and have enough patience to make it easy for the team to develop their skills.

Isn´t being a Project Manager the best job in the world?.

Cheers, Today is a good day!

Name	Mark Phillipy
Blog	www.SensiblePM.com
Twitter	@SensiblePM
Bio	Leading new project management conversations at SensiblePM.com. Also, the host of The Sensible Manager Podcast an insider's look at project management, and The SensiblePM 101 Podcast, dynamic tips for practical project management. Join in the conversation in the Sensible Project Manager Hangout Community on Google+.

What Does Project Management Mean to Me.

Project Management is not about the framework in which we execute a body of work. Nor is it about processes or the ever so valuable soft skills we learn through time. It isn't about communication, change management, risk management, quality assurance, etc, etc. Although all of these are essential during the execution of a project, they are only tools or methods in which we get things done. The essence of project management is being able to capture a vision, form and motivate a team of individuals who rally behind that vision and deliver value to the customer. Let me illustrate what I mean through an experience I had as a 15 year old boy.

The Hike

My father approached me one beautiful winter day with an idea he had about taking a hike along the Pacific Crest Trail in the Cascade Mountains. The Pacific Crest Trail is a hiking trail in the western United States which traverses various terrains from Mexico to Canada for a total of 2650 miles. My father's idea was to hike a portion of that trail from Snoqualmie Pass to Stevens Pass in the state of Washington. Our trip would take six days to travel a distance of 75 miles with a total elevation gain and loss of 16,000 feet. My young mind immediately caught the vision of that trip and we began developing our plan.

As we started to plan I shared the vision of our hike with my best friend and my cousin who were quickly on board to join the adventure. We knew that even though the hike wouldn't take place until August of the next year, there was a lot to learn about embarking on such an endeavor. We had to plan out the details of the journey to know how far we would hike each day and where we would camp each night. There was equipment and food to obtain. Finally the planning was complete and that glorious August day which marked the start of our hike was only a week away...and I became ill. This was a bad cold that settled deep into my chest.

Determined I would not miss out on the hike of a lifetime, I somehow recovered enough to convince my parents I could make the journey and we were off. Two days into the trip I was beginning to feel pretty good, but that evil cold made its way to my father and friend. On the morning of the third day, my father announced that the hike was over because he was too sick to meet the strenuous hike through the mountains that lay ahead. With continued determination to see my father's vision through, I convinced him that my cousin and I could complete the journey on our own. Over the next several days and after separating from my father and best friend, my cousin and I faced several thousand feet of elevation gain and almost continuous mountain rain storms.

On the last day of our journey, we made it to the predetermined place in the trail where we were to meet my parents and we could declare victory over the Cascade mountain range. After several hours of waiting, we were approached by another set of hikers who shared with us that due to the heavy rains the bridge my parents would take to meet us was washed out. We would have to continue one

more day to the second predetermined rendezvous point. After six arduous days of hiking and braving everything the mountain could throw at us we finally met up with my parents, and after relieving the stress that had crept upon my mother's face, we all celebrated the completion of our vision.

I have thought of this experience many times through the years as it truly helped shape my life. We were able to take my father's vision and goal of traversing the Cascade Mountains, develop a plan, meet the trials and adapt to the changes that occurred along the way. Although the plan was modified as circumstances required, we held true to the vision and I personally realized the value that experience has provided me through my life.

Project Management

Isn't this experience truly what project management is about? We are successful as project managers when we can take the vision of an upcoming project and work with our team to deliver value to our customer. Regardless of the roadblocks that are thrown in our way or the number of change requests during the project. If the team can rally behind the vision, led by the project manager, they will deliver great value to the customer.

A French aviator and author, Antoine de Saint-Exupery, summed up the power of what I am talking about when he said, "If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

It doesn't matter much to me about the project management framework, or how rigid or freeing the processes are that I use. What matters most to me is how effective I am at helping my team understand the vision of the project and working with their strengths to build a powerful team which will deliver extraordinary value to our customer.

That is what project management means to me...and that is my sermon.

| Name	Henny Portman
Blog	http:// http://hennyportman.wordpress.com
Twitter	@HennyPortman
Bio	Passionate about my family, Restaurants and drama theatre and reading. Art lover (Dutch movement "De Stijl") and of course project & programme & portfolio management and building and connecting PMO's to make sharing, asking and learning possible.

The Ideal Project Manager

We still see many project failures. Why can't we be more successful? Inspired by some pictures from Gilbert Garcin I found on the web, I will visualize and explain some characteristics of the ideal project manager and than the answer will be in your hands. Do we have them? If you are a project manager, you could say if you are that ideal project manager, if you are a sponsor or project owner you can ask yourself do we have this ideal project manager or maybe you can make the difference and be a team with the project manager to achieve successes.

Every picture visualizes a key project manager competence.
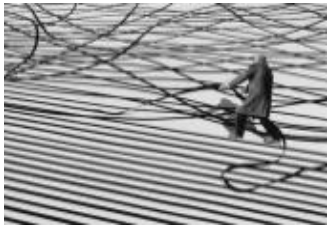
The ideal project manager will create structure out of chaos.

The ideal project manager has overview.

The ideal project manager has a clear focus.

The ideal project manager can motivate him/herself to achieve the goal.
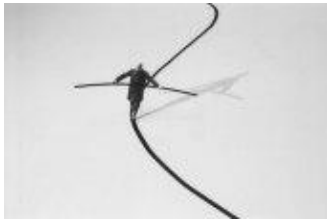
The ideal project manager can bring balance in the work to be performed.

The ideal project manager gets any job done.

The ideal project manager is a problem solver.

The ideal project manager will always make the right decision.

The ideal project manager knows how to communicate.

The ideal project manager is the one who stands in the spotlights when it goes wrong.

The ideal project manager doesn't need direction.

If you are a project manager, do you recognize these competences, are you using these competences? What will happen with your project if you use them? Can you make decisions on your own? Did you get tolerances on your project controls like Time, budget, scope, quality, risk and benefits? Or will you always escalate to your project board? Can you motivate your team? Can you motivate yourself? Is there chaos or structure in your project? If you have problems with some of these competences and/or behavior, will your sponsor or project owner supports you or helps you? If you are a project owner or sponsor do you recognize these competences of your project manager, if not, have you asked yourself what you can do to help?

