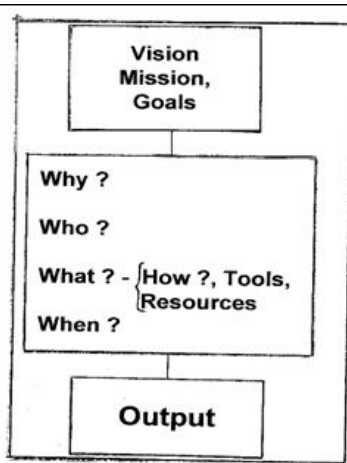


Project Risk – Back to Basics



Larry Cooke is a member of PMI Westchester and an independent consultant with project management experience in the Financial, Information Technology, and Manufacturing industries. He can be reached at LHC209@aol.com

Inside PMI's methodology, Project Risk is often treated as a separate, step-by-step process. When you start with pondering and cataloging qualitative and quantitative risks, you may skip past the most important aspects of project performance, missing the point of performing the risk analysis in the first place. Figure 1, below illustrates the project process. (This illustration is a simplified modification of a figure from "Project Risk Management", C. Chapman and S. Ward, Wiley, 1997, p. 5.)



Instead of looking for risks as a discrete task, we should start from the beginning of Project Definition. What are we trying to accomplish, at the highest level? Can the scope be put into simple English, in the broadest terms, to answer the simple questions inside the box of Figure1? Even in this form, we have some decisions. Must we keep the project confidential, to maintain competitive

advantage? With whom may we share project information? With these basic questions, we can explore Project Risk in concert with other project needs. Starting from this point will treat risk as an organic outcome of other fundamental project goals.

In its simplest form, Project Risk will be closely linked with Time, which will be closely linked with Cost. The longer things take, the more they cost. The more projects cost, the less likely they will be completed. (As costs grow and analysis compounds, the project may become non-viable.) These are the Project Risk components in a paragraph.

Figure 1. Project Development Process

The management team must articulate the overview as shown in Figure 1 above. (Many management teams are not aware of this step.) Incorrectly, you can start a project with the statement, like: "We need a competitive analysis tool and can spend \$ 200,000 and complete it in four months." Then turn it over to a Project Manager. Put in this way makes it may look ridiculous, but it happens. In that case, it falls to the Project Manager to perform the work, while gathering the Charter, Scope, and the other details of the PMI methodology. It would help the PM if s/he keeps the basic model in mind before going too deeply into the weeds.

The classic project risk problem is in the fable, "Belling the Cat." The mice note that the issue is that the cat can sneak up on them unheard. The mice, as a group, decide that if the cat has a bell on its neck, they can all be forewarned. The only problem is determining who and how someone will put the bell on the cat? Many projects get very deep into analysis before the fundamental issues can be resolved. To avoid embarrassment, developing risk analysis must start right from the beginning. (Note that all this is before you have decided whether risks can be avoided, mitigated, transferred, or accepted.)

(Project Risk – Back to Basics continued on page 3)

"The Critical Path" Inside this Month's Issue

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Letter from the President



Redefining SMART Goals

At the end of each year, it's customary to write one's New Years' resolutions with the desire of being a better person in the year to come. By mid-January, it seems equally customary to abandon those resolutions – and allow our old bad habits to re-assert themselves. As Project Managers, used to setting, and reaching goals, its easy to see the source of this failure. Few New Year's resolutions meet the famous "SMART" test for goals.

What's interesting is there is some variation with regard to just what SMART stands for. The prevailing view is that **SMART is an Acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time** based. Not bad, but I personally substitute "Action-based" for "Attainable" and I think that small substitution makes all the difference. Here's why.

The whole point of the SMART test is to produce goals and objectives that will be reached. Take the most common of New Year's resolution – "Lose Weight" – which is arguably the first one to be dropped by the wayside, as well. If you change it to "Lose 15 pounds by March 31", it meets the conventional SMART criteria, as its pretty safe to argue that losing 15 pounds in 3 months is a readily attainable goal for most of us. The problem is that that we lose weight as a result of other actions we take – largely diet and exercise. We can exercise regularly and we can reduce our calorie intake – and together, those actions are likely to result in a weight loss. There is no actual action we can take that is called "losing weight".

My other problem with using Attainable as a goal criteria is that we can't tell if result is attainable, until it actually occurs. In fact, some of the greatest goals ever set, "A practical Light Bulb" or "Man on the Moon by the end of the decade", were at the outset, completely unattainable by conventional means. When asked to make sure goals are "Attainable", an organization is likely to "dumb down" the goal to the point where it is barely Relevant (another important SMART criteria).

