PROJECT PAIN RELIEVER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER 1

FOCUSING YOUR EFFORTS

1.1   Who do I have to please?

By Dave Garrett

What have you learned?

Not having the scope of your project defined up front can create a situation that ends up feeling impossible to deal with. The earlier you get this done, the better, but it's never too late. Also, there is always a fairly senior person in the business who cares about the outcome of your project enough to be an effective sponsor. If there isn't then the project probably isn't worth doing. Once you have the Sponsor in place, you just need to present the tradeoffs whenever there is a potential change to what you are doing. Then the Sponsor can make the tough decisions while you focus on making the project a success. Overall, this helps you stay focused and get the right things done to be successful.

You know you're in a good place when:

- You know exactly what needs to be done in what timeframe.
- You feel like you can appropriately handle any suggestion or change in what you are producing.
- People stop handing you their wish lists.

1.2   How do I define success on this project?

By Dave Garrett

What have you learned?

You can feel pretty stupid when you can't answer basic questions about what you are trying to accomplish, but there are so many reasons why people end up in exactly that spot.

You know you're in a good place when:

- You can tell someone else what you are going to accomplish.
- You can tell someone else how the project goals will help the organization.
- You know how to measure success on your project.
- You can use the information above to help you make good project decisions.

- You know you have a Sponsor you can turn to for guidance if things get tough.

1.3   Different people want different things at different times.

By Michael Flint

What have you learned?

Managing projects has never been easy and these days it is getting harder as expectations are much higher. More projects are judged on the delivery of expectations rather than against specifications. Project managers must be ready for anything on every project, any and every time.

Why? Because there are different people on the projects, who will want different things from that project, and they will want it at different times. The trick is to get detailed agreement on what needs to be done and when.

1.4   I'm technically on track, but not accomplishing what people wanted.

By J. Chris White

What have you learned?

It's hard to make everyone happy, but it is definitely possible to do that on a project. It's not an impossible feat. If you take some extra time upfront to clearly nail down all requirements and expectations, this will help make the project run smoothly and satisfy everyone. As you probably heard in school when you were younger, there are no stupid questions. Clarify, clarify, clarify. Make things explicit, or you and your project will pay dearly for the uncertainty and risk that you accepted.

1.5   I feel like I need to start over.

By J. Chris White

What have you learned?

You have hopefully learned that you play an important role in the success of your project. As the project manager, the buck stops with you. If a project gets significantly off-track, you have the most responsibility for this result. People will blame you. As much as possible, of course, you should try to be proactive to avoid situations like the one described in this chapter. However, if this situation arises, face the music and get to work fixing it. At least you'll now have a war story to tell at the next training class or conference that you attend.

1.6   I feel all alone. Where can I turn for advice?

<p style="text-align:center">By Josh Nankivel</p>

What have you learned?

It can be tough when no one understands or shares your focus on effective project management. There are many options available to you however. You just need to reach out and connect. You know you're in a good place when:

- You are able to bounce new ideas off other experienced project managers.
- Whenever a given situation arises, you immediately know several resources you can tap into to find answers to your questions.
- You have expanded your network of like-minded project professionals and continue to nurture those relationships for mutual benefit.

1.7 Management Just Changed the Goals, How do I Reset the Direction?

<p style="text-align:center">By Aaron Porter</p>

What have you learned?

In this chapter you have learned that effective change management and communication are critical to redirecting a project, and that this work involves:

- Quickly identifying if there is any work that needs to continue while the changes are evaluated.
- Understanding the role of your Change Control Board and making sure that the appropriate people perform a detailed assessment of the changes.
- Sharing the impact of the changes and recommendation for how to proceed with the project sponsor, team, and stakeholders.
- Sharing management decisions, and motives when available, with the project team.
- Creating a new or modified plan to complete the work and sharing it with the project sponsor, team, and stakeholders.
- Understanding the audience of your communications and presenting them in a manner that your audience will be willing to use.
- Not letting your personal views of whether or not a decision is right affect your performance.

1.8 I'm having trouble making decisions.

<p style="text-align:center">By Ty Kiisel</p>

What have you learned?

Making good decisions isn't rocket science. It's simply a matter of making as many decisions as we can in

advance … keeping the process as simple as possible … remembering that many times *any* decision is better than *no* decision … keeping the project objectives in mind on *every* decision … avoiding the temptation to follow gut instinct and instead, turn to data for complex decisions … and involving the team and building consensus to make change initiatives easier to implement.

Refuse to allow the fear of making a bad decision deter you from an important part of your role as project manager—and remember that any decision, even a bad decision, gives us the experience we need to become better at making decisions.

1.9　Sponsors won't decide what they want.

Panos Agrapidis

What have you learned?

- You are the heart and mind of your Project. You are the eyes and the ears.
- You must capture any single sign and elaborate it taking into account the big picture.
- Project Sponsors are your window to the Organization's Top Management. At the same time, they are very close to but also very far from your project. They want to be constantly informed but not continuously disturbed.
- Sponsors must have clear ideas regarding the project's progress but they don't want to be involved in every detail.
- Sponsors will be happy to receive a Contingency Plan rather than spend time and effort understanding all parameters of the project and preparing their own solution.
- In any case you are the only one responsible and accountable for the failure of the project. Therefore, you must be the one to make the Sponsors take decisions.
- In a desperate situation consider to bypass your Sponsors and find a way to communicate with the Top management!

1.10　What my sponsor wants doesn't make sense.

Alex Brown

What have you learned?

- Being "right" is overrated. When your sponsor seems to be asking for something that is impossible, make sure that you are getting the message accurately. The problem might not be in what the sponsor is SAYING. The problem might be with what you are HEARING.

- If there is not a communication problem, take a serious look at what is at stake. Sometimes it might be better to just go along with the sponsor and see what happens. In other situations, it would be career suicide or an ethical lapse to say, "Yes".
- Figure out what is really happening between you and your sponsor. Decide on a course of action that you can live with.
- You know you are in a good place when you can sleep well at night and wake up with a clear conscience in the morning.

1.11   What makes my project important?

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Understanding what the project has to achieve is important, but it's also important to understand why the project has to achieve it. Only then can you be sure that you know what everyone expects from you and your project team, and that the decisions that you make are based on a solid understanding of the business drivers – you know what the big picture looks like and are acting to achieve it.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are aligned with your sponsor and stakeholders when it comes to communication and recommendations.
- You are confident that the decisions you make are right for the overall project need.
- You and your team recognize the contribution that their efforts make to the organization.
- You can answer the question 'what is this project going to achieve?' as well as the question 'what is this project going to deliver?'

CHAPTER 2
MOTIVATING PEOPLE

2.1   I feel like I'm the only one who cares.

By Dave Prior

What have you learned?

As a project manager, there are going to be times when you feel like you are the only one who cares. This happens to all of us and it's practically an occupational hazard. When you reach this point, it is important to realize that as the PM, you are the one responsible for doing something about it.

In this chapter we covered three different levels on which to respond to an apparent lack of caring. First, acknowledge that what you interpret as a lack of caring may be the result of pressure imposed from other sources. If there are people who don't seem to care, find out why, and determine what you can do to change it. This flows directly into the idea of looking at the situation from a Team level and working out what you can do to remove the things preventing the team from becoming more engaged in the project? Lastly, consider the stakeholders. It they aren't engaged in a productive way, determine what other items might be vying for their attention and how you can leverage this to regain their involvement. Are they engaged and concerned in a way that is healthy for the project? If not, what steps can you take to create a change that will benefit the project?

The bottom line is that there are definitely going to be times when you feel like you are the only one who cares. The trick is to not let that become an excuse. Turn it into a call to action and figure out what you can do to get the others re-engaged.

2.2   Team members aren't excited about their work.

By Jerry Manas

What have you learned?

When people appear to not be excited about your project, don't take it personally. There are a variety of reasons why this is so. By addressing work overloads; getting them more engaged in process and project decisions; selling the objectives in an emotional way; creating opportunities to socialize; aligning people with the right roles; simply asking them what might help; and, finally, asking yourself tough questions about the value and appeal of the project, you can go a long way toward energizing your team and building a reputation as a motivator and team builder. To ignore the situation is to contribute to making it worse. Keeping a team energized and productive takes work. It also takes recognizing that it's rarely the people who are at fault; it is often the system.

