

Project Landscape™

January/February 2010

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Upcoming Events



www.fwpmi.org

Workshop...Texas Health Resources (611 Ryan Plaza Dr.—Arlington 76011)

The First Phase: Drinking from the fire hose!

With Sandy Harris, PMP

Jan 9
Sat,
8:30a-
4:30p

Do you feel like you're drinking from a fire hose every time you are assigned a new project? Are you struggling to determine the project scope, budget and timeline in just six to eight weeks? Then you don't want to miss this workshop!

The three most critical activities that must be completed quickly and accurately within the first eight weeks of the project are:

1. Project Definition
2. Work Breakdown Structure
3. High Level Requirements Learn how to ensure your project will complete on time and within budget with very little change management. Understand why planning is so important.

About the Presenter: Sandy Harris, PMP, retired from American Airlines where she spent 20 years in Sabre Travel Information Network (STIN), Airport Automation, Information Technology and Enterprise Technology Services and six years in the AA IT PMO where she assisted with the development of the American Airlines Systems Development Life Cycle (AA SDLC) iterative methodology, taught project management classes, mentored project managers and assisted project teams in various areas. Sandy is the Vice President of Education for the Fort Worth Chapter of the Project Management Institute and is currently a project manager for First American located in Solana.

Meetings...(3rd Thurs) - Marriott DFW South (4151 Centerport Blvd, 76155)

Joint Strike Fighter Program

With Ed Brown

Jan 19
Thurs
6:00-
8:30p

The F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter is one of the largest development and production programs in aviation history. Successful execution of this complex global development, global production and global sustainment program is possible only through best-of-class business partners, technologies and management

About the Presenter:

Ed Brown, PMP has studied Mathematics at the University of Hartford and began his career developing safety-critical control systems for fixed wing and rotor aircraft. He has over 27 years of aviation experience and much of that experience is with legacy BAE systems companies. In 2002, Ed was one of the Collier Award recipients for the X-35 STOVL propulsion system which led directly to his current assignment leading the development and integration of the Prognostics and Health Management System for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. He is concurrently the Deputy for BAE Systems F-35 US Technical Operations.

Stay tuned for additional information and even more exciting events!

- Nikki Choyce & Sandy Harris

Simplifying PM

Six Power Tips for Doing More with Less



Jerry Manas

This article was originally published on *Gantthead*, the on-line community for IT project managers (<http://www.gantthead.com/article.cfm?ID=249024>). It is reprinted with permission of the author.

Albert Einstein said, “Any fool can make things bigger, more complex and more violent. It takes a touch of genius--and a lot of courage--to move in the opposite direction.” The same can be said for project management processes. All too often, organizations create an overabundance of complexity, try to implement unwieldy methodologies and futilely attempt to ensure compliance. Yet they miss the boat by diluting their efforts trying to standardize everything, to the detriment of the few vitally important things that matter.

There is true power in simplicity. It allows us to focus on what’s important, enables clarity and understanding--and guides us in everyday decision-making. Perhaps artist Hans Hoffman said it best: “The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”

In essence, we need to apply more focus on valuable activities toward valuable outcomes. With this in mind, let’s examine six “power tips” that can help us focus on valuable activities, simplify our processes and enable the “necessary” to speak.

The Power of Checklists

We create forms, templates and stage gates in an attempt to gain control. But in doing so, we also create barriers to implementation;

it becomes like the Twelve Trials of Hercules just getting something implemented--or trying to satisfy a customer. We also lose flexibility, not to mention credibility, with those whose support we need.