An Action-based goal, however, is Attainable if the activity can be performed. Positive results will follow. Edison's Action-based "SMART" goal for the light bulb was to keep trying different materials until he came up with a practical filament, which he eventually did. Our end results are often the product of our actions and other forces that we can't control or predict. We need to focus on what we can actually do.

There is one pitfall to setting "Action based" goals: Most of us are interested in results, not the actions that lead to them. The answer is to keep setting goals that are Specific, Relevant, Measureable and Time based – and then take a crack at the "A" test, by identifying the "Actions" you need to take to reach each goal. If you or your group have the time, resources and drive to take those actions, your goal will be SMART by either definition.

See you at the January Chapter Meeting.

Duff Bailey, PMP
President
PMI Westchester

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Ben Saperstein – Quality SIG

Project Risk – Back to Basics (continued)

Once the initial concept and a project statement have been made, analysis can begin by examining possible activities or circumstances which could put the project off course. Whether this is “Plan B” or constraint analysis is not important yet; the point is to flesh out the elements of the project inside or outside which might impinge on its perfect execution. Here, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld offered some pertinent language, with his articulation of the “Known Unknowns,” and “Unknown Unknowns.”

Known unknowns are such things as competing projects, staff turnover, insufficient resources, incomplete definition, poor communication facilities, insufficient training, untested tools, and many others. Unknown unknowns are changing economic conditions, floods, wars, business consolidations or sell-offs, currency fluctuations, technology innovations, and others. Project managers rarely have knowledge of, nor access to, these grand movements of world history before they happen.

Even under the probable risks, it is difficult or nearly impossible to sidestep fairly obvious pitfalls. A great example is staff turnover. For a project of any duration such as six months or more, it is virtually certain to lose a key staff member, through illness, transfer, accident, or termination. Once lost, it takes time to staff up and to train a replacement. A normal loss of progress is three months’ time to fill and bring a replacement up to speed. But how many projects have understudies ready to step in, which are not stage plays? If delivery time is fundamental to a project, staffing to anticipate loss is a necessary but a universally overlooked possibility.

A key example of Risk gone very wrong is the case of the “787 Dreamliner” from Boeing. The project is two years late and way over budget. To minimize risk and avoid a ten billion dollar design expense, the company farmed out components all across the world. There are 28 different languages, different safety standards, component and material shortages, and other problems. From our vantage point, they didn’t have enough Project Managers. One of the only saving graces is that the competing Airbus 380 is also late and over budget, so both vendors are way behind in their deliverables.

The surprise is that it took so long to identify and mitigate problems, not that they occurred. One problem that might have been mastered sooner was inspection across geographies. Inspections were finally made visually by high resolution video cameras, rather than through multi-language discussions. Maybe the cameras are better today, but they were pretty good two years ago, so why wasn’t visual inspection put in place then?

So, instead of second-guessing Boeing and saving them billions of hindsight dollars, I’ll return to the opening premise of working risk in concert with other project activities. This is hard to do without being considered a

naysayer, but is fundamental to skillful project management. When we have outlined the scope of the project, what other events, at each task junction, should be considered in the task’s performance? Who is to do it, where will the resources come from, what competing efforts will influence the execution, what must be done in parallel or fleshed out beforehand that we haven’t yet considered?

Approaches, such as Goldrat’s Critical Chain technique should be considered as a tool. Another technique, recently demonstrated at a chapter meeting, is plotting the product of Probability and Impact on a graph, and noting which quadrant each risk falls in. For example on a scale of 1 to 5, risks will plot from 1 to 25. The highest ones in the upper right quadrant should be done immediately, and the low ones in the lower left can be ignored for the time being. Also, the risks must be re-examined periodically and changes in values noted and addressed accordingly.

Especially note that risks are not all negative. Opportunities should be considered carefully also. In a construction project, good weather can be taken advantage of to accelerate progress, provided that not only the critical task is accelerated, but that important supporting elements are accelerated also, or else the critical path only shifts slightly.

In summary, Project Risk is not a distinct process, but is an integral part of each stage of development. It should begin with the simplest description of project action, and should continue to be a focus, along with time, cost and resources, throughout the project. Risk Logs and reports are useful, but are only as good as the underlying thought processes, which like contingency planning and goal achievement, must also be constantly in the foreground.