Name	Neil Pragnell
Blog	http://journalofaprojectmanager.blogspot.co.uk/
Twitter	@neilpragnell
Bio	I am an enthusiastic Project Manager with a strong work ethic and plain English approach to communication.
	I have over 10 years of public sector experience and during that time have worked within various fields of IT from Application Support, Software Development, System Testing, System Configuration Management, Deployment Planning and Project Management. I have a strong interest in the management of people through change, both in a project lead context and a coaching context.
	Dedicated husband and father of two. Lead guitarist in The Replicants. Motorcyclist and massive MotoGP fan.

What does Project Management mean to me? - a Project Manager's sermon

To me, project management is all about the pursuit to continuously try to improve the predictability of the results of introducing a change, and us as Project Managers are people who genuinely care about doing things right. We are eternal learners who absorb all we can from the past and the present in order to try and make a better future.

In the vast majority of cases, it is us Project Managers who are the ones (very often the only ones) that care about all aspects of the project.

We care about the budget, we care about the timescales. We care about what may go wrong, we care about what has gone wrong.

We care about the quality of the materials, we care about the market forces, we care about the weather, we care about being sensitive to the home life issues the team member is dealing with right now that is taking their focus away from the project.

We care about doing things for a genuine reason that offers a tangible benefit, we care about the test environment set up, we care about the latest developments in our chosen field, we care about keeping stakeholders informed.

We care about the team dynamics, we care about reclaiming VAT, we care about developing our own personal tool kit to help us stay sharp and credible, we care about developing the team's skills.

We care about what needs to be done this minute...we care about the 5 year strategy.

We care a lot, wouldn't you say?

Project management as a discipline gives us tools and processes for bringing some control over the ambiguity and uncertainty change certainly brings, tools and processes that are themselves in a perpetual improvement cycle...exactly the same as ourselves as individuals.

Project Management is about having the flexibility to swoop down into the alleyways of the details when we need to, and be able to soar quickly back up to 30,000ft a moment later to check on the big picture.

Project Management requires that we are resilient in the pursuit of delivery. We are the ones who can come into the office every day, have unbreakable tenacity and do whatever it takes to keep...pushing...things...forward.

Project Management is about bringing an idea to reality in the most appropriate manner possible, whether that is building a royal palace or a simple garden shed. It looks to ensure a solution to a

problem is delivered when it is required, as good as it needs to be and for the right price. It is about delivering the right output to achieve the desired outcome.

Project Management helps drive things forward to achieve innovation and creativity, and it also helps us avoid disastrous consequences occurring from not acting in time or not knowing where we are heading.

Project Management is about communication – communication between human beings, and all of the challenges this brings to ensure that everyone involved in, or affected by, the project has their contribution honoured appropriately.

Mostly importantly though, Project Management is about people. People who come together and work together towards a common goal, and for the Project Manager, this requires the facilitation and leadership to empower these people to carry out the work required, with an increasingly important emphasis on our soft skills to influence.

Project Management is the calling of a few.

P.S. This post is published as part of a first ever project management related global blogging initiative to publish a post on a common theme at exactly the same time.

Over 70 bloggers from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and the USA have committed to make a

blogging contribution and the fruit of their labour is now (literally NOW) available all over the web. The complete list of all participating blogs is found here so please go and check them out!

Name	Patrick Richard
Blog	http://thehardnosedpm.typepad.com/my-blog/
Twitter	@hardnosedpm
Bio	I love visiting museums and art galleries, leading edge technology, motorcycling across the continent, and walking my two Staffordshire Bull Terriers (BOOM! and BLAST!)

What does project management mean to me? Shim Marom suggested the title when he launched the idea of a number of project management bloggers posting all at the same time. Although I am absolutely not religious, I may be preachy at time. Sermon it is.

Some would say I'm a project manager because I am a boring individual. Ex-soldier, engineer, and project manager; how boring can you get? I prefer to believe that the common thread between soldiers, engineers, and project managers is that they are mission oriented people. We deliver something that has not been delivered before while trying to be on time and controlling cost.

Of course some would reiterate that I'm a boring project manager because I hide behind schedules, estimates, and processes. After all, if I could still do the job, I would not have been lobotomized and moved on to management. Actually, the schedules, estimates, and processes are only part of the job, as in managing tasks. They are part of a recipe that allows anybody with basic math skills to wrongly claim that they are project managers. If schedules, estimates, and processes where the end of the story; all projects would go smoothly and end nicely.

Now, the part that many never think about but is the reason I love project management is the leadership needed to bring the project to a successful conclusion. Again, manage tasks but lead people. Leadership is what keeps the project on track. The boring stuff, aka schedules, estimates, and processes allow the leader to see the effect of an action on the outcome of the project. If everything goes well, the boring project manager leads and measures while appearing to do nothing and be completely redundant. If the project is going or has gone off track, the now not boring at all project manager pull leadership out of his bag of tricks and cajoles, reassures, prods and convinces stakeholders and the people that really deliver (the team) back on to what will hopefully be a successful path.

Name	Ivan Rivera
Blog	http://ivanrivera-pmp.com
Twitter	@irivera
Bio	Computer Engineer with wide experience as business processes manager. Managerial background developed through directive positions in companies of services. Innovative, solutions oriented and with teamwork coordination abilities.
	Specialized in high-impact projects management by using globally recognized methodologies (PMBOK, APMbok). Information Technology Master degree. Project Management Professional (PMP) since 2006 and Advanced Project Management Certification (Stanford University) since 2010.

What does project management mean to me // Que significa para mí la Administración de Proyectos.

El mes pasado, Shim Marom me invitó, junto a más de 80 Administradores de Proyecto de todo el mundo, a participar de este interesante esfuerzo: el denominado Project Management FlashBlog.

La idea es interesante en si misma. Y me da la oportunidad para compartir algunos pensamientos acerca de mi profesión.

Voy a empezar contando una historia.

Mi acercamiento a la adminsitración de proyectos se dió como un paso natural. Yo estudie una carrera de sistemas, y he programado computadoras desde los 15 años.

Así que cuando programar en Commodore dejo de ser interesante, aprendí a programar PC's. Primero en XBase hasta llegar a C y C++ (Y algo de ensamblador). Y luego aprendí a programar PDA's. Y en el camino dejé de ser solo un programador y empecé a hacer análisis. Luego tuve la oportunidad de coordinar equipos de trabajo.

Cuando te dedicas de tiempo completo al desarrollo de software siempre te preguntas... ¿Que mas puedo hacer para que mi trabajo sea mejor?, ¿Como evito el retrabajo?, ¿Como evitar los cuestionamientos del usuario al trabajo que yo consideraba terminado?