You know you're making progress when:

- People begin speaking up in meetings and seem more focused.
- The team is contributing to addressing barriers.
- People begin working together on their own, possibly even socializing more.

2.3   Team members question whether the project is worth doing.

By Alec Satin

What have you learned?

Be grateful if your team members are in the habit of questioning authority. It may seem to make your job more difficult. In reality, managed correctly, such project teams have the potential to deliver the highest quality outcomes within time, budget and scope. Perhaps they'll encourage you to start questioning more yourself. If so, maybe you'll get your team some of those great old bumper stickers.

2.4   People feel like they don't get credit for the work they do.

By Ty Kiisel

What have you learned?

Recognizing accomplishment is a lot more than tossing around empty "atta-boys" at the next team meeting. In fact, establishing an environment where accomplishment can be recognized and appreciated starts with a workplace where project leaders understand what each member of the team does to contribute to project success. By establishing expectations early and defining what it means to do a good job, holding team members accountable for their performance, and acknowledging both the good and the bad regarding what team members do, project leaders create an atmosphere where praise *and* critique are accepted by team members as a means to an engaged workforce and successful projects.

Additionally, how we recognize accomplishment is every bit as important as the recognition. Avoid generalities that fall flat. Instead:

1. *Make it Meaningful*
2. *Make it Specific*

Remember, organizations that facilitate the recognition of individual team member accomplishments and contributions foster an environment where team members are more inclined to participate in the project management process—and ultimately project success.

2.5   My team doesn't believe in their ability to execute.

By Fran Samaras

What have you learned?

Project Management isn't about simply gathering, assigning and following up with tasks to team members. It's about working individually with your resources and taking the time to find out what is really going on.   You can't survive or execute pretending you don't have a problem.   There are some very easy and low cost tactics that can be applied to remedy this problem. Getting to the root cause of the

problem will help the project manager determine the most appropriate solution needed to apply to better manage the project.

2.6 My team doesn't believe in the plan or schedule.

By Elizabeth Harrin

What have you learned?

You are not the expert when it comes to carrying out the work for each of these tasks – so draw on the expertise in the team and involve team members when producing a plan and schedule. You will get better buy in from the team as a result, and everyone will have more confidence that the project will deliver on time. You know you're in a good place when:

You have a comprehensive list of tasks for the project.

- You understand the dependencies between tasks.
- You have worked with your team to set realistic estimates for the duration of these tasks.
- You have built a credible schedule with input from your team.

2.7 My team doesn't believe in me as a manager.

By J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Give your team members a reason to believe in you. If they do not have faith and confidence that you can get the job done, something must have happened to cause this. It's up to you to remedy the situation. As mentioned earlier, you need to act as a player, coach, and referee simultaneously. Also, look back at what happened (or didn't happen) in the past that created this current situation. Even if you fix this current situation, if you don't look at what got you to that point, you will end up in the same place again on another project down the road.

CHAPTER 3
EFFECTIVELY COMMUNCATING

3.1 How do I gain people's trust?

By Dave Prior

What have I learned?

Earning trust is one of the most critical aspects of establishing your role as a PM. It is more of an art than an exact science and there is no easy solution. The tactics summarized below will help get you on your way.

- Demonstrate that you are worthy of the trust through your actions as well as your words.
- Work with the team to plan out some quick wins that will help the team realize you have the capacity to help them deliver and then make sure the stakeholders are able to see that as well.
- Always take the opportunity to demonstrate to the team that you are willing to stand up on their behalf because you trust in them.
- Be honest and transparent in your work and practice of Project Management.
- Employ social tokens to build a shortcut to affinity.
- Manage with empathy.
- Demonstrate discipline.
- When all else fails, find a common enemy.

3.2   I don't really understand what my stakeholders want.

By Craig Curran-Morton

What Have I learned?

If you do not understand what your stakeholders want, this is a potentially difficult position to be in. Sometimes you can feel like you are floundering as your confidence level in your abilities plummets. Take a breath, and stay calm. Know that there are lots of project managers in the same boat and that you are not the first, nor will you be the last. The key is to use a combination of soft and hard skills to identify and confirm your understanding of the project and at the same time, have your stakeholders confirm their understanding.

You know you are in a good place when:

- You can readily discuss the wants and needs of your project stakeholders with confidence.
- You can identify gaps and omissions in your understanding of the project.
- Better yet, you can identify gaps and omissions in the stakeholders understanding of the project.
- You begin to offer possible improvements to any of the challenges that the stakeholders are experiencing.
- You stakeholders express confidence in your skills and abilities as a Project Manager.
- You feel like you get it.

3.3   My team members misunderstand or will not follow my directions.

By Jerry Manas

What have you learned?

When people seem to be ignoring or misunderstanding what you are asking them to do, there are a number of variables that could be at the root of it. As a leader, your job is to identify and address those variables. It could be the way you're communicating the "what," "why," and "how." It could be that there's a gap in perspectives that you need to understand. It could be that you are ignoring (and thus supporting) poor performance or overloading your good performers. Or it could be due to factors outside of their control that you need to identify.

You know you're making progress when:

- You can have candid conversations with your team about their needs and your needs
- People seem like active contributors with a good grasp of the intent of the mission
- You feel like you understand your team better, and the barriers they face

3.4   What should my relationships with my team look like?

By Aaron Smith

What have you learned?

The importance of establishing good working relationships with your team cannot be overstated. It is a fundamental part of a project manager's job, as time-consuming and critical as creating the project plan, managing risk, updating the schedule, monitoring the budget, and communicating to stakeholders. Even when everything else seems in order, the team relationships can make or break a project. Treating each team member with respect and fairness, acknowledging their different strengths, and following the principles of trust, accessibility and recognition will serve you and the project well.

3.5 What Should My Relationship With My Sponsor Look Like?

By Ty Kiisel

What have I learned?

The sponsor is a critically important resource on any project. The sponsor is usually an important individual within the part of the organization that is working on the project and their attitude and actions can make or break the project. As the project manager you need to:

- Build a strong, two way relationship with the sponsor where any and all items can be discussed freely
- Ensure that the sponsor is actively engaged in the project, delivering their key deliverables (like the business case) and contributing to those deliverables where there input is needed (the project plan for

example)

- Ensure that the sponsor is always up to date on the project status and any outstanding issues or concerns
- Work with the sponsor to ensure that they are stressing the importance of the project to all levels of the organization and selling the benefits and advantages

3.6 People say they don't know what's going on.

By Ty Kiisel

What have you learned?

If team members are expected to work in a vacuum – without information about the project purpose or how they contribute to it, then the project stands very little chance of being successful. As the project manager you know that you are in a good place when you have:

- Explained the project purpose and context to the team members, answered their questions and confirmed their understanding
- Provided a context to how individual team members contribute to the overall project goals
- Created an environment where people can successfully complete their work with an understanding of their role without feeling buried beneath a huge amount of unnecessary data
- Remained consistent in your messaging to all team members and throughout the duration of the project

3.7 I can't get people to see my point of view.

By Gina Abudi

What have you learned?

Working toward getting others on the project team to see your point of view does not mean you will always 'win' and everyone will accept what you want to do. The more collaborative the team, the increased likelihood that points of views expressed (including yours) will be heard, valued and discussed. By being collaborative you are more likely to be successful in getting your point of view accepted. Take the time to plan your communication and, when you communicate, be very clear about the message you are conveying. Always ensure there is time for the team to participate in the discussion and to share their points of view. Learning how to influence others to be sure you are heard is not necessarily an easy skill to learn, but it is well worth it. Being collaborative makes all the difference in the world and you will find that project team members want to work with a project manager who is collaborative, listens to them, and takes in their points of view also.

You know you are in a good place when:

- You are able to communicate your point of view to the team.
- The team is very collaborative in nature.
- You are able to influence team members to accomplish what needs to get done.
- You are able to reach consensus with your team.