We often overlook the power of a simple checklist. For maximum flexibility in our processes, we should instead:

- Secure agreement across all stakeholders on which process elements absolutely must be standardized (important: get people’s input on this)
- Determine which elements can benefit from having a checklist that would be available to all, and can be a working document revised with each new lesson. (I used to maintain a simple “Have you considered...?” checklist that all project managers would add to as they encountered new lessons.)
- Express trust that those responsible for implementation will use the checklists wisely; watch out for where awareness must be increased (key point: when checklist items are ignored, rather than overreacting by creating new bureaucracy, simply raise awareness or highlight certain items with an icon)

If we look for where we can leverage checklists, we’d probably find that in many cases, checklists could negate the need for forms and approvals. After all, pilots on commercial airlines work together with their flight assistants on a pre-flight checklist; they don’t have management come on board and approve them for takeoff. And that’s with people’s lives at stake. Also consider that a single checklist im-

plemented at Johns Hopkins Hospital had prevented 43 infections and eight deaths, and saved two million dollars in costs. Moreover, as part of a study led by the Harvard School of Public Health (as reported in the *New York Times*), a year after surgical teams at eight hospitals adopted a 19-item checklist, the average patient death rate fell more than 40 percent and the rate of complications fell by about a third.

If checklists can improve healthcare and save lives, think of what it can do for your projects.

The Power of Process Summits

People often talk about scope creep being a nemesis of projects. Perhaps an even larger nemesis is what I call “process creep”. What happens is that each department that serves as a chain in the end-to-end cycle of a project creates their own processes in a vacuum, focused on satisfying the interests of their own area of expertise. In essence, they look at projects through their own, often limited, “lens.”

Overall, this results in elongated processes; an excess in forms, templates, checkpoints, meetings and approvals; and general confusion for all parties as to what’s actually needed to get the project past all of its gates. Stage gate meetings seem like court hearings instead of streamlined decision points. Is this any way to work--or add value to the customer?

Instead, we need to hold a process summit. The idea is to gather representatives from all areas involved in the end-to-end process (in an IT project, this may be representatives from IT security, quality, infrastructure, architecture, helpdesk, customer facing reps and so on). The purpose is to lay out the end-to-end process via the COTW (Cards on the Wall) approach. This way it’s easy to question certain steps, move things around and see where redundancies are.

It’s also easy to spot the inefficiencies of the whole system as it relates to customer value. For instance, maybe certain processes are

in place to ensure adequate quality or security. Perhaps they are overblown in proportion to the speed-to-market requirements of the project, or in proportion to other pressing urgencies. Perhaps they can be simplified, maybe with checklists. Or perhaps some of them are absolutely required--but at least everyone would have the opportunity to understand why.

It’s also a good idea to include customers in this process. There is often a temptation to avoid this so as not to air “dirty laundry” or expose inefficiencies, but the benefits of an engaged customer far outweigh any risks. Plus, the customer will have a greater understanding of the considerations that go into a project.

A process summit not only can result in more streamlined and customer-oriented approach, it can also serve to create buy-in and understanding. It can make people feel included and listened to. And it can ensure greater participation and adoption without relying on compliance and policing. The key is to be open to all ideas and encourage dialogue. No topic should be sacred. Only then can real breakthroughs be made.

The Power of the Trash Can

By implementing checklists and holding process summits, we’ll be well on our way toward simplifying our project management lives. In doing so, we also need to adhere to certain principles.

For instance, how many useless documents, standards, processes and meetings do we have that deplete value instead of create it? Wouldn’t we be better off getting rid of these things and focusing our energy on the most value-producing items? To this end, we must eliminate wasteful practices, processes and projects--anything that does not create value, or that creates little value compared with other activities.

I use “value” in a holistic sense, as opposed to strictly financial value. This reduction of waste is also a key principle of the famous Japanese swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi, as noted in *The Book of Five Rings*. The principle is this: Do nothing useless.

This “addition by subtraction” method can be another power tool in our quest for simplicity. Instead of a suggestion box, why not implement a GROI (Get Rid of It) box, where people can make suggestions for removing processes, forms or meetings that they feel are wasteful, along with their suggestions for alternate ideas?

The same principle can work for the presentations we make in meetings and at stage gates. We can help shorten these events and get our point across better if we’re ruthless about cutting out the noise--any information that is not absolutely vital to whatever decision must be made at the meeting. And if we’re not making a decision at the meeting--or creating some kind of outcome that all are participating in--why meet? With few exceptions, one-way information is better presented via other forums, and even questions can be addressed via e-mail, FAQs, discussion forums or in a separate session.

The trash can is our friend. People talk about doing more with less. In reality, we need to do less with less, but achieve more value. That’s powerful.