Por otro lado, tuve la oportunidad de estudiar una carrera universitaria. Y una de las materias que estudié fue: "Administración de Proyectos". Y mágicamente, todo cayó en su lugar...

En realidad no fue tan mágico. Los años de experiencia, las desveladas, los días de no ver a la familia por que estas a la mitad un proceso de liberación de Software. Eso representa experiencias. La escuela te ayuda a entender y a nombrar: "Control de Alcance", Riesgo, ScopeCreep, acuerdos, stakeholders.

Luego un amigo me animó a obtener la certificación como PMP. Y aquí es donde realmente empieza mi disertación.

Por que en primer lugar, la Administrarión de Proyectos representó para mi una mejora profesional.

En México, tal vez con mayor frecuencia antes que ahora, la certificación como Administrador de Proyectos me permitió acceder a toda una nueva franja salarial. El primer beneficio fue entonces una mejora salarial.

En seguida viene el poder hacer toda una serie de actividades nuevas, con la posibilidad de compartir y explotar mis conocimientos y aportarlos para el beneficio de mi país. He tenido la oportunidad de dirigir proyectos a nivel nacional, proyectos locales de trascendencia. El segundo beneficio fue una mejora en el impacto del trabajo que realizo día a día.

A continuación puedo mencionar las clases. He recibido clases del tema, al grado de optar por una especialización en proyectos en la Universidad de Stanford. Y desde hace 3 años enseño administración de proyectos a alumnos próximos a graduarse en una prestigiosa universidad de mi país, con un doble beneficio: comparto mis conocimientos y me mantengo actualizado. La mejor forma de enseñar con calidad es seguir aprendiendo. El tercer beneficio es que me mantengo aprendiendo todo el tiempo.

Y listado al final, aunque es el tema mas importante: La Administración de Proyectos me abrió camino a una nueva gama de eventos, como Congresos y actividades del PMI a las que antes no tenía acceso. Ahí he conocido a mucha gente nueva. Igual pasa con mi cuenta de Twitter, en donde escribo y leo sobre temas de Administración de Proyectos. Y este blog, con los lectores cautivos y ocasionales para los que mi agradecimiento es igual. Recientemente, además, he empezado a participar en Hangouts sobre Administración de Proyectos.

Así que el otro beneficio que quiero listar son los Amigos. A la Administración de proyectos le debo muchos buenos amigos, de todo el mundo.

Eso es lo que representa para mí la Administración de Proyectos.

English Version

Last month, Shim Marom invite me and more than 80 other PMs from all over the world to take part of this interesting effort: the so called Project Management FlashBlog.

The idea is interesting by itself. And give me an oportunity to share some thoughts about my profession.

Let me start with a story.

My approach to project management was "my next career move". I´m an IT Engineer, and I'm programming computers since 15.

So, when programming in Commodore stopped being interesting, I learned to program PC 's. First in XBase up to C and C++ (and some assembler). And then I learned to program PDA's. And along the way I stopped being just a programmer and started doing analysis. Then I had the opportunity to coordinate work teams.

When I do full-time software development, I always used to ask... What else I can do to make my job better?, How do I avoid rework?, How to avoid user questions when I considered the work done?

On the other hand, I had the opportunity to study at the university. And one of the topics I studied was "Project Management". And magically, everything fell into place...

It really was not so magical. Years of intense work, lack of sleep, days of not seeing family because of a Software release process. All that represents experiences. Then School helps you to understand and name: Scope Control, Risk, Scope Creep, agreements, stakeholders.

Finally, a friend encouraged me to get certified as a PMP. And here is where my dissertation really starts.

Because firstly, Project Management help in my career advancement. In Mexico, perhaps more often than now, the Project Manager certification give me access to a whole new salary range. The first benefit was better pay.

Next comes the chance to make a whole new set of activities, with the chance to share and exploit my knowledge and contribute to the benefit of my country. I have had the opportunity to lead national projects and transcendental local projects. The second benefit was an improvement in the impact of the work I do every day.

Now, I can mention University classes. I have studied the subject, at the end with the Stanford University Advanced Project Management Certification. And since three years ago, I'm teaching project management to undergraduate students at a prestigious university in my country, with a double benefit: I share my knowledge and in the process keep me updated. The best way to teach is to keep learning. The third benefit is that I keep learning all the time.

Last, although it is the most important issue: Project Management opened up a new range of events such as congresses and PMI activities to which I previously had no access. There I met many new people. Same goes with my Twitter account, where I read and write about Project Management topics. And this blog, where captives and casual readers have my appreciation for the same. Recently I have also begun to participate in Hangouts on Project Management.

So the other benefit is the felowship. Thanks of Project Management I have many good friends around the world.

That's what does project management mean to me.

Name	Ron Rosenhead
Blog	http://www.ronrosenhead.co.uk
Twitter	@ronrosenhead
Bio	Passionate, dedicated and practical are my by words. A Project Management consultant, trainer, author (Strategies for Project Management) and speaker.
	Long serving supporter of the Leeds Rhinos, and member of the Council at Epilepsy Action.

What does project management mean to me?

How on earth did I get into project management?

Let me go back some 20 years. I was what we would call today an OD Manager (organisation development manager). I worked with managers to bring about change. I was sat in my office and there was a knock on the door:

"Do you have a few minutes Ron?"

That was a question that was to change the direction of my career. Why? I was faced with a professional who had a real problem. They had to deliver what was in their words was "a huge piece of work." He was struggling and I sat with him and we looked at the issues for an hour and suggested we meet again in a few days.

Research within the company and the wider development world led me to PRINCE. Note: not PRINCE II but PRINCE! But, had I tried to introduce it into the organisation it would have killed off any reasonable attempt at delivery of any of the changes this person (and several others) needed to make. It was not seen as particularly practical.

I then ran some simple 'work organisation and planning workshops' for a group of 6 managers all facing the same situation as the person who knocked on my door.

The results: amazing. The confidence among these individuals grew and they encouraged others with their organised approach and motivation. The huge pieces of work were moving forward and while there were still problems they were a lot smaller compared to the issues they first faced. The projects (large pieces of work) were delivered with some on time, some late, some over budget. But, they were delivered!

This is the impact that 6 people who were organised had after 2 days of workshops and further coaching. The impact for me was to focus on project management as a tool for bringing about change

So what does project management mean to me: being organised and using it to bring about change.