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Letter from the Scheduler – Cost Justification



Ed Mahler, PMP, President Project Administration Institute founded the Institute in 1992. Mr. Mahler is a PMI certified PMP since 1993 and founder and president of the Westchester NY Chapter of PMI from August 2002 to June 2008. You can contact Ed at 917-734-3953.

Recap

This is the 9th in a series of articles on scheduling. Prior articles available on the chapter web site, pmiwestchester.org, beginning in March 2009 include:

1. March 09 – Who uses professional project schedulers
2. April 09 – The political environment
3. May 09 – Using the schedule to manage both the team and management
4. June 09 – Resistance to the use of a professional scheduler
5. September 09 – How to build the schedule
6. October 09 - Schedule Maintenance
7. November 09 – Status Reporting
8. December 09 - Becoming a Scheduler

The Bottom Line

In prior articles we discussed the reasons why it's a good idea to use a professional scheduler instead of project managers doing their own schedules. This article provides the cost justification. If one considers the economic factors, at worst it's a break even, but the quality and usefulness of the scheduler function, which is difficult to quantify, is the tiebreaker. To generate some costs we will declare a set of assumptions that the reader may adjust for their organization. What's important here is the approach to determine the value of using a professional scheduler versus project managers doing their own scheduling. The table below summarizes the assumptions made in the following example.

One time Licensing and Education Costs

Let's start with the costs associated with project managers building their own schedules. Each will need a licensed copy of the software (we'll assume MS Project for this discussion). That's approximately \$350 per license, depending on vendor and volume discount arrangements. An organization of 20 project managers will require 20 licenses costing \$7000, the single scheduler only one license at \$350, a one-time savings of \$6650. Each project manager will also need training on the software. Figure \$1000 each and a new project manager could take 6 months to a year to get up to speed on the product. Thus licenses plus education is \$27000 and up to a year to be fully operational. A scheduler arrives fully trained and requires only one license, an overall startup saving of \$26,650 and up to one year.

Initial Schedule Preparation Costs

Now let's estimate how much time a project manager spends on the schedule for a single project. A new project will require several weeks or months of scope clarification and analysis, configuring the team, and agreeing with the team and stakeholders on the activities that make up the schedule, who will do them, how long they will take, and what depends on what. The example below reflects my experience for a typical one-year project involving a 15-person team developing a 300-task schedule. Assuming a project team can define 10 tasks per hour it will take 30 hours for the project manager to define the schedule.

Because a project manager has more to do than operate the software he/she never gets as proficient as a full time scheduler even after years of use, so let's assume the professional scheduler can accomplish schedule manipulation tasks 25% faster than the average project manager. The result is that the scheduler could help the team define the schedule in 22.5 hours, a saving of 7.5 hours of time that the project manager can use for other activities. Assuming an hourly rate of \$100 per hour for both the project manager and the scheduler that's a saving of \$750 for initial planning.

Schedule Maintenance and Status Reporting

Once the schedule is defined it must be reviewed periodically for changes and compliance, that is, are the defined tasks happening at the prescribed times. If we assume our one-year project is reviewed every 2 weeks there will be 26 reviews over the life of the project. If we assume the project manager will require 6 hours every 2 weeks for maintenance and status update, and the scheduler is 25% faster, the scheduler will only take 4.5 hours per update, a saving of 39 hours of maintenance time over the life of the project that the project manager can use for other activities, and a saving of \$3900 for schedule maintenance.

Summary

Thus for the life of the project the scheduler saves the project manager 46.5 hours and reduces the cost of the project from \$18,600 to \$13,950, a saving of \$4650 or 25%. With 20 projects happening at the same time the potential savings for the organization is \$93,000 per year.

(Letter from the Scheduler – Cost Justification continued on page 6)

Universal Laws of Risk Management



A Risk Doctor Briefing Note
© 2010 Dr David Hillson PMP FAPM
david@risk-doctor.com

The term “risk management” covers many different types of risk, including strategic risk, financial risk, reputational risk, operational risk, project risk, environmental risk, legal risk, contract risk, or technical risk, as well as corporate governance, business continuity and disaster recovery. While each of these areas has its own special language, processes and techniques, there are some principles which apply to them all. These might be called “**universal laws of risk management**”.

The first law of risk management is that **risk is uncertain**. A risk is something in the future which might or might not occur. This is vital to a proper understanding of risk and its management. Risks do not yet exist, indeed they may never exist at all. They are potential future events or sets of circumstances or conditions. This makes them quite different from things which have happened in the past or which currently exist in the present. Past and present events can be analyzed and measured, but future events can only be imagined or estimated. A risk which may or may not exist in the future cannot be experienced directly unless or until it happens. This makes risks different from issues, problems or constraints. In every type of risk management, risk is in the future, which is inherently uncertain.

