

Four Common Project Leadership Mistakes to Avoid



Art Petty is a 25+ year experienced marketing and sales executive in business intelligence software, retail automation, life-safety and building automation markets. Over his many years of leading and building businesses into market leaders.

"This would be easy if it weren't for the people." - A Project Manager

I've been invited to deliver a talk to a group of project management professionals ostensibly around the issue of dealing with difficult people on project teams. The challenge with this topic is that one could mistakenly assume that there may well be some heretofore undiscovered leadership approaches that can take the "difficult" out of these characters who frequent our project teams in so many unique forms.

Newsflash: there is no known cure for the human personality.

Thankfully.

We are complicated, confounding and wonderfully different people. The team or project leader's responsibility is not to find a way to squash the variance in personalities, but rather to foster the right environment for people who are different, to come together and perform.

Here are a few key mistakes to avoid as you seek to align your collection of challenging personalities around your project and pursue great performance.

4 Key Project Leadership Mistakes to Avoid

- Just because you or your boss say it's important doesn't make it so. Having a "clear and compelling purpose" is critical to fostering team motivation and performance. Don't assume that just because management has bestowed the mantle of "critical" on an initiative that your team members agree. It's essential for you to work with the group and with the members on an individual basis to build understanding, answer questions and promote the idea of a compelling purpose. Sell the importance of the initiative with passion and integrity. Fail to do this effectively and those team members who who remain doubtful end up creating tension and contributing to performance challenges

Don't assume your team knows how to talk with each other. I see more performance loss on teams in the churn that surrounds most meetings and conversations than anywhere else. Good team leaders are effective facilitators. Great team leaders help their teams design productive conversations using a technique like DeBono's Six Thinking Hats to help their teams focus together on one issue at a time (risks, ideas, needed information, assumptions etc). And great teams quickly learn that the time spent designing solutions while talking is much better spent than the typical time spent in arguing positions.

In the spirit of number 2, don't assume that your team knows how to decide together. Much like the performance degradation that occurs from poor quality discussion practices, teams are prone to making big mistakes when it comes to deciding on core issues. While no one sets out to make a bad decision, the decision traps that bedevil us as individuals are amplified in group settings, where power distance, structure, personality, personal biases and so many other pitfalls are poised to derail otherwise well-intended professionals. Effective team leaders teach teams to frame decisions, leverage outside viewpoints, and seek critical information and to evaluate risks in a manner that is clinical, objective and comprehensive.

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Letter from the President



This month I'd like to talk to you about volunteering for PMI's Westchester chapter. Volunteering allows you to expand your network, earn PDUs and increase your skills and qualifications as a leader. It offers an opportunity to its members a chance to demonstrate their management skills to their professional peers as well as give back to the community and chapter. It also brings new and fresh ideas to the board and helps to resolve some

the challenges faced by the chapter.

Every year we conduct elections for about half of our board positions. We also have many open volunteer positions on an on-going basis. Chapter volunteers are honored at semi-annual volunteer recognition dinners and also eligible for discounts on chapter events. Volunteers who help organize and/or present an event may attend that event at no charge. They may also avail themselves of career development opportunities from PMI International as well as be considered for greater leadership opportunities in the chapter. I encourage you to contact Peter Roggerman, our nominating committee chair or any board member if you are interested for any elected position.

I will also like to thank our entire PDD committee, board members and all our volunteers for conducting a successful Professional Development Day 2013. Everything was done to perfection and all the attendees seemed to be pleased with the event. We continue to try and improve year after year by having more attendees, more engaging speakers, and a better atmosphere.

I know many of us have plans for spring break, but I hope to see majority of you at our April chapter meeting.

Pawan Kumar, PMP
President
PMI Westchester

PMI Westchester Board of Directors

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Mary Jo Vessecchia

Vice President of Outreach Programs

Anand Kanakagiri - ACTING

PMI Westchester Chapter – Board Elections



As stated in the President’s Letter, PMI Westchester is holding its annual election cycle. We are encouraging member to get involved in the chapter to help make it even better.

This year we have four positions available for nomination and award. The Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for the following board positions:

- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Vice President of Membership
- Vice President of Outreach

In accordance with our chapter Bylaws, chapter members are invited to nominate candidates. The nominating period has begun and continues until April 21st. The election will be held online from May 10th through May 31st. You may nominate yourself or any other chapter member who is qualified for these positions.

