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PROJECTABILITY

ViewPoints

Projectability's monthly newsletter

June 2009 - Vol 1, Issue 6

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Project Reading



People are by far and away the most important factor in any project.

You can have the most elegant processes and the most powerful and well configured scheduling tools but if your people are not on board it will all be for nothing.

[People in Projects](#) focuses the reader on the art of people management in projects, it is a worthwhile reminder to those of us who can sometimes be distracted by the non-human factors in our projects.

Reading for Pleasure -

Dear Reader,

Hello again,

Special greetings to those of you who have taken the time to provide me with feedback both positive and negative. In the spirit of good project management I am learning and applying the lessons learned to each new issue.



This month I continue exploring key elements of successful project management focusing upon planning itself, I hope you find the article both enjoyable and informative.

A new feature for this and future editions is the [words of wisdom panel](#), you may hopefully have noticed my use of proverbs or quotations to illustrate various points in my articles - I find sayings really useful in catching and remembering the essence of a concept. I hope you will take inspiration from the sayings I include in this section in this and future issues, who knows you may well end up using them yourself in the future.

Happy Planning - Dominic

Project Planning - The 6P's!

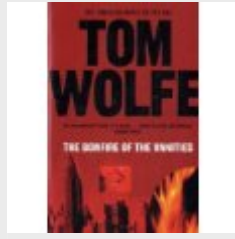
In marketing there is the concept of the 4 P's, product, price, promotion and place. In Project Management we like to go a bit further so we have the 6 P's.

Proper planning prevents pretty poor performance.

I have been polite in the above statement, I will leave it to you to guess which P is the impostor!

When explaining the concepts of Work Breakdown I am sometimes challenged by participants on my courses. Why go to all the bother of spelling out the blindingly obvious, if it is as obvious as 1-2-3 why describe things to that level of detail, why not just have a single high level task and be done with it?

Bonfire of the Vanities



[Bonfire of the Vanities](#)

I read this book soon after it was published back in the late 1980's. At the time yuppies and bankers were fashionable, hard to believe given the current climate.

Tom Wolfe is a brilliant storyteller and this tale of the unraveling world of the lead character Sherman McCoy is both gripping and grimly amusing. At more than 900 pages it still makes the reader want more.

Returning to this book in the aftermath of the Credit Crunch and recent M.P.'s Expenses scandal Sherman seems almost restrained. It is easy to appreciate that his time was when the seeds of our current situation were planted.

As a social critique and mirror on the times this book is in a class of its own.

Are you Linked In?



Are you a member of **LinkedIn**? If you are I would welcome the chance to **Link Up**.

Downloads



There are many documents available for you to download

There is a project management truism that states:

"If you cannot measure something you cannot hope to control it"

All too often projects fail because of a lack of detailed planning and a proper appreciation as to exactly what is involved. Distant deadlines can foster a casual and complacent attitude amongst team members with actual progress being overstated and the threat to targets being unapparent until it is too late. Broad brush tasks can be unrealistic, being either overly optimistic or pessimistic in their estimates of effort and the time required.

Yet another project management truism states:

"People don't plan to fail, people fail to plan".

Or to put it another way, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. It may sound cliched but poor and inadequate planning is all too often a key contributor to project failure. There are to my mind 5 distinct benefits to be derived from breaking project plans down to the lowest level of practical and workable detail possible.

1. By breaking projects down into distinct and easily understood tasks we can measure progress more accurately. Several years ago I worked with an IT Project Manager in Northern Ireland whose modus operandi was to break her project down to the point where every task was of a days duration. To my mind this was a bit extreme but it worked for her - in most cases if you break down activities to a range of between 1 and 5 days duration that should be sufficient. Most organisations report on a weekly basis so this suggested range fits with the natural rhythm of business, if at the end of one week a task is reported as being "in progress" by the end of the following week it should be complete, if it is not the alarm bells should be ringing.
2. We can better appreciate how tasks relate to each other - both within a particular section of the schedule and perhaps elsewhere in the project. Those involved in the work breakdown process need to ask the question *"what do I need to do to do this?"* repeatedly in order to both break projects down into their lowest level of detail and also to identify the obvious and not so obvious dependencies between tasks that can exist in a project. It is often the overlooked dependencies that disrupt and delay progress in a project.
3. Engaging the team in this process can both foster a sense of engagement and a valuing of the individuals contribution to the project. It can also reinforce the notion that team members are both dependent and reliant upon each other for the project to make headway.
4. In some cases we can identify opportunities to progress subsequent tasks earlier than might have

free of charge on our Website - please feel free to take a look!