The second law is that **risk matters**. If they occur, risks will have consequences which make a difference in some way. It is not possible to have an inconsequential risk, by definition. While various types of risk management focus on different sorts of consequence, all agree that a risk must affect something. This is because risks are inextricably linked to objectives. Wherever some field of human endeavor is attempting to achieve something, it is possible to identify uncertainties which might affect the chances of success. Whether the objectives are to achieve good corporate governance, successful projects or business continuity, risk management aims to identify possible future events which could influence those objectives, and to enable them to be understood and managed effectively.

The third law is that **managing risk is a process**. They may have different steps, but all approaches to risk management provide a framework which is designed to maximize both efficiency and effectiveness. Although the details of risk processes are different, every type of risk management has two important parts: analysis and action. Before risk can be properly managed, it must first be identified, described, understood and assessed. Analysis is a necessary first step but it is not sufficient – it must be followed by action. A risk process which does not lead to implementation of actions to deal with identified risks is incomplete and useless. The ultimate aim is to manage risk, not simply to analyze it.

Finally, the fourth law is that **risk is managed by people**. The human aspects of risk management are vital to its success and effectiveness. People implement processes, though we may use machines to automate calculations, to record results, or to generate reports. People set risk thresholds, identify risks, assess the degree of uncertainty and extent of possible impact, propose appropriate responses and implement agreed actions. These require judgments, estimates and decisions to be made in the presence of uncertainty. These judgments are subject to a range of influences, both explicit and hidden, which can significantly affect the outcome. Risk management at every level is exposed to sources of bias arising from overt and covert influences acting on individuals and groups who are trying to make risk-based decisions with imperfect or incomplete information.



Whatever type of risk we face, we have to follow these universal laws of risk management. To manage risk effectively we need to deal with **uncertainty** that **matters**, follow a **structured process**, and take account of the **people aspects**.

To provide feedback on this Briefing Note, or for more details on how to develop effective risk management, [contact the Risk Doctor \(info@risk-doctor.com\)](mailto:info@risk-doctor.com), or [visit the Risk Doctor website \(www.risk-doctor.com\)](http://www.risk-doctor.com).

Letter from the Scheduler – Cost Justification (continued)

Scheduler	PM	Description
Software Licensing and Education Costs		
350	350	Cost per license
1	20	Licenses required
\$ 350	\$ 7,000	Licenses cost
	\$ 1,000	Education cost per PM
0	\$20,000	Total education cost
\$ 350	\$27,000	One time license and education costs
	\$26,650	Savings using scheduler
Initial Schedule Preparation Costs		
	15	No of team members
	300	No of tasks in schedule
	10	Tasks defined per hour
75%	100%	Scheduler efficiency compared to PM
22.5	30	Hours to construct initial schedule
	7.5	Hours saved for project management
100	100	Hourly rate
\$ 2,250	\$ 3,000	Cost of initial construction
	\$ 750	Savings using scheduler
Schedule Maintenance and Status Reporting		
	52	Week long project
	2	Reporting interval
	26	Reporting periods
4.5	6	Time PM spends on schedule
117	156	Total time for project
	39	Hours saved for project management
\$ 11,700	\$15,600	Cost of Schedule Maintenance and Status Reporting
	\$ 3,900	Savings using scheduler
Summary		
		Hours saved for project management using a scheduler
	46.5	
\$ 13,950	\$18,600	Cost of initial construction plus maintenance/reporting
	\$ 4,650	\$ savings for 1 project using a scheduler
	25%	% Savings using scheduler
	\$93,000	\$ savings for all projects using a scheduler

Additional Benefits

As discussed above the scheduler provides the benefit of specialization. The project manager is not likely to achieve the proficiency with the software that the scheduler has because the scheduler works with the software full time. In addition, 20 project managers, even with organizational standards defined, will all use the tool differently. They will not provide the consistency of planning and reporting quality achieved by a single scheduler doing all the schedules making portfolio reviews more difficult for management.

The scheduler can maintain a master resource database and detect and manage resource conflicts and overload. And the scheduler can maintain an organization repository containing the records of all projects, relieving the project managers of that responsibility, and protecting them from data loss that could occur if each project manager kept their schedules on their own PC's and failed to back up the data.

