Project Management Institute
Westchester
® The hub of project management for Westchester and its neighbors

The Critical Path

October 2009

On Projects and Beyond

Larry Cooke is a Director of PMI National Quality Practice and a member of PMI Westchester Chapter. He is also Business Process Management Consultant, a Senior Project Manager, and an ASQ Certified Quality Auditor. He can be reached at LHC209@AOL.com.

When children are quite small, they receive a plastic tool kit as a toy. They learn hand-eye coordination, while trying to bang circular and square objects into the right slots in a specially-constructed plastic workstation. Over the generations, parents have learned how to distract the children from gouging and sawing up the family furniture.

Skip forward fifteen or twenty years, and the children, now adults, do actual work, hobbies, and home repair using saws, hammers, screwdrivers and other common implements. In the process, they have learned which tool is appropriate for the task at hand. It is now so natural that we can reach for a hammer when we want to bang in a nail, not a screwdriver or a saw.

Tools in intellectual activities associated with PM or Business Process Management follow the same progression. Some involve technology, specific advanced training, and practice in the field – learning by doing. Some tools can be learned through training, but other, more complex ones require a deeper education.

The difference between training and education become evident over time. In routine tasks, like sawing boards or, say, preparing Visio diagrams of interior equipment layouts, training is efficient and ideal. When and how to design a whole house, though, is a task for education and insight. Frank Lloyd Wright brought exceptional intellectual skills which made him a better architect than (probably) "Joe the Plumber."

In today's task-oriented work environment, training is sought over education for expediency. This is due, in my opinion, to the press of time and the decreased ability of managers to distinguish quality from appearances, substance from form, and thinking from activity.

Quality tools, risk tools, scheduling tools, and cost tools all abound. To illustrate the tendency to elevate training over education, I'll cite an example of a production facility for a major telephone company. The service delivery is subcontracted to a specialty vendor. The product created by the subcontractor is a completed installation of local area and internet equipment for various businesses. Activity is assigned to Project Managers, each of whom has about 50 concurrent "projects" at different stages of completion. There are four to six PMs working in the environment, and turnover (of both project and PMs) is rather brisk, since each PM can devote only 48 minutes on average a week to each "Project." There is a sense of chaos as the PM flits from emergency to emergency. Each PM provides status reports, schedules around customer dependencies, telephone company service and line availability, vacation and illness events, and other vagaries of life.

However, once you apply thinking to the activities, another reality appears. Each PM handles a sphere too small to allow economies of scale. A higher level of organization, a "Process" view, shows that what the PM controls is really a series of similar tasks and activities. The focus of the business activity is much closer to a florist or a pizza delivery, than an artisan approach or a manufacturing activity as it is currently viewed. There are not really three of four hundred projects to be done by four to six harried PMs, but one overall process to be best managed in a PMO environment. That environment could allow specialization of labor, consolidated status reporting, better tracking tools and a better reporting system. Cross training could be improved, and customer service could benefit as delivery schedules are shortened and rework is minimized.

So, it's not the tools, darling! Thinking about process, not individual projects, is the key to continuous improvement and success. That was what we were really learning when we were banging away with the plastic hammers years ago.

(On Projects and Beyond continued on page 3)

"The Critical Path" Inside this Month's Issue

Letter from the President

The month of September marked the 21st consecutive month in which jobs were lost – making this the longest period in which jobs were lost since 1939, when the Department of Labor began keeping these statistics. The months ahead don't promise any immediate relief – and there is a plausible fear that job losses will continue into 2010 – as companies slash their spending in response to the prospect of fewer consumers – with less money to spend. These grim numbers hit project managers especially hard. Projects are, after all, capital expenditures – and capital investment is most easily cut when cash is short.

There is nothing that we can do at the chapter level to change these macro-economic circumstances. Instead we must adapt to a changing environment of diminished opportunity and help our members do the same. I'm pleased to say that the Westchester Chapter has many programs that can help project managers re-market themselves to this changed environment, and I want to take you on quick tour of some of our key offerings.

Stop number one is the Job Club – which is free to anyone who is actively seeking a job as a project manager. It meets every Friday morning and takes members through a proven job search process that focuses on identifying your strengths, building a strong resume, communicating your value and using proactive approaches to identify and create opportunities where your skills can add immediate value to a hiring organization. The job club has grown to the point where most meetings have a waiting list – and, this month, it will move to a new space at the College of Westchester to allow it to accommodate more members.