3.8 I know someone on my team has an answer, but I can't get it out of them.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

There is always a reason why people are reluctant to offer solutions. It may be that the overall project environment isn't right, or it may be something specific to the individual or the situation. You can't focus on the fact that people aren't providing answers, you have to address the underlying issues that lead to people being reluctant to offer those answers.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- Team members are communicating openly with one another
- People are prepared to offer thoughts and opinions even when they aren't sure that they have the complete solution
- People are comfortable approaching you with their ideas even if they aren't comfortable speaking in a group setting.

3.9 I have bad news. How do I deliver it?

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Projects don't always go according to plan. Things do go wrong and as the project manager it's your job to deliver the news, even when it's bad. That's never easy, but if you prepare for it and handle it in a professional way then you make it easier for both yourself and the people that need to hear the message. The key is not the delivery of the message itself, it's making sure that the project, and the people working on it, can get past the problem.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are confident that you understand the news and what the implications are.

- You feel confident that you know how to deliver the message and how to deal with the questions.
- You deliver the message in a concise manner, focused on the facts rather than the emotions.
- Your audience is able to look past the problem and towards the work necessary to recover.
- Everyone is able to quickly understand, respond and recover from the news.
- You and your team are able to retain a sense of perspective and a sense of humor through the process.

3.10 I can't get management above me to resolve an issue or dispute.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

When you have a bottleneck in the decision making process (or issue resolution process), your only option at this point is to try to remove the bottleneck in some form or fashion (e.g., replace the upper management decision maker, remove or delay the decision, etc.).

Essentially, an upper manager that needs to make a decision is like a key project resource over which you have almost no control, yet whose actions and decisions you are very accountable for. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Upper managers are engaged and responsive
- Issues of timely decision making are resolved constructively between yourself and the upper manager
- Upper managers understand how importance their role is to the overall success of the initiative

3.11 My boss won't listen to me.

By Luis Crespo

What have you learned?

Being listened to is part of basic human communications however if someone is not listening to you there may be several reasons why they are not. Instead of it being *their* problem it is your responsibility to try to condition your communication in such a way that the receiver does not only receive it but is receptive to it.

You know you will have accomplished this when:

- You and your supervisor can objectively discuss items that you have communicated.
- Your supervisor actively responds to your questions or requests.

- Your supervisor actively solicits your opinions.
- Your team and stakeholders come to you for guidance and suggestion. They listen to you in part because they perceive your management listens to you.

3.12 I can't get the team to talk to each other effectively.

Ed Evarts

What have you learned?

Challenges with how team members talk and communicate will exist in every team. Left alone, communication issues will fester, grow, and seriously impede the success of your project. Taking proactive steps to identify current state, impact, ideal state, and benefit statements regarding communication, crafting a *Team Communication Commitment* document, and conducting personality preference assessments will ensure your team speaks candidly, constructively, proactively, and keeps the project on track for success. You know that you are in a good place when:

- The team is communicating well and openly discussing all issues objectively
- Conversations remain focused on the issues and problems and not the people
- The committed to communication approaches are being stuck to, and team members aren't afraid to call out any missteps

CHAPTER 4
NAVIGATING PEOPLE CHALLENGES

4.1 The office politics are killing me.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Politics can come from anywhere and can be particularly disruptive. You need to identify where the problem areas are (and that may be different from where you are seeing disruption), try to understand what the issues are and tackle them head on. You also need to be prepared to escalate the issue if you aren't successful in resolving the issues quickly – otherwise you are falling victim to the politics.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are confident that you have identified all of the political 'players'
- You understand the agendas that they are trying to put forward

- You have discussed your concerns with all of the individuals involved and agreed on a course of action
- The political games are reducing and people are more accepting of the project and its objectives.

4.2   My sponsor doesn't trust me or give me the authority I need.

Peter Taylor

What have you learned?

You need to be the head of the project on a day to day basis and the project team needs to see you in that role and understand that you are the 'go to' person for any decisions or issues. That said you also need to have the authority and influence of a good project sponsor behind you when some tough decisions need to be made or negotiations tackled.

You know you're in a good place when:

- Your project sponsor understands the status of the project through you, and not through anyone else.
- Your project sponsor communicates with you by exception – that means meetings and reports as and when required to suit the project schedule and the project health.
- Your project sponsor appreciates the roles that they need to play.
- You get the support you need from the project sponsor who acts upon your requests for input and/or action.
- You are the center of the project.

4.3   My team members pad their estimates.

Jennifer Russell

What have you learned?

Estimates always reflect some kind of personal bias. Most team members are really optimistic, and think, wow, if I had nothing to do but this project, and everything went well, when is the soonest I could get this done? Some team members will even look at this as a challenge – to impress others with how quickly their portion will be complete. The reality is no one has that kind of uninterrupted time, and most people are expected to work on multiple tasks at the same time. Estimates should never be idealistic goals, but should always be a realistic estimate of how much time it will take.

On the other side are people who got burned once too often. Knowing that my estimates may get cut, or that I might not have as much time as I'd like to devote to the project, I pad my estimates, so that I avoid an overrun and unwanted negative attention.

Whatever the reason for padding, you need to control it. You know you're in a good place when:

- Your team members aren't continuously working nights and weekends to make an unrealistic schedule.
- Your team refuses to give you quick ballpark estimates until they have a chance to really understand what they're committing to.
- Your team is engaged and committed, with an aggressive goal that challenges them, without killing them.

4.4   Some team members lack the skills they need.

Mark Price Perry

What have you learned?

Being assigned to manage a project where the team doesn't have the skills needed to execute the project can be demoralizing, it can feel like you are being set up to fail. For your team though it can be even worse – they may feel stupid or inadequate. You need to recognize that and manage the team and the individual team members to the point that they are confident that they have the skills necessary. That needs a structured approach to understanding your options and then executing a strategy based on those options. Only then can you re-plan the project to provide a realistic chance for success. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand your options for addressing the skills shortfall for both the team and the individuals within it
- You have developed a strategy to address the gaps and are executing that strategy
- You have developed a plan that you and the team all feel is realistic and achievable
- Your team is confident that they are gaining the skills that they need to complete the work

4.5   Other projects keep stealing my resources.

Fran Samaras

What have you learned?

We all like to think that our project is the most important, but it may not be in the larger organizational picture. Therefore, you need to be proactively looking at risks or concerns outside of your

project that could ultimately affect you. What you see as 'theft' of resources may actually be a perfectly legitimate reallocation of resources to higher priority projects.

When problems do occur, there are a number of formal and informal approaches that you can take to address them. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the losses that your project is experiencing and have documented the impact
- You have confirmed with stakeholders that the reallocation was a conscious decision, or you have their support to correct the issue
- You are able to work with stakeholders and other project managers to minimixe the impact on all projects

4.6   My "Team" Isn't Really A Team.

Harlan Bridges

What have you learned?

Project teams are usually composed of people who may not typically work together. They haven't had time to create relationships and build bonds of trust. Effective project managers understand this and take steps to create an environment that fosters trust and relationship building. It takes leadership and communication to make this happen. Teamwork is crucial to project success and the project manager is responsible for bringing individuals together to form a team.

The techniques and tips described in this chapter are not difficult to understand and most are not difficult to implement. Trust your team. Communicate with them often. Empower them to do their work. Encourage team interaction and do not let team members be stifled by others. Reward and recognize good work and good teamwork.

You know you're in a good place when:

- Your team is confident and energized.
- Your team is excited about the project.
- Everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.
- Team members believe they are valued and an integral part of the team.
- Team members support and trust each other.
- Team members are proud to be a part of the team.
- People look for the chance to be on your teams.

Whether you are creating a new team or trying to get an existing team back on track, if you take the right actions, your team will be a winning team.

4.7   My team spends more time arguing than working.

Gina Abudi

What have you learned?

Key for the project manager is guiding his/her team through the stages of team development. Remember that every single team – without exception – goes through the stages of team development. The more you understand about how teams develop and grow, the better you can be prepared to ensure your team is working well together toward a common goal – the successful conclusion of the project.

Not taking the time to conduct team building and let team members get to know each other <u>prior</u> to the start of the project makes it more difficult for a team to work well together. There are always challenges on projects – the time spent up front to allow the team members to get comfortable with each other enables them to get to a norming or performing stage as quickly as possible.   As a project manager, you are responsible for guiding your team through the stages of team development, sometimes allowing them to work out issues for themselves, but stepping in to manage conflicts when necessary.