But it also means having the systems and processes in place to ensure success. Too many companies see project management as a way to deliver change but do not introduce the changes to bring this about e.g. decision making that still needs to go through several layers of management or sponsors who are not trained in their role. So what project management means to me: having the correct systems and processes in place to support the changes the company wants and needs.

Now, you can have all the organisation in the world, you can introduce great systems and processes but what about people? It's people who deliver projects? It's not processes, but people.

Processes clearly help, but without people, projects will never be delivered effectively. Just how much time and effort goes into developing the people skills of project staff; project teams, project

managers, project sponsors and steering groups? Not enough, is my view. Projects are being delivered but in some cases the project team do it through long hours and cajoling and driving themselves really hard. But, could more be done by helping them develop the "hard people skills?"

So project management means to me: those engaged in projects (and the wider organisation) having well honed people skills to face and deal with what is ahead

So what does project management mean to me? It means:

being organised and using it to bring about change

having the correct systems and processes in place to support the changes the company wants and needs.

those engaged in projects (and the wider organisation) having well honed people skills to face and deal with what is ahead

Name	Allen Ruddock
Blog	http://www.arra-pm.com/blog
Twitter	@arrapm
Bio	Passionate about my family, good food and excellence in project & programme management. Keen Nordic walker. On a sensible health kick so I can enjoy good food.

So what does project management mean to me? It is such a broad subject with many different aspects to it. To many, project management conjures up visions of plans & planning, risks & issues, reporting, tracking etc. - all important tools, techniques, methods and processes. But for me, project management is about people. People deliver projects, to people, for people and impacting people. Look at the 'project management wheel' diagram. Two thirds of it is about people and communicating with people!
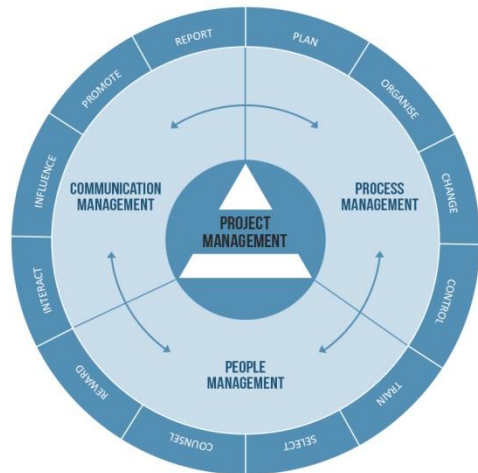
For many years the profession - and yes, project management is a profession - has focussed on the how and the what. Hundreds of thousands of people have been trained in Prince2 - a great method. But anyone thinking a one week course leading to a practitioner certificate makes them a project manager, is deluded. Why is it that with all this training every survey on project delivery success still shows a high proportion of projects failing against one or more success criteria? Because that training ignores the people factor.

A good, successful, project manager has to have people skills. They have to build, manage and motivate their team. They have to interact with and manage a vast array of stakeholders. They have to be able to negotiate. Above all, they have to lead!

So a good project manager is a people person. To be an effective people person, you have to look at things from their view point. In the project world they will always be interested, and sometimes worried about, what the project means for them. I call it their WIIFM factors - "what's in it for me?". Understanding their WIIFMs is key to managing any stakeholder.

Part of that is understanding their world - the business they are in and the pressures and challenges they face. So a good project manager has to have, or be able to quickly assimilate, a good understanding of the business they serve.

The basics of these skills can be taught and all project management training should incorporate basic people skills as a minimum. But these skills are honed in the workplace through practical experience. Each project manager has their own style and approach, fashioned over the years. Find a good one and they are worth their weight in gold!

Name	Lew Sauder
Blog	http://blog.consulting101book.com/
Twitter	@lewsauder
Bio	Lew Sauder is the author of Consulting 101: 101 Tips for Success in Consulting. He has been a project manager and consultant with top-tier and boutique consulting firms for twenty years.

I've been blogging for about three years now. Today I'm trying something a bit different. I'm participating in a Flash Blog. More than seventy-five bloggers are contributing a blog at the same time on the same day with the same title: What Project Management Means to me: A Project Manager's Sermon. (To see other participants' blogs, check out #PMFlashBlog)

I'm not a regular church-goer and I don't intend to get too preachy, but the initiator, Shim Marom specifically chose the S-word to ensure the content is genuine, convincing, rational and emotional. So here goes...

Friends...we gather here today to discuss something dear to my heart...

I've been managing projects for several years now. I have sinned often. And I've learned from them. When I started out, I did what I think most new project managers do. I was a task master. I had a Microsoft project plan and it was my bible.

Every task had an estimated begin and end date, an estimated duration and an assignee. Every week, we congregated for status. Every week we reviewed what got done last week and I doled out the planned tasks for next week. Git 'er done! We met like that every week throughout the project. Religiously.

Success on the project was defined by two things: On time and on budget. As long as both of those measurements were met, we were good.

As the years went by and my experience level increased, I learned a few things. First of all – and most importantly – if the project you deliver to the business people doesn't provide the value they expect, on time and on budget is meaningless.

Secondly, if you drive your team into the ground to get a project done by a specified date, you risk losing some or all of your valuable people. That will make adding value on your next project all the more difficult.

The ultimate goal of the project manager

Don't get me wrong. Delivering a project on time and under budget are important goals. But if that's all you focus on, you risk missing the mark by a long shot. So here is my list of things that define the true meaning of project management.

The project manager is the project's CCO (Chief Communications Officer). Imagine a project as a wheel with spokes. Each spoke is a project stakeholder. I manage IT projects, so my spokes generally consist of developers, business analysts, QA testers, architects, external third parties, business users and so on. My top priority is to ensure communication is flowing to and from all of those spokes.

Do the developers have all the information they need to do their jobs? Have the business people been informed of the issues with the proper detail to allow them to make good decisions? Something that took me a long time to learn is that communication is a two-way street. The most important aspect of communication is listening. Did I hear and understand the issue from the developer so that I can communicate it to the business team? Did I hear and understand the

business users' concerns well enough to translate it back to the team?

The project manager is the blocker buster. Instead of weekly status meetings with the project team, I've evolved to a more agile approach. (Not pure Agile, mind you. That's a whole other religion and a totally different sermon.) This is more of an iterative approach. We divide the work into manageable three- to four-week segments and put our tasks on Post-it notes on the wall. Then we hold a daily stand-up meeting where each team member provides three updates:

What I accomplished yesterday

What I plan to accomplish today

What issues are blocking me from making progress

It's the project manager's job to remove the issues blocking each team member. Often times, it's a third party dependency like the database team or a vendor that hasn't responded to an email. Sometimes it's another developer who hasn't completed a task on time. The project manager is responsible for finding out the root cause of the blockage and facilitating its removal.