One of the key techniques the Job Club emphasizes is effective networking and that takes us to our next two stops – the monthly Chapter Meeting and the Breakfast Round Table. Both provide you with the opportunity to meet others face to face. The key is to take the most advantage of these opportunities by exchanging business cards and being able to introduce yourself to others in a way that helps them understand what you're about and how you could help them or someone they know, succeed. The key to effective networking is follow up, which can be facilitated by our LinkedIn group - PMI Westchester Networking - to which all chapter members are invited.

If you are out of work, it's essential to maintain and build your professional credentials, especially the PMP certification which is, more than ever, listed as a job requirement. If you aren't a PMP, our PMP prep class will help you get there. If you are already certified, it's essential to keep earning those PDUs and our chapter programs provide the opportunity to earn 30 or more per year – at minimal cost.

(Letter from the President continued on page 6)

On Projects and Beyond *(from page 1)*

The telephone company is gaining value by subcontracting the work. It has a known cost it can manage, (and pass on to it's customers), so it's intellectual capacity can be spent in designing systems, not in managing a service task that does not contribute to its core value proposition. (This is the same reason hospitals outsource food service and housekeeping *). And it has elected to pass off the process value of managing a PMO, and consolidating service delivery from supplier to customer, presumably because it has better investment opportunities elsewhere within its core business.

The Subcontractor's Value Proposition

The company that is missing out on improvement possibilities is the service subcontractor. It may eventually be replaced by a more efficient provider, which views delivery as a process rather than as a group of projects, and which can reduce costs and underbid the present company. Or it may muddle along because of the hectic pace and rapid change cycles of the telephone equipment business, which changes more quickly than the management can understand what is happening in technology.

Over time, of course, innovation catches up with the laggards who only want to trim costs by working people harder rather than smarter. The dance between technology and cost propositions goes on continually. Eventually, dramatic change will invade the business I just used as my example. Not all or even many companies can foresee when and how this change will come. The entire infrastructure will change dramatically and suddenly, and equipment installations themselves will be replaced by a technology that will permanently obsolete the companies and perhaps the industry.

And, of course if I knew when and how this industry will change, I wouldn't be speculating here, I'd be buying the stock of the new, yet undefined industry. What we can do now, though, is think more about process, and improve what is currently in our grasp.

Projects are still the best way to organize any particular, detailed change and improvement activity. But the Project Manager must also look beyond the project, in the course of his/her learning and development. It is the business context that should dominate. In viewing the forest and the trees, it is the forest that will be there after the local project is forgotten, and will provide ongoing growth for the leader.

----

*See:("Owning the Right Risks," by Kevin Buchler, Andrew Freeman, and Ron Hulme, Harvard Business Review, September, 2008, pp.102-110) for determining which risks are fundamental to a business strategy

PMI Hudson Valley Professional Day

The Hudson Valley Chapter of PMI is pleased to offer our first Professional Development Day on October 23, 2009 at Marist's historic Cornell Boathouse. The agenda has been developed to appeal to Project Management Professionals wishing to better leverage their project management skills as well as students that are interested in a career in Project Management. Invest in your career and join us for an exciting day on the Hudson.

Morning Session:

8:30 -- Networking
9:00 -- Keynote: Science of Success - How to use PM to make your career SOAR, Michelle LaBrosse, CEO Cheetah Learning
10:00 -- What can the PMP do for your career and your business, Ray Strano, Cheetah Learning
11:00 -- How CAPM can help people early in their career get off on the right foot, Kristen LaBrosse, Cheetah Learning

Afternoon Session:

1:00 -- PDUs PDQ - Making the maintenance of your PMP fun and easy, Jean Steinmetz, Cheetah Learning
2:00 -- Patterns for Project Management
Stewart Dutfield, Excelsior College
3:00 -- The Role of the Project Leader - 21st Century Transformation, Cathy Cassidy, CEO Martin Training
4:00 -- Using Thinking Styles to Improve Project Team Performance, Cathy Cassidy, CEO Martin Training

Costs for the day include a Continental Breakfast, Lunch and Refreshments is $75.00, $65.00 for PMIHVC Members and free to Marist Students and Faculty. The PMIHVC Professional Development Day will qualify for 7 PDUs.

Seating is limited so register early to insure your spot. Please contact Deborah Gione (mooreda@us.ibm.com or 845-435-6793) or Tom Gezo (gezo@us.ibm.com or 845-433-2671).