Qualifications:

1. Must be a PMI Westchester member in good standing for at least 1 year prior to the election
2. PMP strongly preferred, but not required
3. Must have served as a Director or Program Manager in the PMI Westchester Chapter for at least 1 year prior to the election
4. Must have expressed a commitment to fulfill the duties of the applicable officer and demonstrated knowledge of PMI Westchester operations, as judged by the Nominating Committee
5. Must be an active participant at PMI Westchester programs

While considering candidates for any of these positions, please keep in mind the many benefits of serving. This is an unparalleled opportunity to network, demonstrate service to the community, and be recognized as a project management leader.

Position Descriptions

Secretary

- The Secretary shall keep the records of all business meetings of the PMI Westchester Chapter and meetings of the Board
- Be responsible for managing essential chapter records and providing for efficient communication, electronic and otherwise, among officers

Treasurer

- The Treasurer shall oversee the management of funds for duly authorized purposes of the PMI Westchester Chapter and provide all financial reports required by PMI and governmental authorities
- Will provide an accurate account of income and expenditures to the Board on a quarterly basis and will keep adequate documentation of expense and income
- Will provide any and all documentation upon the request of the President, Vice Presidents, officers or Directors

Vice President of Membership

The VP of Membership shall be responsible for receiving and maintaining the membership database(s), and the mailing list(s) of non-members.

- Additional responsibilities include providing e-mail and mailing addresses upon Board request to conduct Chapter communications and creating/distributing new member welcome letters and annual membership renewal notices

Vice President of Outreach

The Outreach Vice President shall be responsible for managing the academic, business, and community outreach programs that support the Chapter's vision, mission, and goals.

Dates to remember

March 21 st through April 21 st	Nomination period
May 13 th through May 31 st	Voting period
June 11 th	Winners announced at the June Chapter/Business meeting
July 1 st	Winners assume their roles

Please contact anyone on the Nominating Committee for more information. Committee members are Peter Roggemann, Gil Harris, Maude Fribourg, and David Morgan (contact info is on the Officers and Contacts page at PMIWestchester.org).

Please email nominations to Gil Harris, at gilharris@hotmail.com no later than Sunday, April 21st.

Resolving Cobb's Paradox



A Risk Doctor Briefing Note © 2013 Dr David Hillson PMP FAPM david@risk-doctor.com

When Martin Cobb was CIO for the Secretariat of the Treasury Board of Canada in 1995, he asked a question which has become known as Cobb's Paradox: "We know why projects fail; we know how to prevent their failure – so why

do they still fail?" Speaking at a recent UK conference, the UK Government's adviser on efficiency Sir Peter Gershon laid down a challenge to the project management profession: "Projects and programs should be delivered within cost, on time, delivering the anticipated benefits." Taking up the Gershon Challenge, the UK Association for Project Management (APM) has defined its 2020 Vision as "A world in which all projects succeed."

This sounds good, but is it really possible? And is it even desirable? Do we want to limit the scope and ambition of our projects to only those that we are certain can succeed? Or will this reduce innovation, creativity and appropriate risk-taking? A spectator at a recent Cirque de Soleil performance was heard to say: "I want to see them do things that they can only do half the time." Isn't this what every project sponsor or portfolio manager should be saying?!

There are several reasons why it might be impossible to resolve Cobb's Paradox or to meet the Gershon Challenge or to achieve APM's 2020 Vision.

- All projects are risky. Uncertainty is built into every project, since each one is unique and complex, based on assumptions and dependencies, delivering change through people. Although the degree of risk might vary, the zero-risk project does not exist. This means that the probability of success for any project is less than 100%, so there is always the possibility of failure.
- Most projects include unmanageable risk. Of course we aim to manage risk in our projects, but risk management can never be 100% effective, and each project will carry some residual risk. As a result, some unmanageable risks will occur on every project, challenging our ability to meet schedules, budgets or performance requirements. On some projects the effect of unmanaged risk will be so significant that these projects will fail
- Risk management is not always done well. Even though we have been managing risk on projects for centuries, there are still weaknesses in how we do it on many projects. Ineffective risk management leaves our projects exposed to unacceptable levels of risk and causes failure.

- Project charters often omit risk thresholds. When project sponsors commission projects, they should define risk thresholds against each objective in the project charter or business case. This tells the project team how much risk is acceptable in their project, and provides the target for risk management. But if project sponsors do not understand their risk appetite they will not set risk thresholds, leaving the project manager unable to manage risk effectively.

- Projects should exist in a risk-balanced portfolio. The concept of risk efficiency should be built into the way a portfolio of projects is built, with a balance between risk and reward. This will normally include some high-risk/high-reward projects, and it would not be surprising if some of these fail to deliver the expected value.