Summary

The scheduler provides both quantitative and qualitative benefits to the project organization, freeing the project managers to focus more time on their projects, reducing overall project costs, improving the quality and consistency of schedules, providing data storage and backup functions, and creating and maintaining the organization's project portfolio.



Highlights from BRT
December 3, 2009

"PM Challenges in Tough Economic Times"

We looked at the impact to the project manager for:

Budget, Project, and Portfolio Management; Resource Management; Government Regulations; Vendor Management; and Mergers and Acquisitions.

- More discipline is being applied to project management and project prioritization. This is resulting in some good and bad decisions. For example cost cutting to no longer use blackberry devices can challenge the technical savvy PM. Alternately there are more opportunities for alternate work service arrangements due to companies expanding the virtual office to cut rental costs or renting out space that is owned.

- Perception that talent is available cheaply but expert talent in certain disciplines is still scarce. Recruiting strategies have changed based on this.

- Projects require more approval steps due to government regulations and budget constraints. The PM needs to account for this by reviewing the task plan and adjusting the task and effort.

- A new way to prioritize by segmentation of data. Drive the budget to the projects where the risk is high based on new and expanded government regulations.

- Vendor management is affected in two ways resulting in reduced rates - mergers and acquisition and companies driving vendor consolidation. Depending on which side you are on - vendor or customer - you may be celebrating this aspect.

Next BRT, January 21, 2010

"Other Certifications that PM's can Obtain"

Chapter Meeting – January 12, 2010, 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Topic: “Fractured Projects - How to identify, understand the issues and correct the problems associated with these projects”

Any project can fracture, the key to success is to be very smart about what the goals are, who the players are, and to be flexible about how to do things and get things done. This talk will be interactive; we'll talk about some of the projects that I've worked on and some of the projects that you've worked on. What went wrong? What went right? How to recognize fractures? And how to make projects work!

Featured Speaker – Claudine Y. Halpern, President, The YCH Group, Inc.

Claudine Halpern is a chameleon; she has worked in many different situations during her more than twenty-five years in business; as a management consultant, Claudine advised many of the major brokerage, insurance, and financial houses, completing more than fifteen major corporate initiatives during the past ten years. As a crisis manager for major corporations, Claudine successfully brought in projects and products that other firms would not touch. As a specialist in business and management consultancy, Claudine consults to emerging businesses across the spectrum. Ms. Halpern has successfully completed more than fifteen major implementations in the last 10 years.

Location

Casaletto's Fine Italian Cuisine
 15 Saw Mill River Road, Elmsford, NY
 914-592-5980 | [Get Map](#)

Agenda

5:30 to 6:15	Networking, buffet dinner, Meet the Vendor and Recruiter
6:15 to 6:30	Chapter business / announcements
6:30 to 7:30	Featured program
7:30 to 7:45	Continued networking, buffet dinner, Meet the Speaker, Vendor, Recruiter
7:45 to 8:45	PMO SIG Meetings (PMO & Quality)

Fees

Chapter members – \$20; Non-members – \$25
 We accept cash or checks. Sorry, no credit cards.

Career Corner

Watch our website for details

Vendor Corner

[International Institute for Learning, Inc. \(IIL\)](#)

For more information and free webinars, visit www.iil.com or call +1.212.758.0177.

Directions:

From White Plains:

From Central Avenue in Hartsdale, take Hartsdale Avenue West for 2.2 miles. Turn left onto Route 119, and follow for one mile. Turn left onto Saw Mill River Road, and go .1 mile.

From the South:

Take the Saw Mill River Parkway North. Get off at the Elmsford exit, and turn right at the Stop sign. Turn right at the first light onto Saw Mill River Road. The restaurant is on the right.

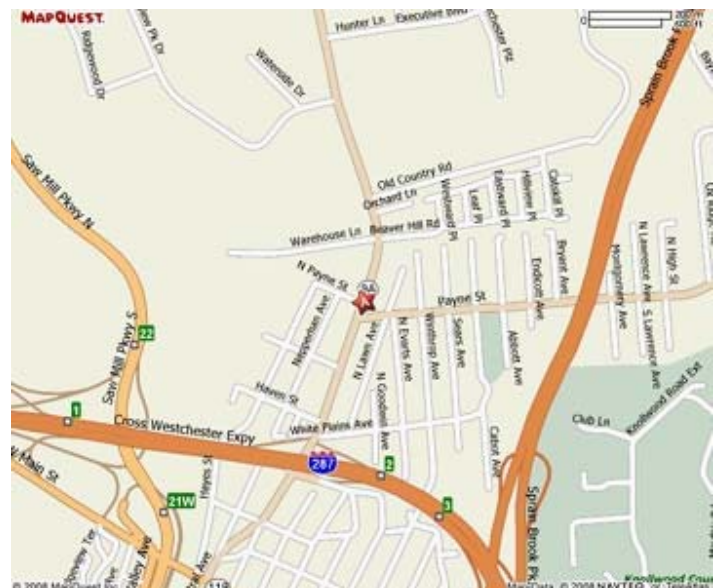
OR Take the Bronx River Parkway North to the Sprain Parkway North to I-287 West. Get off at Exit 2 (Elmsford). Turn left at the light onto Saw Mill River Road. Go straight through the intersection. The restaurant is on the right.