You may transfer your registration fee to HVFCU to acct # 82759, account type S9, The first three letters on the account are "PMI". Please be sure to put your name in the memo field so we know who transferred the funds. Or you can mail a check to PMIHVC, PO BOX 1692, Poughkeepsie NY 12601.

For directions to Marist:
http://www.marist.edu/about/visit.html

Letter from the Scheduler

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 6th in a series of articles on scheduling. In case you missed any prior articles, or are curious to know what they are about or where you can get them they are available on the chapter web site, pmiwestchester.org. Click on the Newsletters link and you will see pdf's of all our newsletters. This series began with the March 09 issue:

1. March 09 – Who uses professional project schedulers and PMI demographics
2. April 09 – The political environment the typical PMI project manager finds him/herself in and how a professional scheduler can help
3. May 09 – Using the schedule to manage both the team and management
4. June 09 – Resistance to the use of a professional scheduler; organizational maturity vs. privacy
5. September 09 – How to build the schedule and what should be in it
6. Schedule Maintenance

Why

"The only constant is change." Where have we heard that before? For projects you can square it. When you build your schedule it is only valid for the current time frame. A day or a week later something will change, and that change could affect when others should do their tasks, and it could affect the dates of project deliverables. You need to know that and communicate the changes to the team to get back on schedule if possible.

Illustration

To illustrate please refer to the October 08 chapter meeting presentation titled "Taking the Blinders off MS Project & The Case for 3rd Party Planning and Tracking Services". To see it go to the chapter web site, pmiwestchester.org, click on the Past Chapter Events link, click on September 2008 to June 2009, and scroll down to the October 14 chapter meeting. Then click the Presentation link.

The beginning of the presentation up to slide 47 describes the building blocks of a schedule and how to transform the MS Project default view into a schedule you and the project team can understand.

Capturing Task Status

After several weeks of execution it's a good idea to check to see if tasks that should be under way or complete for a given status date are on schedule. Pages 48 to 57 of the presentation describe how to make tasks that should be under way or complete for a given status date visible. Tasks that completed on schedule can be updated as 100% complete. Tasks that should be under way need to be assessed as to whether they are still on schedule for their original completion dates. If the task is still on schedule let MS Project calculate the task % complete. Asking the task owner what % complete the task is will most likely produce a different % complete and if you enter that MS Project will change the task completion date. Best to let MS Project reflect the task owner's intent. This sequence is illustrated on slides 62 to 66.

Tasks that are not on schedule

If a task owner says he/she will not complete their task on schedule change the task duration to reflect the new date. Then let MS Project calculate the task % complete to be on schedule for the new date. Changing the duration of a task will most likely produce a ripple effect causing other tasks' dates to change and possibly impacting a key deliverable. The presentation shows the addition of a field that highlights changes to task finish dates with blue arrows. This makes it easy for the project manager and the team to see the results of schedule changes and recover from them if possible. Slides 67 to 80 illustrate the impact of a schedule change and modifications to the schedule to recover the key deliverable.

Summary

For small projects a project manager may be able to see all the changes in their schedule without the MS Project enhancements in the illustration. However even a small project can contain complex relationships like the one in the presentation that make changes difficult to spot. If you are going to build and track your own project schedules it is strongly recommended that you modify MS Project to provide the visibility described here, or hire a professional scheduler to do it for you. The time saved and the schedule integrity provided will pay for itself.

Next

In the next installment we will discuss status reporting to the team, stakeholders, and your management

What is Your Biggest Risk?

A Risk Doctor Briefing Note

© 2009 Dr David Hillson PMP FAPM
david@risk-doctor.com

It should not be too hard to answer the question "What is the biggest risk in your project or business?" Most of us know what keeps us awake at night, either worrying about what could go wrong (threats), or getting excited about possible improvements (opportunities). But how do we decide which risk is the "biggest"? Is it just an intuitive feeling, or are there measurable parameters we can use?

It is very common to use just two factors to size risks: probability and impact. These estimate how likely the uncertain risk is to occur, and how significant its effect would be if it actually happened. Probability and impact are related to the size of a risk because they describe two fundamental characteristics of every risk:

1. Each risk is uncertain, which means that it may not happen, and "probability" reflects the degree of uncertainty about whether it will happen or not.
2. A risk that occurs would affect our ability to achieve one or more objectives, and "impact" describes our prediction of the extent to which objectives would be affected.