The project manager keeps an eagle eye on risks and issues. When team members bring up issues that are blocking their progress, it's an issue that needs to be resolved. Sometimes it can't be avoided. The goal is to be more proactive to avoid the issues from occurring in the first place. That's where risk management comes in. Risks are potential issues. Issues are risks that came true. Although it's impossible (and impractical) to anticipate every issue that could occur on a project, it is important to do the due diligence of risk analysis. Brainstorm with your team early and often about what could go wrong. For each risk, identify at least one risk mitigation strategy to avoid that risk from becoming an issue. It's also good to have a strategy for handling the situation if it becomes an issue.

The project manager is more leader than manager. Managing risks, issues and task status are important aspects of the project manager's job. You can't get the job done without doing those tactical duties. The more important responsibility is to lead the team. For each team member, the current project is just one building block of their career. It's the project manager's job to help each team member develop and grow while they serve on the project. Whether the person is an employee of your company, a client or an outside contractor, you may end up working with them again in the future. Helping them develop will help their career and may be beneficial to you in the future.

To be a good leader of the team, it's important to make sure they have a good understand of the purpose. They need to understand the purpose of the project so they have some appreciation for why we're all working so hard. They also should know how their role fits in with the big picture. If they have a sense of purpose for the project and for how they are contributing, they will be more motivated and more willing to go the extra mile on that project.

The meaning of project management has evolved for me over the years. It used to be a rather simplistic series of checking things off of a list. For a project to be truly successful there is a much deeper meaning. A good project manager has to have excellent communication skills, a proactive approach to issue resolution and risk mitigation and assume the role of a leader.

Tasks have to be managed. There's no getting around that. But if that's all a project manager focuses on, he or she is doomed to burn for eternity in project hell.

Name	Lindsay Scott
Blog	http://www.arraspeople.co.uk/camel-blog/
Twitter	@projectmgmt
Bio	Into project management careers in a big way; love reading, writing and talking about it; getting people together to share their stories and help others out along the way.

Imagine gaining a lifelong skill from an early age that helps you do many things in life better. From organising your homework timetable; hosting a dinner party for 20; planning your wedding day or even decorating your bedroom – wouldn't it be great if you were able to almost automatically know the best way to get these done without lots of stress and arguments?

That's what project management means to me – it's a life skill that once you "get it", it never leaves you.

Once you've had your eyes opened to some simple techniques that help you think about things a little more logically – planning and managing yourself (and others around you) becomes just that little bit easier. When you're presented with a problem or want to push to do something new and challenging – rather than thinking you have no idea where to start, project management will bring order to the chaos.

So what simple techniques mean the most to me? Forget about the complex approaches in project management – the earned values and governance structures of a project management world where accreditation and methodologies are king. What really matters is the ability to think through a problem or challenge – what needs to happen to get to the solution? Basic project management is about understanding what is required to get to the solution; what path (or workflow) can I take; what tasks need to happen and who will do those tasks. It's also about thinking of the potential things that might happen along the way that might derail your efforts – we think about the potential issues and risks of what we're trying to achieve in advance – hence the less stress and arguments! Basic project management is about thinking of those two words – project and management. Recognising that a project is about something you're going to do new or differently – when you recognise that the dinner party for 20 is just that little bit more ambitious than one for 10 you know you have a project on your hands. Once it becomes a project you automatically instigate the techniques to help you manage your new project.

So project management to me is a life skill – the only difference between "project managers" and everyone else in the world is that project managers have taken the step from informal project management to formal project management (training, accreditations, project management for a wage)

I hope in my lifetime we'll see project management as a life skill develop and certainly something that every child has access to. Imagine our knowledge economy world in 10 years time if every child is taught how to use these simple techniques; something they'll be able to practice throughout their school and university years. When they enter the job market after twenty years they'll have a great skill set that enables them to make things happen in the workplace and any other challenges they face in their lives.

Name	Dave Shirley, PMP and Rich Maltzman, PMP
Blog	http://earthpm.com
Twitter	@richearthpm
Bio	Co-authors of Green Project Management ©CRC Press, 2010. Passionate about the intersection of project management and sustainability. Aging but young in spirit, eager to teach and learn.

What Project Management Means to Us – a PM Sermon

A LinkedIn discussion (http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Project-Management-is-in-3-37888.S.165381767) which has so far received almost 1,600 comments - challenged people to define project management in three words. There were some very good entries, some very classic, like, "Time, Scope, Cost", some humorous, such as "headaches and heartaches", and some that went for what the authors saw as the bottom line, such as "successful results always".

At EarthPM, we like the following answer to that challenge, and it's the theme of our Sermon today. We go with this one:

"Ideas Into Reality"

This is at our core. We (project managers) sit at a critical juncture in any organization – that juncture where an enterprise's core values have been made into a strategy and that strategy says we need to make some sort of change – that change could be anything from a new release of accounting software to an ultramodern office building to a new hybrid vehicle, to an improvement in a manufacturing facility, to implementing a major recycling program.

Whatever the change, we take that idea and make it real.

We sit where the rubber hits the road.

And perhaps it's that screeching of tires that makes this discipline of project management so very special to us.

Implied in that screeching of tires, is power. Implied in that screeching is friction... heat... energy... and finally (hopefully) acceleration and movement.

The inventors and strategists have come up with an idea for a car. The operations folks have the road ready for us. But we're the ones who bring the vehicle down from the 'ivory tower' and ease it

on to the road and turn the key (or these days, press the ignition button).

So that's the setup. Now comes the 'preachy' part of the Sermon.

How far ahead do we think of the car's progress to consider the project a success? Is the project done when the car drives off into the sunset? Perhaps yes. Indeed, as project managers we're told that there must be a definitive start and finish to the project. If we have to consider every mile of the vehicle as it drives along – and even (gasp!) to think about the car's eventual end of life and disposition – we couldn't move on to any other project. And that's all true.