The Power of Brand Strategy

Most people don’t equate marketing or brand strategy with project management. But when people ask me what kind of skills they should look for in a good project manager, I often suggest marketing. Marketing people understand how to focus on a niche, how to communicate and how to simplify. They understand how to move with the grain instead of against it.

Specifically, there are two overarching rules of brand strategy that stand out above all.

1. Get Typecast. Unlike the film industry, in business we want to be typecast. We want to be known for one thing, and one thing only. We’re the “xyz” people; if you want “xyz”, come to us. As brand strategists know, people create anchors in their mind linking a single idea or concept to a person or business. The idea is to pick

one central theme and beat it to death. Dissect it, analyze it, talk about it, write about it.

What does this mean to the project management field? Everything. From an organizational or PMO level, a single overarching theme will rally people easier than a convoluted message, a complicated methodology or a list of fluffy feel-good words. Maybe the current goal is to do better estimating, to plan better or to be more customer-attentive. Whatever it is, focus on one thing at a time and then move to the next most important thing. It’s much better than saying 10 things and having people remember nothing.

From a project level, by stating the one single most important thing that the project must deliver, it will help remove barriers and speed up decisions. It can also help in customer relations as well--a single concept that will bring everyone together. In this way, everyone is working toward a common goal, and decisions will revolve around that goal.

2. Focus on Value and Benefits. A key tenet of brand strategy is to sell what they think they need (“they” being the customers), not what you think they need. In other words, don’t sell solutions; sell benefits. You’re not selling a car, you’re selling transportation--or a lifestyle, or whatever it is that’s meaningful to your customer. The key is to know who the customer is and what they need, what they’re starving for.

Again, this principle holds true on both a macro level (e.g. implementing a project management framework) or on a micro level (e.g. on a specific project). We need to focus on what the customer needs, and communicate in those terms. Instead, most PMOs and project managers focus on their internal processes, or on the tools they’re using. They talk to customers and stakeholders in terms of solutions, tasks and processes--not the benefits the customer will achieve.

By focusing on one thing at a time and by always keeping customer benefits in mind when creating and communicating processes, we can smooth the way for less resistance--by team members, customers and stakeholders. And doesn’t this make our lives simpler?

The Power of Service Standards

When project teams are in the heat of action, they are often too busy to remember complicated rules or mission statements. Successful organizations realize this and instead create prioritized service standards. Ideally, this should be no more than three or four items, in priority sequence. This gives people real guidance when making independent decisions. And let's face it: We don't want people to be dependent on management for every project decision. We can greatly simplify the decision-making process and our team cohesiveness by having such standards.

The Walt Disney Company has prioritized service standards. They are, in order:

1. Safety
2. Courtesy
3. Show
4. Efficiency

Safety trumps everything. Courtesy trumps show. Show (i.e., the perception that everything is real) trumps efficiency. But all are important. If a child were about to fall from a platform, a Disney cast member (as all Disney employees are called) would run to help, regardless if he or she was helping a guest, or had to go "out of character" to address the safety issue. If a ride could be made more efficient but it would make the riders feel rushed, or would detract from the experience, the modification would be nixed by Disney. Let's apply the same thinking to a software project. Let's say we had a software development team and we had set three prioritized service standards:

1. Ease of use
2. Ease of maintenance
3. Performance

Software developers would know instinctively what their priorities should be. The product must perform well, but not at the expense of being maintainable--and certainly not at the expense of being easy to use (which was always my barometer for well-developed software). This is just one example of the many ways prioritized service standards can be more powerful than any mission statement. Service standards are simple, easy to remember and--above all--actionable.

The Power of Inclusion

The last power tool we'll discuss is perhaps the most important---the power of inclusion. By including others in creating forms, processes and templates (especially the people that have to use them), we can increase the likelihood of greater buy-in--and a leaner template. This doesn't mean including the whole world, or design by committee. There is a difference between inclusion and consensus. But it does mean probing the thoughts of the people who will use or benefit from the document. Small teams of three to seven people tend to work best.