There are however several other important characteristics of risks which we might want to use when we answer the question "Which is the biggest risk?" For example:

- **Manageability** – How easy is it to do something about the risk? We may decide that a medium-probability/medium-impact risk that we can do nothing about is more risky than a high-probability/high-impact risk which is simple to deal with.
- **Proximity** – If the risk happens, how soon do we expect that to be? A risk that might happen tomorrow should be treated as more important than one which might not occur until next month or next year.
- **Propinquity** – How important is the risk to me personally, or to my team or our business? We are more sensitive to risks that affect us directly, and view risks to others as less important.
- **Urgency** – How much time do we have in order to implement an effective response to the risk? If we must act now to address the risk, we should give it higher priority than one where we have longer to respond.
- **Relatedness** – Is this risk related to other risks? A risk with complex links or dependencies with many other risks should be treated as higher priority than a simple independent risk.

We might wish to consider these and other factors when we try to decide how big a risk is, and what degree of priority we should give it. Simply assessing probability and impact is a limited way to determine risk size. Of course if you use more dimensions to size your risks, it becomes harder to develop suitable ranking algorithms and to present results. For example the traditional Probability-Impact Matrix only deals with those two characteristics and other tools are required to deal with additional dimensions – for example bubble charts or risk meters.

The question "What is your biggest risk?" seems simple, but we should avoid the trap of giving an answer which is too simplistic.

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), or visit the Risk Doctor website (www.risk-doctor.com).

What is the difference between defining a project and planning one?

Jeff Crow is a Portland, Oregon consultant and trainer. He conducts seminars and workshops on project management and organizational development for corporations and through the Professional Development Center at Portland State University.

In defining a project (also called defining the "scope" of the project), you are setting parameters -- building the box to hold the project plan. The plan is the detail of how the project will be accomplished. The project definition tells you what is inside and what is outside the box. It sets limits on the project. A good project definition is defense against "scope creep" that gradual (or not-so-gradual) expansion of the project as it unfolds.

When defining a project, it is also important to establish the difference between the necessary components and deliverables and those that are desirable but not absolutely necessary.

One way to do this is to define Needs and Wants. This yields a short list of those things that MUST be part of the project as opposed to a long list of all the things that COULD be part of the project.

Think of Needs as "black and white" a Need must be met in order for the project to be seen as even minimally successful. A Want, on the other hand, is a "shade of grey." some Wants are more important than others but, none of them are absolutely necessary for minimum success. Rank the list of Wants in order of importance the most important at the top of the list and the others in descending order of importance down to the level of, "That would be nice but I really don't care."

Use the lists of Needs and Wants to evaluate What you propose to do with the project -- your proposed solutions. First, test proposed solutions against the Needs. Discard any that do not meet all the Needs. Next, test them against the Wants. Which solutions meet the most important Wants? Which meet the largest number of Wants? The solution that meets all the Needs and as many of the Wants as practical, is probably the best.

Once you have defined the project, you can plan to deliver the required solution. Obviously, if you can meet all the Needs and the majority of the Wants, it is going to be seen as a resounding success. However, if all you can do is meet all the Needs and a few of the Wants, it can still be viewed as successful.

Defining Needs and Wants is an excellent way to define the scope of a project and to set the parameters for project planning. It can be a catalyst for discussion about what is really needed from the project. And, it can force realistic decisions about what can and can't be done.

Letter from the President (con't)

Being unemployed eats at one's self confidence – which in turn undermines your ability to effectively network and job search. One way to break this vicious cycle is to volunteer and a great way to do so is by being a mentor to another project manager. Our mentoring program matches experienced project managers with those who are less so. As a mentor, you can see the value of your experience reflected in the achievements of your mentee. It's also a great way to help finesse a shift in industry. If you've been in financial services, you could mentor someone in the growing health care industry and use that experience as an entry point for your job search.

While there are many other ways that you can leverage the chapter to build your career – I would be remiss if I didn't mention volunteering to help the chapter itself. We have many, many ways to effectively engage you - in well defined roles, as well as in using your creativity to develop new programs and initiatives. Either way it's a great way to demonstrate your managerial acumen and leadership to your professional peers – and that can't possibly be a bad thing. Volunteer opportunities (and all other programs shown above) are listed on our web site. Prospective volunteers are always welcome to contact me with their ideas and interests at president@pmiwestcheter.org.

See you at the October Chapter Meeting.

Duff Bailey, PMP
President
PMI Westchester

Chapter Meeting – October 13, 2009, 5:30 to 7:30 pm

Topic: "Communications and Personality Styles--How to get what you want and how to get the most from management, clients and team members"

This presentation will be on how to recognize distinct styles and personality types and deal in the most effective way for each individual person. Since people are unique with different motivations, we will discuss how to recognize yourself and others, how to match the personality and skills to the task and how to keep yourself, team members, clients and management all working together smoothly to accomplish a goal.