But what's also true is that by at least considering these things – at least considering what happens to the products of our projects in the steady state, we can do a better job on the project itself. We just need to take off the blinders and think a bit longer-term, to do a better job in the short-term world of projects in which we live, and to also drive that long-term thinking backward into the decision making process

Now back to the question – what project management means to us. It indeed means understanding requirements, building and growing a team of people focused on those requirements, and executing well to get to the project's interim and final deliverables. That's "ideas into reality". But it's up to us to remember that reality is very long-lasting, very durable, and to bring that long-term thinking back into our daily project work.

Name	Peter Storm
Blog	http://www.everestmanager.com/blog/
Twitter	@everestmgr
Bio	Peter helps clients in industry, construction, law enforcement and government translate their goals into effective training programs. He stimulates managers and their teams to explore, learn and improve their skills. This idea is at the heart of every training program he designs.
	Peter recently created PMLab for project managers to share knowledge and to improve their own performance. For two decades, he was a professor of Management at the Open University in the Netherlands.

What does Project Management mean to me - a Project Manager's sermon

"What does Project Management mean to me?" Working in projects is a way of life. It either is or is not your cup of tea. Of course, working in projects allows you to hop in and out. It is quite natural for project managers to make a side step once in a while. But for most project managers a side step usually results in going back to one's roots: projects.

What's so special about working in projects that makes most project managers stay with or return to a life of hard work, heavy responsibilities and light rewards? In our current – PMI sponsored- research among project managers we did some testing of their vocational interests. We used Holland's model of vocational choice which categorizes individuals into six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Realistic types like work that involves hands-on activities. Investigative types like intellectual work. Artistic types like work that involves creative, expressive and unconventional activities. Social types like work that involves helping and teaching. Enterprising types like assertive and leadership activities. Conventional types like well-ordered and routine activities. Project managers in majority belong to the enterprising types: taking initiative and leading the team. In the world of projects that is precisely what is asked of them. Compared with other sorts of managers we find a much lower percentage in the other categories. So, project managers opt for a life in the world of projects because it suits their natural desire to take the initiative and lead the pack.

We also asked the project managers in our sample what they like and dislike about their role as project manager. What project managers like is: accomplishment of results, entrepreneurship, diversity in interpersonal relations and leading people. That's what they do it for. What they do not or rarely mention –compared with other samples- is pay, fringe benefits or prestige. That's not what they do it for. What project managers do not like in their role as project manager is: politics, trivial administrative obligations, frustrating processes and being held accountable but not authorized.

Finally, we also asked our sample how they got into this role and how they were prepared for it. Surprisingly or not, a majority of them said things like: "I kind of drifted into it", "As a specialist I took the initiative to co-ordinate things because nobody seemed to see the need for that; and I liked doing that", "Prepared? You mean by means of a course or training? No, It was just learning-by-doing".

So, what does project management mean to me? That's where I feel at home! Even if I do not get to meet my fellow project managers very often, I know they are out there. Accomplishing great things by taking the initiative, whatever frustrating politics or bureaucracy they have to deal with.

Name	Peter Taylor
Blog	http://www.thelazyprojectmanager.com/index.htm
Twitter	@thelazypm
Bio	Productively Lazy Project Manager – my mission is to teach as many people as possible that it is achievable to 'work smarter and not harder' and to still gain success in the battle of the work/life balance.

What does project management mean to me - a Project Manager's Sermon

There is a well-known Project Management 'joke' that starts...

'In the beginning there was the plan and the plan was good.

But then came the assumptions, and the assumptions were without form and the plan was completely without substance and the darkness was upon the faces of the employees'

It ends up explaining through a sequence of bad-communication why projects fail. It is amusing and I used it in my recent book on project management fun 'The Project Manager Who Smiled', but it is definitely not what I feel about project management.

As one of the generation of 'Accidental Project Managers' (that is I was just given 'something to do' one day and it turned out to be a project I learnt much later on) project management has come to mean a great deal to my personal and professional life and it is fantastic to be part of something that has, and will continue to, mature year after year. I was asked to write a short piece for a PM magazine recently on 'legacy' and I think this is very relevant to the question about what project management means to me.

After nearly 30 years in project management it is only natural, from time to time, to consider what legacy will I, and my fellow project managers, leave behind for the next generation of project managers? After all it has been the major part of my working life and a period of intense development of the 'profession'.

Perhaps personally I can consider that my writings, including 'The Lazy Project Manager', can be one form of legacy, but in general how have the 'Accidental Project Managers' done?

Well I would argue 'not bad' should come back on the report; the growth in awareness of all things 'project' and the maturing of all of the professional communities, along with the focus on project skills and methods in most organisations is a pretty good place to be today. Plus there is a vibrant wealth of knowledge out there (books, websites, blogs, podcasts, communities of practice, magazines such as 'Project' and so on) that project managers today can tap in to.

Yes, of course, 100% of projects are still not successful (and probably never will be) but project health is so much better these days in general and much of this is to do with the investment in project managers (training, support, certification etc) – the days of the 'Non-Accidental Project Manager' are definitely with us.

And there is much left to be done naturally; raising the standard of executive sponsorship, connecting business strategy to project based activity, making project management a default step on the path to the top, the 'C level', of an organisation etc.

But all in all I think we should be proud of our achievements and be confident that the generation of 'Intentional Project Managers' entering the project management world today have a great legacy to build from.

So for me, project management is the future. There will be, of course, business as usual, and there will be projects to deliver significant change, and there will be a hybrid that I call 'projects as usual' – smaller change initiatives that managers and others with a basic project management skillset will

manage as part of their day to day job. Because I believe that more and more people will enter the business world having gained such basic project management skills through schools, colleges, universities and other development routes.

So whilst the 'joke' might make us smile it isn't true of the future:

In the beginning there was the plan and the plan was good.

But then came the assumptions, and the assumptions were without form and the plan was completely without substance and the darkness was upon the faces of the employees.

And they spake amongst themselves, saying 'It is a crock of shit and it stinks!'

And so the employees went unto their supervisors, saying 'It is a pail of dung and none may abide the odour thereof.'

Thereafter the supervisors went unto their division managers, saying 'It is a vessel of fertilizer and none may abide its strength.'

And the division managers went unto their general manager, saying 'It contains that which aids plant growth and it is very strong.'

And soon the general manager went unto the Board, saying 'It promotes growth and is very powerful', adding 'This new plan will actively promote the growth and efficiency of this organization.'

And so it came to pass that the Board looked upon the plan and saw that it was good and so the Plan became Policy.

This is how s**t happens!

Rather I think it will go...

In the beginning there was the plan and the plan was good.

And the project manager who takes charge of the plan was also good.

And this is how change happens.