From the North:

Take the Taconic Parkway South to the Saw Mill Parkway. Get off at the Elmsford exit. Go around the bend, and turn right at the Stop sign. Turn right at the first light onto Saw Mill River Road. The restaurant will be on the right.

Valet parking is available in the front. Additional parking is on the street or in the Post Office parking lot across the street from the restaurant.

Map to Casaletto's Fine Italian Cuisine



Upcoming PMI Westchester Events

January Breakfast Roundtable Meeting

Topic: Other certifications that PM's can obtain to enhance their skills and value

Facilitator: Mary Gilmartin

Date: Thursday, January 21st – 7:30 to 8:45 AM

Location: 108 Corporate Park Drive, White Plains, NY (off Westchester Ave) Cafeteria – Lobby Level – 2 Buildings down from Malcolm Pirnie

Breakfast available for purchase at the cafeteria

February Chapter Meeting

Topic: Mentoring/Peer Coaching

Speaker: PMI Westchester's Breakfast Round Table Team

Date: February 9, 2010

Location: Royal Palace, Greenburgh, NY

PMI Westchester Education



Topic: PMP Exam Preparation/Study Series

PMI Westchester is pleased to offer this study group to further prepare you to take the PMP Exam. The curriculum

has been updated to cover the new PM BOK 3rd edition. These sessions are fast paced and require a 6 week commitment. Study materials will be provided, light dinners are included, and there are weekly homework assignments. Our exam passing rate is excellent and we are proud of the hard work and success of our students. Again in 2010, it will be possible to earn 12 education credits with the completion of all class requirements.

Audience: Portfolio Managers, Project Managers, and Project Participants

Date: Wednesdays –Jan 20, 2010 thru Feb. 24 2010
(reserve March 3rd for snow day)

Time: 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Location: Lower Hudson Regional Information Center - BOCES - Elmsford - [Directions](#)

Instructor: Anita Wilton - Please contact Anita Wilton, 914 332-9391 or anitawilton@optonline.net for information and reservations.

Cost: \$300 for PMI Westchester members, \$375 for non-PMI members (Payments must be made via Pay Pal or by check the first night of class).

PMI Westchester - Career Development



The PMI - Westchester Chapter **Project Management Office (PMO) SIG/LIG*** meets, every month, following the main chapter meeting. Here, we discuss topics and share information related to Project/Program Management Offices.

No membership is needed and there is no charge for participation. Additionally, if you are a PMP, you may obtain an additional PDU for sticking around! If you have any questions or topics/suggestions, please contact Gus Sanchez at gus_sanchez@hotmail.com.

* - Program/Project Management Office Special Interest Group/Local Interest Group

The **Quality Special Interest Group (SIG)** meets every month following the main chapter meeting. During the meeting, we discuss topics related to Quality Management.

- No membership is needed and there is no charge for participation. If you are a PMP, you will obtain a PDU in addition to the main chapter meeting PDU! If you have any questions or topics/suggestions, please contact Linda P. Dowdell at lpdowdell@optonline.com

Toastmasters Invitation

- Seth Greenwald is the VP of PR at Toastmasters in Stamford, CT. Toastmasters is an international club dedicated to improving members' skills in leadership, communication and public speaking. If any member of PMI Westchester chapter is interested in hearing more about Toastmasters at Toastmasters' annual party on January 26 they should contact Seth for a free invitation. Contact Seth at seth@greenwaldesignmgmt.com

The Critical Path

The Critical Path is PMI Westchester's free monthly newsletter, published as a service for members and non-members alike. We're always looking for your contributions. To submit an article for publication, please contact the newsletter editor listed below:

Brenda Horton – Newsletter Editor
newsletter@pmiwestchester.org