You know you are in a good place when:

- Your team is working well together, which means they are helping each other out, managing conflicts well, holding each other accountable, and working towards one goal – the successful conclusion of the project.
- The team is able to resolve many issues that arise on their own, but calling on your for guidance when required.
- Timelines for tasks are met, and handoff from one team member to another is working well.
- Your team welcomes new members into the fold and manages to work back to a norming or performing stage quickly after a new member joins the team.
- Team communication is strong.

Remember that the team may on occasion revert back to a previous stage – that's OK. Help guide the team to get back to where they were as quickly as possible.

4.8   There is way too much finger pointing.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Finger pointing can quickly become an epidemic. If it's not addressed early then things can quickly spiral out of control. You have to bring the focus back to the 'what' and the 'how' of the project, not the 'who' and the 'why'. You also have to make sure that you create a project environment where people

trust one another and are working together. A group of individuals working on their own independent set of tasks will not be effective and will not pull together when problems occur.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your team (including stakeholders) is working well together, helping one another out, communicating between themselves and respecting each other.
- Discussions with your team are full of comments that start with "We".
- Problems are brought to you as a factual statement of what has happened and what needs to be done about it.
- There is a positive atmosphere and good energy in your team.

4.9   People around me have hidden agendas.

Dave Prior

What have I learned?

Hidden agendas are a reality of life for anyone managing projects, but this does not have to be a bad thing. By following a few key steps you can control the situation and ensure that you remain in control of your project. You know that you are in a good place when

- You understand and accept that team members will have their own agendas
- You know which agendas have the potential to damage the project and what is motivating them
- You have implemented risk management strategies for dealing with those agendas
- You are actively managing your team's agendas and are prepared to implement additional risk mitigation approaches as necessary

4.10   I do way too much work myself to manage anything.

Jerry Manas

What have you learned?

As a manager, you must always make time for your team, as well as the typical administrative, planning, and functional duties that go with management. However, in order to get your work done while still remaining available to your team, you need to manage your time and priorities appropriately.

Managing your time is, in essence, similar to running a doctor's office, where there are appointments, hours allotted for walk-ins, and exceptions for emergencies. And, just as a doctor might hire a physician's assistant or other staff members, it is important to consider who you may be able to delegate work to and to make decisions about which tasks each member of the team will undertake.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to effectively manage your working day to get the work done without constant interruptions
- Your team knows how, when and where to reach you and they feel that they have the access that they need
- Your project team, including yourself have a balanced workload and you are focused on appropriate tasks
- You aren't having to work late into the evening and on weekends

CHAPTER 5

DEALING WITH CONSTRAINTS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND SCOPE

5.1   We took on too much.

Alexander Matthey

What have you learned?

It's not uncommon to become bogged down in seemingly insurmountable quantity of work on a project. Often the Sponsor underestimates the work. A relatively inexperienced PM can overestimate their capacity to manage the work. You need to recognize the symptoms and act before it is too late.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your Sponsor or Customer gives you feedback that they feel understood when you present them your Scope Statement and the WBS of the project.
- When you feel confident your breaking down the immense quantity of work on the project gives you a good grasp to achieve the deadlines and budget constraints.
- When all stakeholders agree that your solution to manage scope is appropriate and sign-off or buy in.

5.2   Everything has changed. I need to reset goals and expectations.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

No matter what you do as a project manager things will change. It's not a reflection on you or the team, it's just one of those things that happens as organizations review their internal strategies or react to external changes in their market. What can set you apart as a project manager is your ability to recover from such a set back – to climb back on the horse that just threw you off. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You fully understand the changes that need to be accommodated
- You have developed a plan that you and your team believe in
- Your stakeholders understand and approve the changes and are providing you the resources necessary to achieve success
- You have control of the new plan and are executing

5.3   We don't have the resources we need to get it done.

Fran Samaras

What have you learned?

There are a number of ways to address a resource shortage, and sometimes the hard part is agreeing which is the best solution. You need to understand which solutions are acceptable to the stakeholders and you need to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each of those options. Having done that you need to build and execute the plan in conjunction with your team, recognizing that the impact of such changes can be far reaching. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You and the stakeholders agree on the acceptable alternatives for your project
- You are able to communicate the strengths and weaknesses of each option and recommend a course of action
- You can work with your team to re-plan the project based on the approved solution and the team buys in to the approach
- You are able to focus the team on executing the revised plan successfully.

5.4   Everything is going well. We are just over budget.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Budget overruns are difficult problems to resolve completely. It may be that if you are unable to reduce the scope or increase the schedule you can never fully recover from a cost overrun. The best way to solve budget problems is to prevent them in the first place with good cost planning. Even then, things can go wrong and the use of a contingency reserve with your risk planning can help plan for that. However, the story isn't all doom and gloom, there are a number of things that you can do to manage cost overruns.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand why the cost overrun occurred, and you know if and how it will affect other aspects of your project.
- You know what you need to do to minimize the impact of the problem on future tasks
- You understand the actions that you can take to try to bring the project back on track and have stakeholder support for those actions.

5.5   We can get everything done. We're just short on time.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

There are literally hundreds of things that can go wrong on a project, and many of those things will cause a delay. There are a number of things that you can do to correct schedule delays, but firstly you need to understand how important the schedule is relative to the other project constraints, particularly cost and scope. Once you understand that then you can implement an appropriate strategy to bring the project back on track, and then analyze the upcoming tasks to see if there are other schedule problems ahead that you can take steps to correct now.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the options that are available to you to recover from a delay.
- You can implement the strategies that will help against critical path tasks.
- Your implemented strategies are shortening the planned duration of the tasks that you apply them to.
- Your overall project delay has stabilized and is reducing.
- You understand the cause of the schedule problem and have taken steps to address it.

5.6   We can get everything done on time and under budget, but we can't do it well.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Sometimes, two out of three ain't bad. Trade-offs typically have to be made among schedule, cost, and scope (i.e., quality). If you have this in mind at the beginning of a project, then you can begin to negotiate requirements in a more favorable direction for you and your team based on your previous experience. If you are stuck with the trade-offs, make sure your customer and your project sponsor are informed of the changes in requirements and the reasons for them. Sometimes, regardless of our best intentions and how hard we try, conditions change on a project and the original requirements cannot be met anymore. The sooner you and your team begin to address these trade-offs, the more choices you will have and the more time you will have to implement those choices. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to identify early when quality is starting to suffer
- You understand the root causes of the problem and can explore all options for recovery
- You are able to discuss the issues with stakeholders and propose appropriate compromises
- You conduct a review of each situation to learn how better to manage future initiatives

5.7   My project's end point seems to be a moving target.

Cicero Ferreira

What have you learned?

Project delays can be the result of a number of different factors and the solution to them depends on what is causing those delays. You need to make sure that you fully understand the issue and then you can implement a solution designed to address that cause. You need to monitor the effectiveness of your solution and also try to recover some of the delays that have already occurred.

You know you're in a good place when:

- Team members are accomplishing the deliverables on time
- Change requests are manageable and are logical changes to the existing scope rather than completely new feature sets
- Stakeholders are actively engaged and providing timely support
- Project resources are stable

5.8   Part of my project has no end to it.

Fran Samaras

What have you learned?

The fundamental definition of a project is that is has defined start and end date. Accepting ongoing work as a part of the project is not an effective way to staff work. Your project budget would never be reconciled; work tracking within your company won't be accurate because work is being completed under the radar or in areas where it simply doesn't belong. Identify the ongoing or repeated work, create comprehensive training, tasks lists, job descriptions and executing that transition plan is the most effective way to handle this situation.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to distinguish between project tasks and ongoing operational tasks
- You have a plan for all of the project elements that need to transition to post project functions
- You are monitoring for any new problem areas that occur during the project
- You are able to execute your transition plan and obtain all required sign offs.

5.9   The requirements keep changing and I can't nail them down.

Elizabeth Harrin

What have you learned?

Change is inevitable and desirable on a project – there is no point delivering the wrong thing just because it was agreed to at the outset. However, you need to be prepared for them when they do occur.

You know you're in a good place when:

- People aren't changing their minds about what they want.
- You have a clear set of requirements to act as a baseline.
- Everyone understands what making changes to these means.
- Everyone understands how changes can impact the project.
- You have a process in place for controlling change on the project.
- You can see the end of the project.