I look forward to seeing my profession of project management in the hands of those who believe in project management in the future.

Amen to that.

Peter Taylor (The Lazy Project Manager) – 25th Sept 2013

Name	Ian Webster
Blog	http://blogramme.com
Twitter	@IanWebster
Bio	Pilot and blogger (but mostly programme manager).

"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it" Ferris Bueller, Project Manager, 1986
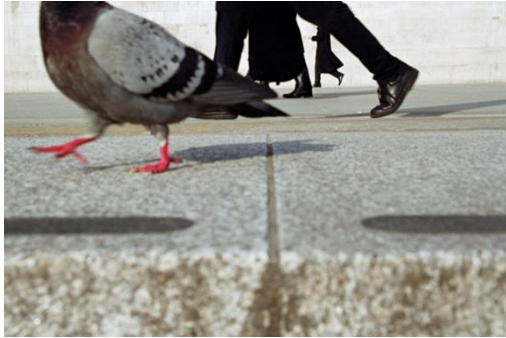
Flashblog

Back in August (2013) Shim Marom contacted me and asked me to participate in an initiative whereby the leading project management bloggers around the world would all write a post, on a common topic, then publish them all simultaneously. The subject of our posts was to be "What does project management mean to me". Rich Malzman subsequently came up with the term "Flashblog". This is my contribution.

Journeys and Destinations – Ends and Means

Project management is, in essence, a means to an end. It's about delivering stuff. Creating new business outcomes. New futures. That's one of the reasons why projects can be so motivating. Outcomes usually outlive the projects that created them in the first place. That's how it should be. Children should outlive their parents. It's the natural order of things in both projects and life.

However (as Ferris Bueller points out) life moves pretty fast. Spend the best years of your life blindly running projects, being a slave to PRINCE2, and you could miss it. The last thing you want in life is to reach the final destination and to realise you didn't care for the journey much.

In projects you should quite rightly be more concerned about the destination than the journey, more about the outcome than the method. In life, however, it's my opinion (and therefore a fact) that the journey should be more important than the destination. I will explain...

Interesting Stuff

In the last 25 years I've delivered countless projects and programmes – outcomes, if you will. I've done a job, created outcomes, personally invested a lot of myself in those endeavours, and been remunerated fairly for doing so.

However, I've also done some pretty cool stuff along the way, all of it as a direct consequence of doing the job and the people I've met on the journey.

Over the years I must have met literally thousands of people from hundreds of companies. I've worked with some of the brightest minds in business today. Some of the most interesting and memorable people I've met haven't been CEO's but homeless people in London or fellow commuters on a train or plane on the way home on a Friday evening.

I've flown (a lot) both as a passenger and a pilot, in everything from helicopters to microlight aircraft. I've been cleared to fly right up the Thames and been ordered to hold in the hover alongside the Houses of Parliament. I've also been buzzed by the Duke of Cambridge's rescue helicopter whilst parked up on top of a mountain in Wales.

I've drank way too much alcohol with a series of politicians (one of whom tried to score a drug deal at 1am when somewhat the worse for wear – not so cool) and one serving Prime Minister.

For a while I counted Elle Macpherson, Margaret Thatcher, Roman Abromavich and Joan Collins amongst my neighbours (my apartment was considerably smaller than theirs).

I've lectured to university and college students and spoken at countless conferences (somehow getting away with using clips from The Lion King, Hook and Dead Poets Society in the process, as well as teaching some pretty serious delegates how to juggle as part of my slot)

I've held a series of clandestine meetings with Harry from Spooks.

I've travelled extensively on business and marvelled at some of the places I've worked in. I fell in love with America, ran people all over the Middle East, was underwhelmed by Hong Kong, and got shot at in Manchester. I've been humbled at the sheer scale of poverty in India, the similar sized chasm between the rich and poor in Mumbai, and the equally large scale of my Indian colleagues' indifference to it.

The Exam Question

So, what does project management mean to me? Well, if project management is a means to an end, it's sort of diametrically opposed to life, which should be more about the journey and less about the destination. For me it's best summed up by Robert J Hastings' short essay "The Station" which I will paraphrase here:

"… stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more and cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough."

Whilst on occasion I will admit it has felt like the day job is killing me, project management has, in part at least, helped me to do some pretty cool stuff with my life. No matter how passionate we are about projects, it's mostly the stuff we do in between jobs that defines us, and that sort of puts PRINCE2 into perspective, doesn't it?

	Name	Martin Webster
	Blog	Leadership Thoughts http://www.leadershipthoughts.com
	Twitter	@tristanwember
	Bio	Martin Webster MBA IEng MIET MBCS CITP is managing solution architect at a large UK public sector organisation and has more than 20 years' experience in project delivery and business change. He writes regularly about project management, leadership and business change on his website http://www.leadershipthoughts.com

Today I join around 80 international bloggers and project management experts to answer the question: "What does project management mean to me?" This is my project manager's sermon. It is quite a long read.

What Does Project Management Mean to Me? A Project Manager's Sermon

However, before I answer the question: "What does project management mean to me?" I think it wise to set the scene. Nowadays I manage a team of brilliant solution architects. I no longer manage projects. But I do coach, cajole and encourage them!

My job is to solve problems: To find solutions that enable beneficial business-led change. And I see project management as a core competence in directing and managing change; ergo I shall begin with a concise definition of project management.

> "Project management is the planning, delegating, monitoring and control of all aspects of the project, and the motivation of those involved, to achieve the project objectives within the expected performance targets for time, cost, quality, scope, benefits and risks." – Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2, 5th Edition

As far as project management definitions go this is rather good. But what does it tell us about project management? What does it tell us about *being* a project manager?

In truth, many definitions often leave us out in the cold. Yet this simple definition does encapsulate what we should be doing. It helps identify 3 important things a successful project manager does. The three—and yes, this is a 3-point sermon—things project management mean to me are:

1. Making informed decisions;
2. Gaining management support; and
3. Dealing with the unexpected.

So now you have my answer to the question "What does project management mean to me?" I shall now take a closer look at these 3 distinguishing project management qualities.

Making Informed Decisions

Project management is often misunderstood and poorly practised because organisations don't know how to control change. Simply put, they don't know what they are doing. Senior management believes it is driving change through from the top down when in reality it is basing decisions on assumptions.

And here's the crux of the problem. Every one believes someone at the top knows what they're doing. This stops everyone from learning and innovating.

Let me tell you a story...