For example, many organizations have a problem getting agreement or buy-in on the format of a business case template for justifying and approving projects. Some people think it's too long. Others think more information is needed. What we need to do is hold a session with representatives who will use the form (either to populate the data or to use the data to make some decision). We need to ensure that questions are encouraged, that the need for each piece of data is challenged and that every bit of information agreed upon will be used by someone to make a decision. This may take some savvy facilitation, as some people have a tendency not to speak up (and then complain later).

We also need to encourage simplicity, erring toward the "less is more" approach. Some people may feel compelled to include everything "just in case." It's better to start lean, and add things later if needed.

Summary

We've discussed six power tools for simplifying project management:

- **Checklists**, which reduce errors without adding red tape and extensive approvals or oversight
- **Process Summits**, which allow everyone to clearly see redundancies and inefficiencies when looking at the “whole system”
- **The Trash Can**, which encourages lean thinking and eliminates waste
- **Brand Strategy**, which fosters a focused and customer-oriented mindset
- **Service Standards**, which give people simple priorities by which to operate and make decisions
- **Inclusion**, which increases the likelihood of purposeful documents, greater buy-in and active engagement.

None of these tools are complex. As researchers in quantum physics have discovered, complex systems have simple roots. Such roots gently inspire a direction without trying to predict every possibility. They increase the likelihood of success without trying to dictate or control every move. They allow an organization to operate on the edge of chaos, yet remain true to a common purpose. This is the power of simplicity.

Jerry Manas is President of the Marengo Group and author of *Managing the Gray Areas* (RMC Publications, January 2008) and *Napoleon on Project Management* (Nelson Business, April 2006). Through the Marengo Group, Jerry consults and coaches on the human side of project management, with a specialty in virtual teams. His work is rooted in the principles of SET (Simplicity, Engagement and Trust). Jerry is a founding member of *The Creating We Institute*, (<http://www.creatingweinstitute.com/>), co-founder of the blog PMThink! (<http://www.pmthink.com/>) and a founding member of PMI's New Media Council. Visit his website at <http://www.marengogroup.com>.

Thank You

From Garry Booker and Dotti Patton

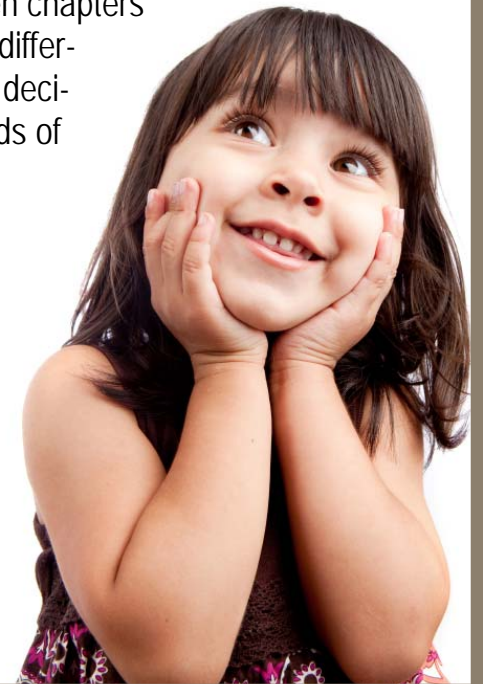
In 2007, we created *Project Landscape* so PMI chapters would have a vehicle to work together for the common good. It started as a joint effort between our two chapters — the Tulsa Chapter and the OKC Chapter. As we opened the collaboration to other chapters, we had the opportunity to work with over a dozen chapters in our region. Together, we produced 26 monthly issues of *Project Landscape*, with countless local editions.

In 2009, both of us relinquished our board positions, after serving several years with of our respective chapters. So as 2009 draws to a close, it is also time for us to relinquish our positions as executive editors of this newsletter.

Newsletter collaboration between chapters may continue, perhaps under a different newsletter name, and those decisions will be up to the new boards of directors and the editors of your local edition.

From the two of us to all of you, we'd like to say **THANK YOU**. Thanks especially to the local editors and feature article editors who have contributed so much content and so many good ideas.