CHAPTER 6

BUILDING AND DELIVERING ON REQUIREMENTS

6.1 My sponsor told me what to do, but there's not enough detail.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

When beginning a new project expect to be given vague and abstract objectives from which to start. Knowing that it is up to you as the PM resolve vagueness issues before beginning a project you will need to have the skills necessary to work with sponsors and other key stakeholders to develop a meaningful framework for shaping a requirements discovery project.

Conducting one or two Sponsor / Stakeholder facilitation work sessions focused on quantifying project objectives and expectations in operational terms will help build a true consensus as to the outcomes the project will deliver.

Vetting those objectives against the business plan will ensure that the project is properly aligned with the overarching needs to the organization. You know that you are in a good place when:

- All stakeholders agree on what the project needs to achieve
- The project objectives are understood by everyone engaged on the project
- The objectives are actionable and can easily be translated into detailed business requirements
- The project goals align with organizational strategy

6.2 We ended up with the wrong design.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

In the final analysis, wrong designs are virtually always driven by wrong requirements. Using formal "Proof of Correctness" / "Check Point" tasks that test how well the project's requirements, design and final outcomes align with the organization's needs (i.e. provide formal traceability steps into every phase of the project effort (goals, requirements, design, construction

and deployment) ensures that wrong designs can't happen or at least minimize the possibility. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to tie requirements to scope
- You can map design elements to specific deliverables
- You can test that the assembled features match the approved design

6.3   We have the wrong platform/technology for the job.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

As a general rule, it is wise to budget infrastructure improvements into every project in a way that keeps capacity and performance at least 18 months ahead of the demand curve. Since infrastructure projects on their own offer little in the way of a value proposition that is likely to get funded, using high yield projects to underwrite improvements appears to offer a painless alternative. While this might seem like management is being misled, it is actually nothing more than spreading needed infrastructure investments over the improvement opportunities that often invisibly erode existing infrastructure over time.

Keep in mind that IT exists to leverage the organization and its people's ability to do business in a fast and efficient manner and you will discover that optimizing people's ability to produce positive outcomes can often require de-optimization of the supporting technologies. In other words, going *lean* as a business sometime going *fat* on technology. No one has ever complained that their systems are too fast, too robust or too easy to use. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Consideration of infrastructure needs are automatically included in new systems related projects
- The organization is committed to staying 'ahead of the curve' with its infrastructure investments
- Production support, service levels and user complaints are stable or improving

6.4 The design meets the requirements, but does not satisfy the project's goal.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

Ensuring that the project developed accurately reflects the design specifications, and that those specifications were accurately driven from well-defined requirements, does not guarantee that those requirements will achieve the goals for which they are intended to satisfy. Only through a pragmatic and predictable process that validates requirements against *true* stakeholder needs can you ensure that the requirements developed are functionally correct and complete.

Learning how to drive projects using proven alignment and traceability methods is about as fool proof as you can get for ensuring that what you deliver meets the technical, business and cultural needs of the organization. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Requirements are confirmed to match the stakeholder's needs
- The design accurately reflects the requirements
- The deliverables have been developed in accordance with the approved design

6.5 Beyond being "done", how do I measure the quality of what we are doing?

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

All too often, the price paid in stress, hassle and effort on the part of project stakeholders (management, operational personnel, IT staff, project team members), is so painful that regardless of the project's technical success, a bad taste remains. By consciously making the quality of the project process part of the project's success or failure assessment this long neglected area can be improved upon. Improving the cultural, behavioral and stakeholder relationship management aspects of the project process can yield big dividends as resistance to project participation is reduced and cooperation and support improves. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Feedback on the way that the project was managed is as positive as the feedback for the positive outcome
- The process improvements identified are more refinement than rebuilding
- Stakeholders and team members want to be engaged in future projects that you lead

6.6   The team is getting frustrated with "rework" based on changing requirements.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

Voluminous rework issues can sink a project. By performing a "root cause" analysis on your lifecycle process you can usually pinpoint the flaws that are introducing defects into the requirements and / or design specifications which in turn drive errors into the final deliverables and thus drive rework.

Changing the overall development process so it integrates proofs-of-correctness at each stage of the development effort can ensure that defects don't flow through to construction or into deployment. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your processes include safeguards to ensure that problems are identified early
- Your team and stakeholders understand the importance of process compliance
- Your change control process is ensuring that legitimate change requests are effectively managed

6.7   Our "specifications" are unclear.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

Pursuing an initiative to establish design and programming standards, protocols, and rules, can cost effectively eliminate the problems caused by design specifications that are vague or unclear. However, these standards cannot be prescribed and force fed to your IT organization. Instead, allowing your IT development professionals (analysts, designers and programmers) to shape a standard can yield impressive results; ones that are embraced and faithfully followed.

Allowing the standard to evolve over time can turn an undisciplined and unsophisticated development group into a learning organization focused on continuously improving its ability to produce applications that are quick to build and economical to support and maintain. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your processes and standards effectively manage the execution of a project solution design
- Your execution team understands and is engaged with the standard approach
- You are able to evolve and enhance the standard over time

6.8   We are spending too much time on documentation.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

So how much technical documentation is needed on development projects? The answer is; enough to ensure that the requirements are adequately identified, defined, specified and deployable. While this varies in terms of quantity of items produced, the contents of each component should be well defined and standardized.

By properly describing the requirements and design work products produced in context to the value they add to the final result claims of inefficiency and bureaucratic paperwork can be avoided; the project kept on track and greater success achieved. You know that you are in a good place when:

- All stakeholders and team members understand why each piece of documentation exists
- The templates support the process and allow for efficient production of the work
- The processes are understood and followed
- Each piece of documentation adds value to the project and its deliverables

6.9 Sponsors are complaining that documentation and/or training is insufficient.

By Michael Wood

What have you learned?

Despite the desire for some to believe that quality user documentation and training is optional on application rollouts, nothing could be further from the truth. Every new or application improvement project needs an appropriate level of formal classroom instruction, OJT and supporting user reference materials. The more complex the rollout the more robust the training and materials need be. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have support material, manuals and training that all complement one another
- Users are engaged in the training process and demonstrating that they are gaining knowledge and skills that they can apply
- You combine formal training with OJT to provide a complete experience
- Users are able to use the system without any undue difficulties

CHAPTER 7
PLANNING

7.1 I don't understand why we need to plan so much.

By J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Upfront work pays off. Barring any huge, unforeseen changes to the project, spending sufficient time during the planning phase of the project pays enormous dividends. If you and the project team take all the necessary steps to fully understand customer requirements, project sponsor expectations, and team capabilities and limits, then you will eliminate most of the need for lots of planning and re-planning. However, if you are unfortunately stuck in the middle of a poorly defined project and are undergoing a lot of planning and re-planning, buckle your seat belt and endure the ride the best that you can. You know that you are in a good place when:

- The original plan is built based on complete, accurate and agreed upon scope and requirements

- You have processes in place to identify when issues or changes are arising that may cause additional planning / re-planning
- You have ways to communicate these issues to decision makers with an analysis of the potential impact to allow for changes to be made if required

7.2   How do I break it down into smaller parts?

By Josh Nankivel

What have you learned?

Fire fighting seems to be accepted as a primary part of managing projects, but much of it can be prevented. Breaking down a project in an appropriate way using a deliverables-based work breakdown structure tied to requirements is critical before starting to create a list of tasks for the team.

You know you're in a good place when:

- Your team has a clear idea of what the whole product will look like when done
- They have a clear idea of exactly which pieces they will produce and how they contribute to the completed product
- The frequency of "things we forgot to plan for" becoming emergencies dies down to a manageable level
- You catch yourself thinking of *how* before *what* and stop yourself so that instead you define *what* before diving into *how*.

7.3   Everything is "top priority".

By Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

The reason why everything can seem important on a project is because it is important! However, that doesn't mean that tasks can't be planned and sequenced – not only does something have to be done first and something else done last – that's how it's supposed to happen!

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the way that tasks need to flow through your project
- You have established how tasks relate to one another
- You have adjusted your sequences for resourcing needs

7.4 Someone must have done this before. Where do I find more info?

By Cornelius Fitchner

What have you learned?