The key players in "Channel Shift" are not top management. They are the project manager and the analyst. The project manager had the conviction to follow his hunch and the analyst the tenacity to uncover evidence.

Project management isn't simply about following process. It is about challenging the status quo and making sure project objectives and benefits are crystal clear. The project manager must use evidence—honest facts—to inform decisions and *show* people how their project will [make change happen]().

So what does project management mean to me? For starters it is making informed decisions to get change started.

Gaining Management Support

My next point is about gaining management support. So let us return to the case study...

In "I Have a Voice" we learn that those who think they have little power can make a difference. The overwhelming evidence presented to the project board could not be refuted. They were on-side. The project manager had moved them from commanders to sponsors!

Making informed decisions using hard facts helped the project manager win over the project board.

The board immediately connected themselves to something important and lent it their credibility.

In this way project managers must learn to gain proactive support from senior leaders. This is what sponsorship is about. It is holding up an idea or cause as important. And when the project manager has true sponsorship he is empowered and likely to succeed in his role.

So what does project management mean to me? In a nutshell it is about making informed decisions and gaining management support.

Dealing With the Unexpected

But this isn't enough. We all know that projects are unpredictable and inherently risky endeavours. Therefore, the third and last point is this: project managers must know how to deal with the unexpected.

Knowledge Is Power

Getting senior management on-board was just the beginning. Lots of questions followed and there was an expectation for us to have all the answers. We didn't have them.

The project team quickly realised it had to learn about customer access, efficiency and channel shift. We needed to be one step ahead of everyone else's thinking. We also knew our limitations and when external help was desired. Our approach to the project meant we could anticipate problems and deal with them head-on before they derailed what we were trying to do.

For instance, when parts of the business were too ambitious in their plans we were able to convince the project board that restraint was necessary. We fully understood the end-to-end transaction costs and the importance of user experience. In contrast, some of the ideas coming from the business made neither economic nor practical sense.

Most business change projects have difficulties. This is not surprising since we rarely know exactly what we are doing or how it is to be done. In other words, project management is learning as you go. Or to put it another way, dealing with the unexpected. Why this is such a surprise often confounds me.

I think we are all in agreement that the project manager's job is to deal with uncertainty. However, I believe it is more than this. It is about making our future more probable.

What we learn from the case study is this: driving projects from the top does not work because people assume someone knows the answers.

Projects are called projects because we don't know exactly what we are going to do. We have to learn as we go. The project manager has to learn fast. Only then can the unexpected be handled with any degree of confidence.

In Summary

So now you have my answer to the question: "What does project management mean to me?" Simply this: Make informed decisions, gain management support, and know how to deal with the unexpected.

> "There is no such thing as a problem without a gift in its hands for you." – Robert Bach

Who said project management was easy? Thank you.

Name	Russell Whitworth
Blog	http://q2associates.com/blog/
Twitter	@Q2Associates
Bio	A career mainly in the telecommunications industry, that has included network design, marketing and product management, management consultancy, coaching and project management.

I never wanted to be a project manager. At various times in my life, I have wanted to be an astronaut, a physicist, a programmer, a telecoms engineer, a telecoms manager, a product manager, a management consultant and a teacher. But never a project manager.

Like many in our profession, I am an accidental project manager. I just sort of stumbled into it unintentionally, only realising that I had become one when others started attaching the PM title to me.

Why, then, did I drift in this direction? What is it about project management that others recognised in me? (And I'm far from unique here; I think this is very much a shared experience.)

I like driving. I enjoy the act of planning and executing a route, and adapting as needed depending on traffic conditions. The discipline also appeals to me: driving is a skill that can be learnt, and developed. It helps to have a destination in mind, but even that isn't essential; I'm happiest of all when driving round and round in circles on a track day. There is "best practice", but there are also differing views on driving technique. On track, I enjoy trying different lines to find out what works best for me.

The analogy with project management should be obvious. There are those of us that enjoy the journey, and managing the journey, in and of itself. Having a clear destination is great – but what really matters to the project manager is finding the best way to get there. There are opportunities to try out new approaches, and to optimise the journey. Project management is a road movie. And having arrived safely (hopefully), project managers are immediately looking forward to the next trip. The journey is the important part: making things happen.

So that is what project management means to me. Project management is about making things

happen, and project managers are people that like to make things happen.

Once I accepted the mantle of "project manager", the next step was to look for best practice, start to try out alternatives, and accumulate the bits that seem to work for me. I have being doing this for around 10 years now, and the distillation has been The Seven Essentials, which you can read about on this blog. Very little of The Seven Essentials is truly original, of course. It is mostly borrowed (some would say stolen) from the best practice of colleagues, consultants and experts that I've been fortunate enough to work with over the years, as well as some input from Prince2, PMI PMBOK and other recognised standards.

The fun part is that project management best practice can never be complete. There are always new challenges, new approaches, new tools and technologies. So I'm always on the lookout for new ideas. Every project has its "what can I learn from this?" moments.

That is why I am excited about participating in #pmFlashBlog. It has been a challenge to write this article. As a "sermon", it is perhaps more personal and soul-searching than my usual style. More than anything, though, I'm looking forward to read all the other contributions, which surely will provide new and thought-provoking themes to explore in the pursuit of project management excellence.

Name	Louise Worsley
Blog	http://pi3cubed.blogspot.com/
Twitter	@PiCubedCT
Bio	I love learning and feel so lucky that my chosen area of work never stops challenging me. Thirty years married and with my daughter coming up to matriculation, we all look forward to what life still has to bring.

When I wrote this blog I had just completed several assignments looking at PPPM role profiles and how they are being fulfilled in organistions. It really worries me that our profession may be losing focus. The good project managers are still good, but with increasing role differantaion I fear we are setting the wrong expectations to our upcoming PMs.

Requiem for the Project Manager

The business case? Not my job... the business does that.

Requirements? Not my job... the business analyst does that.

The communications plan? Not my job... the communications manager does that.

Business reporting? Not my job...the programme manager does that.

Stakeholder engagement? Not my job... the change manager does that.

Status updates? Not my job...the PMO does that.

Project documentation? Not my job... the project administrator does that.

Quality assurance? Not my job... the test manager does that.

Workshops lead? Not my job... the facilitator does that.

Risk plans? Not my job... the risk manager does that.

Team management? Not my job... the line manager does that.

Resource allocation? Not my job... the portfolio manager does that.

Procurement? Not my job... the procurement manager does that.

Leadership? Not my job ... the sponsor does that.

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