- Innovation is built on failure. For research and development projects or those with high innovation content, failure is an expected and natural part of the process. Edison failed many times before he invented a working light-bulb, and creative organizations expect to do the same.
- Failure to learn. We don't examine past failures to learn lessons for future projects. Too often we repeat our mistakes and fail again for the same reasons. Cobb was wrong – we don't always know why our project has failed, so we can't learn how to prevent the same type of failure happening in future, so we fail again.

How should project-based organizations respond to the challenges laid down by Cobb, Gershon and APM? Should we accept unrealistic targets and be branded as failures if some of our projects do not succeed? Those of us in the project management community should help our stakeholders to understand that no project is without risk, and project failure will occasionally happen. We also need to make sure that our risk processes are fully effective, so that we minimize the chances of failure, but even with the best risk management, we cannot guarantee 100% success for every project.

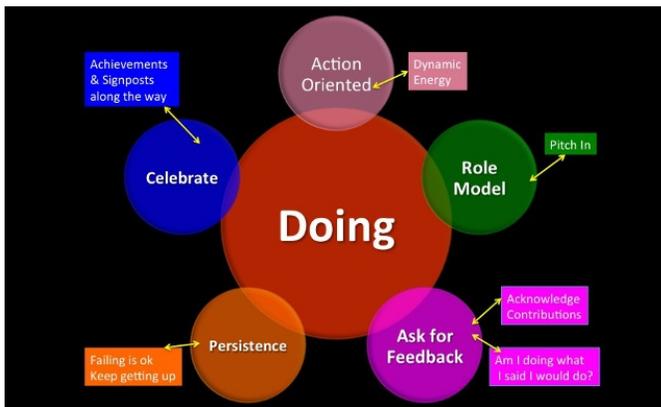
Despite our best efforts, it seems that Cobb's Paradox cannot be resolved, the Gershon Challenge is unrealistic, and the APM 2020 Vision may be unachievable. To provide feedback on this Briefing Note, or for more details on how to develop effective risk management, [contact the Risk Doctor \(info@risk-doctor.com\)](mailto:info@risk-doctor.com), or [visit the Risk Doctor website \(www.risk-doctor.com\)](http://www.risk-doctor.com).

The Conscious Lifestyle: A Leader Must Know What To Do



Deepak Chopra, MD is the author of more than 70 books with twenty-one New York Times bestsellers. FINS - Wall Street Journal, stated that "[The Soul of Leadership](#)", as one of five best business books to read for your career.

A leader must be action-oriented, turning his decisions into plans. Because of their inner drive and ambition, most would-be leaders have no problem with this part of a leader's role. But the sequence of steps that leads up to the actual doing must be fully mastered; otherwise, action becomes erratic and unreliable. All important actions follow the same template.



The Anatomy of Action

1. A challenge presents itself.
2. The situation is assessed.
3. Consultation is called in.
4. A decision is made
5. Action is taken - there is something to do.
6. A result is achieved.
7. Responsibility for the result is accepted.

What makes action far more difficult in the real world than any model can indicate is that all seven steps are generally present at the same time, because challenges don't arrive in a neat linear sequence like boxcars on a railroad track. Every day is filled with things to assess, decisions to make, advice from consultants, and so on. Old decisions come back to haunt you, and new challenges always come with the burden of old results.

Photo courtesy of Graphic India

It is this constant overlapping and merging that makes leadership so human, because you can't rely on a simple formula for action. Anyone who reads the biographies of great generals or captains of industry quickly realizes that the "fog of war" could be called "the fog of leadership" just as well. It takes consciousness to negotiate your way through murky situations. In most situations of great importance, this comes down to group consciousness - a leader with a good team behind him has a better chance of arriving at the right action in time to make a difference.

But nothing replaces individual awareness, so you will benefit yourself if you look closely at the seven steps of action, with an eye to maximizing each one. At business school, where the standard procedure is case studies, the advantage of hindsight, which exposes the fatal flaws or great astuteness of action plans, is offset in the real world by the fog that surrounds every situation, no matter how clear-cut it may seem.

What can cut through this fog? See every situations as feedback that centers on you, then on the challenge, and finally on the group. Ask these critical questions:

- Is the feedback mostly positive?
- Am I being realistic?
- What are the hidden factors that need to be exposed?
- What am I reluctant to see?
- What do I feel anxious about?
- Where is resistance coming from?
- Am I centered?
- How well have I calculated risk and reward?
- What will my decision look like a year from now?