Not knowing where to start is never a reason *not* to start. The resources that are available to you are exponentially greater than you realize. It starts with the Prime Question and continues as far as necessary until you have what you need to lead your project. By reaching out, you will make valuable connections and increase your project management knowledge. Not only that, you will be ready to help the next project manager who doesn't have the necessary experience but knows that "*someone* must have done this before."

You know you're in a good place when:

- You have a clear direction for how you would like to proceed.
- You have the necessary tools at your disposal or know how to find them.
- You have people you can rely on for continued support.

7.5 I have no idea how to estimate how long this will take.

By Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Estimating is a complicated task, and it takes time, planning and experience to get it right. You need to make sure that you engage the experts on your project, in your organization, and potentially elsewhere in the industry to help you build reliable estimates. You also have to allow time in the project to complete estimates – you can't rush the process.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have determined the methods that you will use for each part of the project.
- You have identified the people who need to be involved in producing each of the estimates.
- You have allowed for factors that affect how much time resources have to work on your project.
- You have completed dependencies and sequenced all of your tasks.
- You have leveled all of your resources, giving priority to critical path tasks.

7.6   The project management software is not helping me.

By Andrew Filev

What have you learned?

You can't be successful if you are battling the project management software all of the time. The software needs to be a support that is almost invisible except when you need it to assist you with information. If that's not happening then you need to understand the nature of the problem and address it. You also need to monitor how things have changed to ensure that you really are controlling the software and not the other way around. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand how to use the basic functions of the software to support your management of the project
- You are learning how to better leverage some of the other software functions
- You understand the limitations of the tool and how to work around those
- The software is providing you with accurate information and not requiring a significant amount of your time to maintain the data

7.7   My schedule is totally unrealistic.

By Cornelius Fitchner

What have you learned?

The schedule (time) is usually the most flexible project constraint. Because you can negotiate with the customer, you can often change the schedule in order to accommodate many of the other constraints that the customer has. If extending the schedule is not possible, one or more of the other project constraints will have to change, i.e., scope, quality, budget, resources and risk, and most likely, it will be a combination thereof. The solution is early and proactive communication and expectation management. You really have to talk to your customer about a realistically estimated schedule as soon as possible and work with him or her to resolve issues – especially if the project has a fixed end point.

You know you're in a good place when:

- You are forward scheduling (not backward scheduling).
- You meet with your customer *as soon as possible*, you manage his expectations, and you both understand the critical constraints.

- You have calculated a realistic schedule.
- You can resolve scheduling issues by developing options using other project constraints and negotiating with your customer.
- Your team, your customer and you are satisfied that the schedule is achievable.

7.8 It's hard for me to tell what is important- (critical path).

By Andrew Filev

What have you learned?

When it's hard to identify the most important tasks on a project, you can use Critical Path Analysis to simplify the process. This is an effective and powerful method of assessing:

- What tasks must be carried out.
- Where parallel activity can be performed.
- The shortest time in which you can complete a project.
- The sequence of activities, scheduling and timing involved.
- Task priorities.

An effective Critical Path Analysis can make the difference between success and failure on complex projects. It can be very useful for assessing the importance of problems faced during the implementation of the plan.

Creating a flexible critical path that can be adjusted to emerging project conditions can be very tedious, if you don't have a good project management software tool at hand. Project management tools can be extremely helpful when you need to calculate your project end date or quickly edit your project schedule. They also will save you a lot of time that you'll be able to spend on more important things, like evaluating risks. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the critical tasks on the project
- You understand how the critical path relates to the overall duration of your project
- You have reviewed possible approaches and selected the most appropriate way of completing the critical path activities
- You are actively managing the project with appropriate priority given to the critical path.

7.9   I made some wrong assumptions.

By Stephen Maye

What have you learned?

Effective assumption management is a mindset and a process.

Assumptions are here to stay, but they must be identified, understood, minimized, and managed. It's your job to surface the assumptions that create potential risk for the project and gain sponsor support for proceeding with those assumptions in play.

Managing assumptions requires linking each major assumption to the project plan, schedule, and underlying strategy. Each time an assumption is proven, disproven, or adjusted, you must analyze, propose, and implement the appropriate changes to the project—in full view of the sponsor(s). You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand where you have made assumptions on your project
- You have processes in place to confirm, track and verify those assumptions, and activities for this are integrated with your project plan
- Assumptions are tied in to your risk management approach
- You are able to quickly assess the situation when assumptions prove wrong and work with your sponsor and stakeholders to take appropriate action to correct

7.10   The company's project management process doesn't work for me.

By Ian Stewart

What have you learned?

Part of being a successful project manager has to do with knowing what works best for a certain situation. With experience a project manager gains a deep understanding of when to pull specific levers and take certain actions. That being said, organizations still tend to expect project managers to perform within the parameters outlined by their published project methodology processes or standards. Failing to work within those parameters, is a good recipe for project failure.

Project managers caught between a published methodology and what experience has taught them work's best can take specific steps to reconcile these differences. Having an open dialogue with key constituents that steers clear of philosophical debate and focuses on the project's specific needs will move

the project manager closer to a negotiated agreement that satisfies the needs of all parties. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You can recognize the differences between your preferred approach and the organization's approach
- You understand the reasons behind the organization's approach and the benefits that it is trying to achieve
- You can follow the ADOPT approach and reach a solution that you can work with and doesn't compromise the organization's project methodology

7.11   Everything is urgent and I'm behind.

By Mike Donoghue

What have you learned?

If you are an expert and people come to you for help, it's easy to keep taking additional work until it becomes too much for you to handle. It can be hard to reject a request, so it's important that you have a process in place to effectively communicate why something can't be done or that it has to be prioritized along with other work. Setting up a time management plan is a step towards establishing a normal work level that also makes provisions for when you need to step forward and support special situations.

Discuss options with associates and management to work out problems before they actually become problems. If no one hears a complaint, people assume everything is just fine.

Taking care of yourself also has an impact on your work. Recognizing workplace needs and personal needs is a balancing act to be sure, but it should always be in balance, not tilting more heavily in one direction. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to recognize when you are becoming overworked and falling behind
- You can reach out to others for assistance in managing the priorities that need to be dealt with
- You are focused on the areas where you are truly adding value to the project
- You are actively managing your time
- You are able to leave the job behind at the end of the day

7.12   Oops, I forgot a big chunk of work that needs to be done.

By Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Missing a big chunk of work can be a scary discovery. It can cause significant upheaval on a project and is likely to impact at least one of the project constraints, and potentially multiple ones. However, it's always worth remembering that the only thing worse than discovering this problem is having the problem and not discovering it.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You and your team are able to react calmly and objectively on discovering the problem

- Your stakeholders feel that they have been kept involved in what is happening and are aware of the problem and the work that is being done to solve it.

- You have been able to analyze the problem and develop alternative approaches to solve the problem.

- The stakeholders have enough information to approve a solution and you are able to integrate the additional work and manage your team to complete their revised work assignments.

- You understand how the problem occurred and have taken steps to prevent similar problems in the future.

7.13   We had no plan B.

By David Arias

What have you learned?

Not having previously identified alternatives to project plans when problems occur is not necessarily the end of the road. You have an opportunity to prevent further project erosion if you act quickly and diligently.   Therefore if your project is feeling the symptoms of "hitting a brick wall" you are well advised to stop and seek to develop a new strategy. In the end as a project manager you control the project, not the other end around. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have identified that a problem exists and have identified a sponsor to help you champion the solution

- You have performed a project audit to establish the scope and severity of the problems
- You have identified / revised the project risks and have a plan for managing them
- You have re-planned the project, gained buy in and resourced the team accordingly

7.14   Whenever I propose a project schedule I'm asked to compress it.

By Imad Alsadeq

What have you learned?