Project Conference



The [Microsoft Project Conference](#) takes place in Phoenix Arizona on 14th - 17th September.

Words of Wisdom

"Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want." - Dan Stanford

been the case if we had stuck to "broad brush" or indistinctly detailed planning making good use of the most precious thing in any project - time.

5. We can educate others as to what is involved in the project and why it will take as long as the schedule suggests, sometimes injecting a welcome dose of realism into the project environment.

Hopefully you and your team will take the time to apply these suggestions to your future projects and benefit from improved project planning.

In the next edition I will focus on planning for effective project communication, the very lifeblood of successful project management.

MPUG Midlands Chapter Launch Meeting



The new Midlands Chapter of the Microsoft Project Users Group, [MPUG](#), launches on Tuesday, June 23 18:30-21:30

The venue for the first meeting of the chapter is the Warwick Hilton (Hatton Suite) on the A429 Stratford Road Warwick, [CV34 6RE](#). It is conveniently located just off junction 13 of the M40.

I will be one of the presenters at the event and hope you will be able to attend. Click [here](#) if you would like to register to attend, for more information about the evening click [here](#).

CTRL+ - Handy Microsoft Project Keyboard Shortcuts



Keyboard shortcuts are a useful way to improve your efficiency in using Microsoft Project. Each month we highlight one of the shortcuts available and the benefits of using it.

If you are using Project Server 2007 the Build Team from Enterprise dialogue box provides you with a wealth of information and analysis as to the status of your resources, it is available from the Tools menu but a quicker way to display it is to press **CTRL+T**.

A document with all the [Keyboard shortcuts in Microsoft Project](#) is available to download **free of charge** from our website.

Ask the Expert - excluding Bar Styles from the Print Legend.



If you have a question you would like answering and are happy for others to benefit from the answer provided send an email to [ask the expert](#).

This months question touches upon the vexed issue of printing a project plan. "I have managed to make a project print out pretty much as I would like, however the legend includes numerous bar styles that I am not using and also makes the footer deeper than it really needs to be, how can I overcome this?"

There are two ways to eliminate superfluous bar styles from the legend.

1: Make sure you are in the default Gantt Chart view and in the format menu, select Bar Styles and simply delete the bar styles you do not want to have display. Don't worry you will not damage your schedule in any way and if you wish to reinstate the bar styles simply run the "Gantt Chart Wizard".

2: Make sure you are in the default Gantt Chart view and in the format menu, select Bar Styles and simply edit the bar style names to include an * in front of the bar style name, this will exclude this bar style from the legend.

A document covering issues relating to printing is available from the [downloads section](#) of our website.

Inspirations - Ken Cambell



I was fortunate enough to see Ken perform live on the stage in a production he had written a few years ago, it was an evening I will never forget as I laughed so much I was in pain which only made laughing even more contagious.

You may recognise Ken as he was a stalwart of television comedy, invariably playing second fiddle to the star of the show. However Ken was far more talented than most of those he performed with. He came perilously close to landing the role of the 7th Dr Who but lost out to his friend and collaborator Sylvester McCoy.

His surreal imagination, Pigsput, Jamais Vu and confessions of a furtive nudist give you some idea as to the range of his thoughts. His delight in communicating his unusual world view and experiences to an audience made him hugely entertaining.

For some reason pidgin English proved to be a dialect ideally suited to his creativity and manic energy - stories of a Polynesian race that revere the Duke of Edinburgh as a deity were rendered even more amusing when delivered by Ken in full flow.

In a world where conformity abounds Ken was most definitely unique, sadly he passed away [last year](#) - gone but not forgotten.

Next Months Issue