Garry (Tulsa Chapter)
Dotti (OKC Chapter)





Coming in February



FWPMI Contacts

Workshop...(Sat, Feb 6) - [Fort Worth Central Library\(500 W. 3rd St, 76102\)](#)

Working with MS Project With Nikki Choyce

MSProject® is a powerful scheduling tool and there are several things that you need to know in order to make it work for you. Join us to learn some tips from the school of hard knocks and what NOT to do in *Project*. This is considered to be at least an intermediate level course and it is assumed that participants already have a working knowledge of *Project's* functionality. We **will** have a computer lab with 25 workstations for this course. Participants are also welcome to bring their own computers with *Project* installed to use during the workshop.

About the presenter: Nikki Choyce is president of Infotech Management, a Fort Worth based company providing project management services including consulting, training, coaching and assessments. She has been working with *Project* for almost ten years and has practical as well as teaching experience with the tool.

Meeting...(Thurs, Feb 18) - [Marriott DFW South \(4151 Centerport Blvd, 76155\)](#)

The 10th Knowledge Area With John Baley

We all know about Time, Cost, Quality, Scope, Risk, Integration, Communication, Human Resources and Procurement. But in the day-to-day planning and managing of projects, it becomes necessary to improve your skills in the little known tenth knowledge area... Humor. Come join us for an enjoyable evening of how important humor can be to build team spirit and relationship and motivate stakeholders through the challenges and risks presented to us in our projects.

Our speaker: John Baley, PMP is the regional mentor for region 6 (our region) and past president of the PMI Dallas chapter. John has been a project manager for over eleven year working at JC Penney, Alliance Data and most recently as a program manager at EDS. John earned his MBA from UTD in 2007.

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Innovative Concept Provides Members
Communication Skills, PDUs



Remembering David Hostler



Fort Worth PMI is thrilled to offer advanced, PM-oriented, PDU-bearing communication skills to members as a result of entering into an agreement with Toastmasters International.

Toastmasters International, the world's leading not-for-profit educational organization, has successfully teamed with a number of other PMI Components.

The FWPM Toastmasters will offer 2 PDU per meeting and is structured to also enhance the Project Manager's skills in all Knowledge Areas and Processes. PDU reporting will be done by the chapter. How easy is that!

Details: **What:** FWPM Toastmasters

When: First Tuesday of the month 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Where: Marriott DFW South

Registration: No registration is required to attend

Who: Any FW PMI members wanting to improve their communication abilities, earn inexpensive PDU and grow as a PM

Why: Did I say PDUs?

Cost: \$99 annual membership (about \$4 per PDU)

Toastmasters International has over 12,000 chapters in over 80 countries. Members are free to network with any chapter.

Relevant Web Sites:

Toastmasters International: www.toastmasters.org

Toastmasters Local District: www.D25toastmasters.org



Distinguished Toastmaster and
Past District Governor
David R. Hostler
passed away
Saturday December 26, 2009.

David was a long time member of FWPMI. He was instrumental in establishing the our PM-oriented Toastmasters chapter and served as the President. David will always be remembered for all that he contributed to Toastmasters not only in our district but others around the world. He was proud of having been a past District 25 Governor, and was often sought out for his opinions on the nuts and bolts of running the District's business, long after his term as Governor was over. He could speak Spanish like a native, knew some German, and was learning Russian at the time of his death. David was a lion and a captain. We shall miss him dearly.

A funeral Mass was held **Saturday January 2, 2010** at 10:00 a.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church at 509 W. Magnolia Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76104

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to either the Ralph C. Smedley Fund at Toastmasters International (www.toastmasters.org) or to the St. Mary's Youth Group c/o St. Mary's Catholic Church, 509 W. Magnolia Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76104, (817) 923-1911.

If you would like to send a card or note, you can send to:
Terri Hostler, 2000 San Jacinto Dr, Arlington, Texas 76102.



2009 Registered Company Coordinators

Educating members and potential members about PMI



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

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The Fort Worth Chapter Registered Company Coordinators (RCCs) help the Chapter with membership and chapter marketing activities within their organizations. Organizations with at least 50 employees and five PMI chapter members may establish an RCC. **Interested in volunteering as an RCC for your company?** Submit a [volunteer application](#) on the www.fwpmi.org website under the *Membership* tab to get more information.

RCC Program Chair — Tom Sheives, PMP
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