FasTraCra schedule leads to explosion when there is over compression. Consideration, preparation and communication are the key to building agreement among stakeholders. Trust requires character and competence. Peer review will help safeguard a project schedule. FasTraCra Law requires a trustworthy PM to sometimes say no in the face of compression.   You know that you are in a good place when

- You have been through the consider, prepare communicate cycle to understand stakeholders' needs and present informed responses
- You have built an environment of mutual trust with stakeholders and can explain the importance of maintaining a realistic schedule
- You have been able to validate your schedule through a peer review process
- You can answer "no, however I have some ideas of some other things that we may be able to do", rather than just "no"

CHAPTER 8

MANAGING PEOPLE DAY TO DAY

8.1   My meetings are a waste of time.

Dave Prior

"A meeting is an event where minutes are taken and hours wasted."--Captain James T. Kirk

What have you learned?

In this module you have gained some new tools to help you evaluate whether or not the meetings you are leading are actually providing value to both the project and the participants and the project. You have also learned about some steps you can take in order to improve the state of your meetings.

And with any luck, you've also figured out that you probably have a few meetings you need to go cancel. You know that you are in a good place when:

- All of your meetings have a specific, necessary purpose to assist with moving the project forward
- You have the right attendees (and only those people) at each meeting
- You have an agenda for each meeting and facilitate the meeting to that agenda
- Attendees show up and are engaged in the meetings

8.2   My vendors aren't delivering.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Vendor problems happen, but they needn't be the cause of the breakdown in your relationship with the vendor. You need to focus on communication, aggressively manage the vendor and look for regular evidence that the vendor is correcting the problem. You also need to work with the vendor to try and ensure that future problems don't occur. Finally, you need to ensure that you are fairly compensated for the problems that the vendor caused.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You and your vendor counterpart have a strong, open line of communication.
- The vendor is demonstrating their willingness and ability to correct the problem.

- You understand how the problem occurred and both the vendor and you are taking steps to prevent future issues.
- The vendor is providing fair and appropriate compensation.

8.3   People are ignoring my emails.

Josh Nankivel

What have you learned?

Ineffective communication happens quite often by default, and it takes some proactive critical thinking to combat the "norm" and make your own communication more effective.

You know you're in a good place when:

- You are no longer a causal factor of email overload in the organization
- People are crystal clear about what you communicate with them
- Team members are comfortable asking you questions verbally and confusion is resolved quickly
- When you need to communicate, you ask yourself "what is the best channel for my message?"
- You think twice before sending any email, to anyone
- Your professional relationships are strengthened in general

8.4   I may not have the right team.

Cicero Ferreira

What have you learned?

Not sure whether you have the right team to execute a project? Doubt hinders decision-making, and therefore the solution to the problem, which is extremely critical and puts the success of the project at risk. Having the right people on board is vital to accomplish the deliverables on time, on scope, on quality, and on budget. The sooner you can precisely diagnose the problem, the better.

You know you're in a good place when:

- you know, in a pragmatic way, the competencies, skills, and experience needed for the project and those that exist in the team;
- you could describe to someone else how the team competencies are helping to achieve the project objectives;
- stakeholders are satisfied with the partial results in terms of depth and breadth;

- the project team is very productive and meeting the established standards of quality, timeliness, and budgeting;

- each team member is performing with the right amount of autonomy; and

- the project environment is suitable for teamwork, and the team members are integrated and helping one another in order to achieve high performance results.

8.5   I'm not sure how much process is enough.

Michael Wood

What have you learned?

'Right sizing' project process to project needs requires an adaptable / scalable process framework. When developing this framework, common sense should prevail. Scoring and categorizing projects across a consistent set of attributes (as exemplified, but not limited to, the above) provides a way to objectively assess how much process is needed to ensure timely and cost effective completion. Indeed, one size does not fit all when it comes managing the project process. Hopefully, this chapter has provided you with food for thought on how you might approach an adaptable and scalable project process framework within your organization. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have a framework of processes that can be used to determine the level and amount of process for different levels of complexity, risk, etc

- You can compare your project to the framework and easily determine what's appropriate for your situation

- You can demonstrate to stakeholders the appropriateness of your approach

8.6   I don't know enough of the technical stuff to manage.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Sometimes you have to ask for help. Keep in mind that these are learning opportunities. If you are managing a project in a different technical domain than you are familiar with, getting up to speed on the new technical aspects will make it easier (and more appropriate) for you to manage these types of projects in the future. You just opened up your portfolio of project management possibilities. The next time it

will not be unknown. You have also shown your boss or project executive that you have the ability to learn and adapt. That always looks good on your resume. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have recognized that you need to develop your technical skills for the project that you are managing

- You have taken steps to increase your knowledge and understanding

- You have resources who can assist you

- You are ensuring that you focus on information that will assist you in managing the project

- Your ability to manage the initiative and lead the team is improving

8.7   There are too many issues to handle in a timely fashion.

Andrew Filev

What have you learned?

If we're under the pressure of multitasking for a long time, the tension is accumulated. In the long-term perspective, stress weakens your productivity. It is a major challenge to avoid stress and perform efficiently when we have to deal with multiple tasks. For a project manager, it is probably an even bigger challenge to keep an eye on many people performing several tasks at a time.   You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to focus and do one thing at a time;

- You can follow the 2-minute rule;

- You learn to delegate and understand which tasks to delegate;

- You are able to prioritize items appropriately;

- You can set deadlines for the tasks that require them;

- You have a system to help you.

8.8   How much status is enough?

Dave Prior

What have you learned?

Finding a balance with respect to how much status is enough is never easy. Providing too much can be as detrimental as providing too little, but asking just a few questions you can ask to evaluate what is truly needed.

The questions included in this chapter will help you work out how much status is required, why it is needed, by whom, how often and in what format. The answers to these questions will help you tailor your

approach. This tailoring is necessary because it removes barriers to the information and makes it easier for the clients to understand what is happening and what decisions they have to make. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your stakeholders feel that they receive timely, accurate, appropriate reports on status
- Your team feels that they can provide their inputs to status reporting with the minimum of disruption to their work on deliverables
- You are able to efficiently produce accurate and up to date status reports
- There are processes in plane and known by all of how to provide / receive updates inbetween regular reporting periods

8.9　　　　I don't know how to test to ensure things will work.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Just like in the business world, in product development project management you often have to start at the bottom and work your way up. That metaphor works for testing products and systems (either hardware or software), also. If you start at the bottom, you isolate issues by "level" within the system hierarchy. As you move up to testing at the next level, you can be assured that any problems that arise are due to integration or combination issues at that level. This helps to limit the detective work when trying to figure out what needs to be fixed. You will know you are on the right path when you hit a snag (e.g., failure on a test) and the problem is easily identified. When you find that "detective work" is very difficult, you are perhaps bundling too many levels of the hierarchy together for a single test. In this case, simply break the testing out to the lowest level and begin working bottom-up again. You know that you are in a good place when:

- Your plan includes testing at all levels
- You have time and budget contingency to address problems with testing
- Your team understands the expected standards
- You have detailed test plans that address all aspects of all levels
- You are able to quickly isolate and address problems when they occur
- All problems are found and fixed before the product is released to the customer

8.10   I can't work well with people at a distance.

Jennifer Whitt

What have you learned?

Working with remote teams is becoming more commonplace as the global economy continues to expand. Team members, vendors and clients can all be working on the same project from different locations. It's your job as a Project Manager to make sure everyone is coordinated and moving in the same direction.

You know that you are in a place when:

- You have established a team who can handle the responsibility of working on a team with remote workers (or of being a remote worker).
- You have set clear guidelines and parameters of what you expect of someone who is working remotely.
- You make sure that you connect with your team members outside of formal weekly meetings and give them the opportunity to discuss what is on their mind.
- You manage people who want to work remotely for their own convenience by starting with a trial period, or short duration of time where someone can work remote and then assess how things are working out and make adjustments accordingly.
- You understand the challenges of conducting a virtual meeting and adjust accordingly. You prepare and forward in advance a detailed meeting agenda that specifies the role and participation of each participant.

8.11   My project has needs. My people have needs. I don't know how to balance them!

Jennifer Russell

What have you learned?

It can be really frustrating when you feel like you are personally dragging the project across the finish line, instead of being the coach of an excited, focused team. By balancing the needs of your project plan, your team, and each team member, you can help your team find the inspiration they're looking for.

You know you're in a good place when:

- Your team gets excited about problem solving.

- You have to remind your team members to go home at night, because they're enjoying their work so much.
- You're not just delivering on time and on budget, but your team members come up with new ideas to show the customer
- You enjoy your own job more, since you're helping your team work together and reach their full potential.