If you know the answers to these questions, first as applied to yourself, then to the challenge at hand, and finally to your team or group, the action you eventually take will avoid the worst aspects of bad decisions, which are impulsiveness, hidden traps, a reluctance to face reality, and ego attachment. Those bad qualities exist in famous catastrophes from Napoleon's invasion of Russia to the fall of Lehman Brothers. In every case the failure was preventable only at the top level of leadership. It wasn't external chaos but internal confusion that led to disaster.

Yet even minor decisions come down to the same thing, an ability to cut through the fog of the situation by cutting through the fog in your own awareness.

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Don't skip the feedback. Of all of the performance tools in our leadership toolkit, feedback is perhaps the most powerful. It is also the most abused, misused and ignored. Delivering feedback on performance requires the leader to have the courage to tackle a difficult topic with a group and/or with individuals, and we tend to avoid this perceived form of confrontation. That's a huge mistake. Keep the feedback business focused and behavioral. Tackle it without indicting the team. Tie it to the business...ensure that it is behavioral and dispense it early and often. And of course, don't forget ample helpings of any well-earned positive feedback.

The Bottom-Line for Now:

There are few things in life or business more challenging than attempting to promote group performance. And there's no post, article or even book that contains all of the right answers. There are however, some critical habits that you as a lifetime student of human and group behavior can promote as a means of quieting the dysfunction and harnessing the talent in front of you. Great teams don't occur by accident or luck. They are the outcome of deliberate hard work.

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Quarter Page	\$50 / issue	\$42.50 / issue
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To advertise in The Critical Path, e-mail our Vice President of Communications at newsletter@pmiwestchester.org



Highlights from BRT
February 26, 2013

Emotional Intelligence (ET) – What is it and what value is it to a Project Manager (PM)

During the session it was defined as having a “sense” of the personalities of the team members and utilizing this insight to improve on management of the team. Having ET helps to foster relationships and is a critical skill for a successful PM. By utilizing team members strengths, it can improve project implementation. ET could be used to foster a relationship with a supervisor, especially of a different personality, as well as with a project team or peers.

Next BRT, March 26, 2013
“Grab Bag of Topics”

New PMI Westchester Chapter Members!!!

PMI Westchester would like to welcome the following new chapter members

NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS

Michael Bruen	Brian Campbell
Dimitrios Catechis	Linda Chen
Ryan DeVita	Christopher Gaine
Penelope Hartz	Balakrishna Inabathini
Kapil Mirchandani	Doug Ondreyko
Shivana Patel	Steve Sherman
Guiseppa Zeppieri	

Chapter Meeting – April 9, 2013, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Topic: Project Origination: How Project Managers can Prevent the Next Arch Deluxe

Popular thinking tends to believe that the most critical phase in determining the success of a project is Project Planning. This session will challenge this belief and provide real life examples of costly product failures which will demonstrate how Project Managers can make their most critical contributions even before the project begins. The best managed project in the world will not provide value to an organization that has selected the wrong project to undertake. This session explains how we can improve the success of our projects during Project Origination by understanding: Recent product failures, The Egg Theory and How Wal-Mart drives prices lower.

Featured Speaker - Jon Haverly, PMP, MBA

Jon Haverly is an accomplished speaker, mentor, trainer, consultant and blogger in the area of project management. He has more than 15 years of hands-on experience in project management, portfolio management, governance, and PMO's. He specializes in demonstrating how to apply findings from behavioral science and economics research to improve organizational and project results. Jon serves as Senior Project Manager at Garnet River, a Saratoga Springs based firm providing IT, PM and business process consulting services. Jon is a well-respected speaker at PMI Chapter Meetings, PMP Exam Preps, Government Technology Conferences and NYS PM Community of Practice Forums.

Location

The Royal Palace Restaurant

77 Knollwood Road, White Plains / Greenburgh, NY 10607
 (at the south end of the Greenburgh Shopping Plaza)
 Phone: 914.289.1988

Agenda

- 6:00 | Registration, Networking & Dinner
- 6:45 | Announcements, Introduction of Program
- 7:00 | Guest Speaker or Internal Program (1 PDU)
- 8:00 | Participants network
- 8:15 | SIG programs; PMO, Quality (1 PDU)

Vendor Corner

Thomas Deirlein, Academy Leadership
 Phone: (917) 287-5961
 E-mail: tdeirlein@academyleadership.com