Featured Speaker – Patricia Tamowski, PMP and Certified NLP Master Coach

Patricia works as a business and personal coach and is a Certified NLP Trainer and Master Coach as well as a Certified Master Hypnotist. She assists individuals and teams reach their goals both professionally and personally. Her office is in Katonah, NY. In addition to training and coaching she has over 20 years of experience in the business world, including over 14 years software development, IT management and project management and is a certified PMP. She as a BS in Economics, an MS in Information Systems.

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

InSys Consulting Services, Inc.
Hosted by Tina Costanzo, Senior Technical Recruiter
E-mail at tcostanzo@insys.com
395 West Passaic Street Rochelle Park, NJ 07662
Phone: 201-621-4797 ext. 32

Vendor Corner

Big Visible will be represented by Alex Singh & Giora Morein
Phone: (800) 675-1757
www.BigVisible.com
Big Visible will be raffling off an iPod Nano.

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.

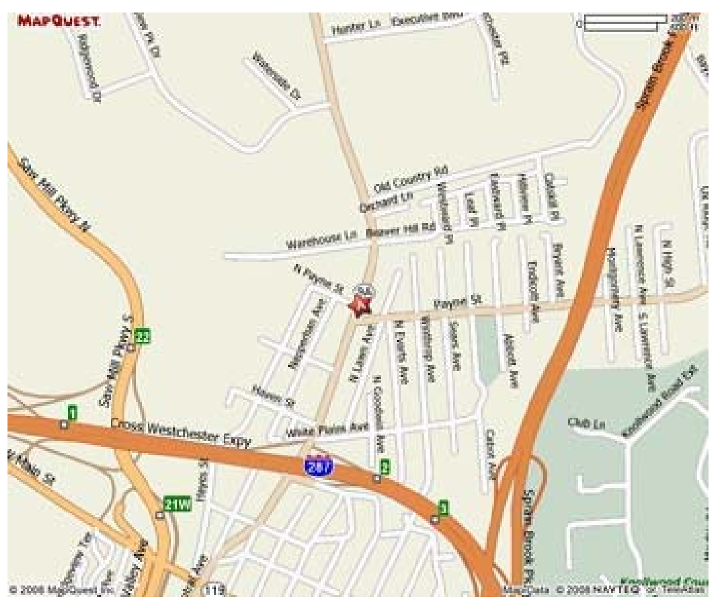
From the South:
Take the Saw Mill River Parkway North. Get off at the Elmsford exit, and turn right at the Stop sign. Turn right at the first light onto Saw Mill River Road. The restaurant is on the right.

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

October Breakfast Roundtable Meeting

Topic: "Inside the Project Manager's Toolbox: Using the Right Skills for the Job "
Facilitator: Seth Greenwald
Date: Thursday, October 15th – 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

November Chapter Meeting

Topic: Pragmatism – The Key to Enterprise Agility
Speaker: Patricia Tamowski , **Date:** October 13, 2009
Location: Casaletto's Fine Italian Restaurant, Elmsford, NY

Conference

Topic: "Effective Communications and Human Relations"
Location: Dale Carnegie
Date: October 19, 2009
Fees: 42 PDU's. The Original price is $1795 the Westchester PMI 15% discounted price is $1525.75. For more information and to enroll using the 15% discount, please contact Sherry Cowan, Performance Consultant at 212-836-0775 or sherry_cowan@dalecarnegie.com e-mail.

PMI Westchester - Career Development

The PMI -Westchester Chapter 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

PMI Westchester - Career Development

The Westchester Project Managers Job Club is sponsored by the Westchester Chapter of the Project Management Institute. The goal of the Job Club is to provide mutual support for Project Management Job Seekers. In weekly, structured meetings, participants acquire and practice proactive job finding skills with the help of professional job coaches and with fellow club members, e.g., delivering 30 second pitch/ brand, networking, resume/ cover letters, interview and presentation, negotiation, etc.

There is no charge to participate, but participants in the club agree to:

- Make finding a new job a serious priority in their lives.
- Attend the job club meetings regularly until they locate a job
- Keep information other members shared confidential.
- Actively and enthusiastically participate in the job club's activities including ongoing contact with other job club members.
- "Give back" to the club or the community through volunteer service

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