CHAPTER 9
MANAGING RISKS

9.1   I didn't realize what could happen if this project fails.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

The implications of failure are critical to determining how best to manage the project. You need to understand the constraints that you are operating under and risk is one of those constraints. If the implication of failure is simple inconvenience then you will take a very different approach than if the company`s very survival is at stake. That's something that your stakeholders need to understand as well – protecting you from the truth is not helpful. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the importance of the project to the organization (yours and the customer's if different)
- You have crafted a project approach based on all of the constraints
- Your risk management strategy considers not just project factors but also the project impact
- You and the stakeholders have a common understanding of the importance of the project

9.2   Problems keep popping up that I didn't expect.

Peter D. Carothers

What have you learned?

Uncertainty is present in all projects. As a project manager, you must expect the unexpected – and your team is looking to you for leadership when it does. Don't disappoint them. . *"The essence of wise living is anticipating the unanticipated and expecting the unexpected." - Kevin A. Woolsey*

Commit to the principles discussed here and you will see fewer unexpected problems on your next project. You will be more confident in your ability to handle the unexpected. You will be recognized as a more capable project manager. Effectively managing change and the unexpected is an essential skill of a competent project manager. Invest in yourself through dedication to analysis, preparation and continuous improvement and you are on the path to project management success. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have done your homework and have all the background information surrounding your project, your stakeholders and environment.
- You know your own strengths and weaknesses.
- You have built your own support systems and networks.
- You are prepared for the unexpected because thou have strong risk management practices.
- You have invested in your relationships.
- You are dedicated to strong communication.

9.3   The importance of my project changed.

Aaron Porter

What have you learned?

Sometimes there is a good reason for a project to become less or more important. As a project manager, you are responsible for understanding the reasons for and impacts of the change, and then working with your sponsor, stakeholders, and project team to come up with the response to the change in importance that is best for your company. It's not about what is best for you, or even for the project. The purpose of the project is to support the business. Projects that support the company's strategic objectives should have priority, with differing levels of importance based on the importance of the objective. Projects that don't support the company's strategic objectives should be considered carefully for the value they add to the company and whether or not they should be allowed to continue. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the significance of the change
- You understand both the *what* and the *why* of the change

- You have analyzed the stakeholders, you know who supports and who is against the change, and you have determined how you need to manage each of those stakeholders
- You understand the extent of any changes to scope
- You know how you need to respond to the change and you have been able to integrate the response into the project plan, working with your team to do so

9.4   My project is too dependent on a few key people.

J. Chris White

What have you learned?

Relying on a couple of key people is difficult. You just handed over your ability to succeed to someone else. Hence, as much as possible, you want to structure your project so that it is not dependent on a small number of key resources. Sometimes, however, this cannot be avoided due to the nature or timing of the work.

In those cases you have to get creative and you have to keep an open line of communication with your project sponsor and the end customer. If you definitely need these people, the next best thing is to get these people as dedicated as possible to your project along with adding resources to help shoulder the workload and reduce the potential for bottlenecks, if possible. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand where you have 'single points of failure' – the resources who are critical to success and how long the reliance on those resources last
- You have worked with your sponsor to ensure (as far as possible) that those resources are committed to your project for as long as you need them
- You are reducing the reliance by bringing in additional experts, developing skills in other resources, or both
- You have discussed contingency options with stakeholders and know what you need to do if you do lose a critical resource

9.5   Some of this is beyond my control.

Luis Crespo

What have you learned?

Project management is about monitoring and controlling even when those items which you are monitoring are outside of your immediate control. It's critical to differentiate when an item is out of your control and when it's a project issue you need to correct, such as project communication. It's also

important for you to determine when requesting additional authority can bring control within reach. Regardless of the situation, you always need to document it and track it accordingly.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to identify those items on your project which are truly out of your control
- You are able to identify situations where you can request additional authority to improve the chances of your projects success
- You are able to take situations which are outside of your control and influence their outcome
- You are able to monitor, track and respond to these as project risk items

9.6   Costs are much higher than we thought.

Andy Jordan

What have you learned?

Risk management is more than just identifying what might go wrong and putting plans in place to try and manage those items. You need to recognize that some of those risks will become real, no matter how hard you try to avoid them. That will cause both dollar and time impacts on your project that you need to plan for. Additionally, there will be some unforeseen issues that come up during the project that will also increase costs and cause delays, and you can't avoid those either. What you can do is budget for them. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You have identified the contingency required for each of your risks
- You have totaled up the contingency for each risk to create a contingency reserve need
- You have worked with your stakeholder to consider the overall risk level of the project, the approach that you are taking, etc and have developed a realistic estimate for management reserve
- Your project budget includes management and contingency reserves and your stakeholders understand why
- You and the sponsor are managing the reserves to ensure that they are consumed appropriately

9.7   I don't know what a real risk is, versus an "issue".

What have you learned?

The key difference between a risk and an issue is the concept of uncertainty. If you don't know whether something will happen or not then it is a risk. If it has already happened then it is an issue. Also remember that risks can be positive or negative, issues are always negative.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to assess every situation and identify whether it has already happened or has the potential to occur.
- You have management and contingency plans for your risks.
- You can respond quickly to identify and deal with any issues that occur on your project.
- Your project team can tell the difference between risks, issues that need to be addressed, and the minor problems that are inevitable on a project.

9.8 How do I know what might be a problem in the future?

Aaron Porter

What have you learned?

If you are starting from scratch, remember that implementing risk management from scratch can be easier than trying to change established processes. However, blank slates have their own sets of risks that should be addressed, or you risk not only failing to implement risk management, you could also create a situation in your organization where key people are no longer open to the process. Either way, you are dealing with organizational change and should seek appropriate support to make it happen.

In this chapter, you have learned that there are multiple points at which risk can be assessed, that there are different ways to identify and document risk, and that the main purpose of identifying risk is to prevent unexpected problems with varying levels of impact from occurring. You have been presented with a set of steps that can be taken as a whole or applied separately. And you have been shown several tools that can help in your risk analysis efforts. Armed with this information, you are ready to start making a difference. You know that you are in a good place when:

- You understand the importance of identifying and analyzing risks at various points during the project initiation and planning phases
- You have an approach to risk identification and analysis that works within your organization

- You have incorporated regular and appropriate risk reviews into your project management processes

9.9 Should we end this project early?

Alex Brown

What have you learned?

It is easy to focus on accomplishing goals and getting work done. As a project leader, you need to lead the team to accomplish their goals, while still remembering *why* you have those goals in the first place. Regularly review the "why" for your project with your team and sponsor, even when the world changes or when the best decision is the decision to say, "Stop."

You know you are in a good place when:

- You are able to identify when the rationale for the project is no longer valid
- You are able to objectively review the option of ending the project early
- You can close the project observing all of the appropriate formal steps and move yourself and your team on to the next project

9.10 There's been a serious crisis! (Beyond the scope of my project)

L.R. Sayles

Project managers function as bandleaders who pull together their players – each a specialist with individual score, and internal rhythm. Under the leader's direction, they all respond to the same beat. The foresight and the dynamic interpersonal skills of many individuals is the reason why we as an organization, and more crucially, as individuals lived to work another day. In the days following "the crisis" superb leadership was a must-have skill.

"The crisis" in this case resulted from a very real and large disaster: the September 11th destruction of the World Trade Center towers which were the headquarters of my firm and the workplace of my project team members.

This chapter will examine lessons that can be learned from an extreme crisis for application in more routine project "crisis contexts."

What have you learned?

It may not be an act of terrorism or catastrophic natural disaster that happens during your project, but it's easy for a project manager to envision circumstances that could find the project team in crisis mode.

Planning for the foreseeable and strengthening team dynamics will always give your team the preparation and resources to deal with the unlikely or unexpected. Under crisis, the Project Manager must bring to bear his or her leadership and interpersonal skills to keep the team engaged and productive.

You know that you are in a good place when:

- You are able to put your team members first when dealing with a crisis
- You allow your team time to deal with the significant issues that have occurred
- You can demonstrate leadership to your team and be the 'rock' that they need
- You are able to work on understanding how your project has changed and develop a new / updated project plan
- You can execute on the plan