Fees

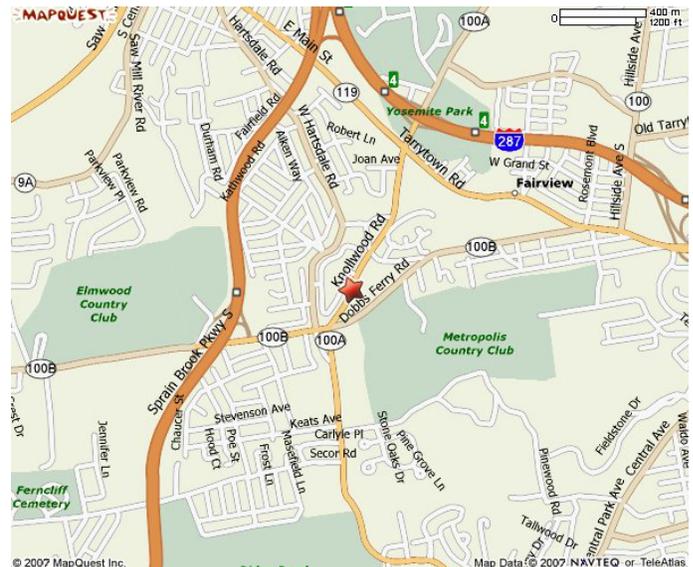
Chapter members – \$20
 Non-members – \$25
 We accept cash or checks. Sorry, no credit card

Directions:

From I-287

- Take I-287 to exit 4.
- At the end of the exit ramp turn SOUTH and go 6/10 of a mile to the traffic light at Stadium Road (sign may not be visible).
- Turn LEFT onto Stadium, go 50 yards, then RIGHT into the unused end of the plaza parking lot.
- Go to the far right hand corner of the lot where it connects to the part with the stores. Pass the stores and the movie theater on your left until you come to the Royal Palace.

Map to Royal Palace Restaurant



Upcoming PMI Westchester and Other Educational Events

April 2013 Breakfast Roundtable Meeting

Topic: Challenges of Building a Project Management Plan
Facilitator: Joanne Guerriero and Doreen DePass, BRT Program Manager

Date: Thursday, March 23rd – 7:30 to 8:45 AM

Location: 108 Corporate Park Drive, White Plains, ground level cafeteria - Breakfast available for Purchase

May 2013 Chapter Meeting

Topic: Agile in Practice - The Real World

Speaker: Stanley Ioffe, PMP, PMI-ACP, CSM

Date: May 14, 2013

Location: The Royal Palace, Greenburgh, NY



Job Club Meeting

Topic: Your Value Proposition In Today's Job Market -- Searching for your next career move in this economic climate presents numerous

challenges. Chief among them is how to present yourself in a way that is so targeted that your audience immediately understands what you do and how you can solve the needs of an employer.

Speaker: Linda Van Valkenburgh, MS, CCMC, CJSS, CSMCS - certified executive career coach and owner of My Executive Career Coach, LLC at Fordham Westchester (West Harrison, NY)

Date: April 19, 2013 – 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM

Location: Fordham Westchester (West Harrison, NY)
400 Westchester Ave., Room 142
West Harrison, NY 10604

Invitation To the SPL Programs in NYC/JC – Mastering Project Leadership and Politics

As the next step of skill-building in project management, the SPL program is transforming project practitioners into business leaders who are focusing their projects on achieving business results, while learning to improve time and budget performance, and at the same time having fun. This, research based, industry-proven, and PMI award-winning program was developed and tested during 20 years of research and consulting, dozens of studies, and five Doctorate dissertations.

Instructor: Dr. Aaron Shenhar, PMP, PMI Fellow, Professor of Technology and Project Management is one of the world's leading experts in project management, innovation, and execution leadership. He was honored recently as PMI Fellow; was the first recipient of the PMI Research Achievement Award; and is a holder of five academic degrees in engineering and management. After a career in the defense industry, he served as a Professor in several universities, building academic programs in project management at Stevens, Tel-Aviv, and Rutgers Universities. He is one of the most published authors in project management and his work has influenced project research and education throughout the world. He served as a consultant to major corporations such as 3M, Honeywell, Intel, NASA, Dow Jones & Co., U.S. Army, and Tata. His book "Reinventing Project Management" published by Harvard Business School Press was among the top five business books of the year and is the only Harvard-published book in project management.

Dates & Time: April 29 – 30, 2013 OR May 2 – 4, 2013 – 8:00AM to 5:30PM

Location: New York City / JC

Fees: 3 Days Program: \$1,800, 2 Days Program: \$1,200.
Group Discount: Teams of 3 or More, 1/3 Off

Registration and More Information:

<http://splwin.com/invite/nyc-apr-may.html>

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:

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