



# **What You Didn't Learn In Class: The Three Laws Of Project Management And The New Project Manager's Top Ten List**

**Alan M. Gopin, PMP**

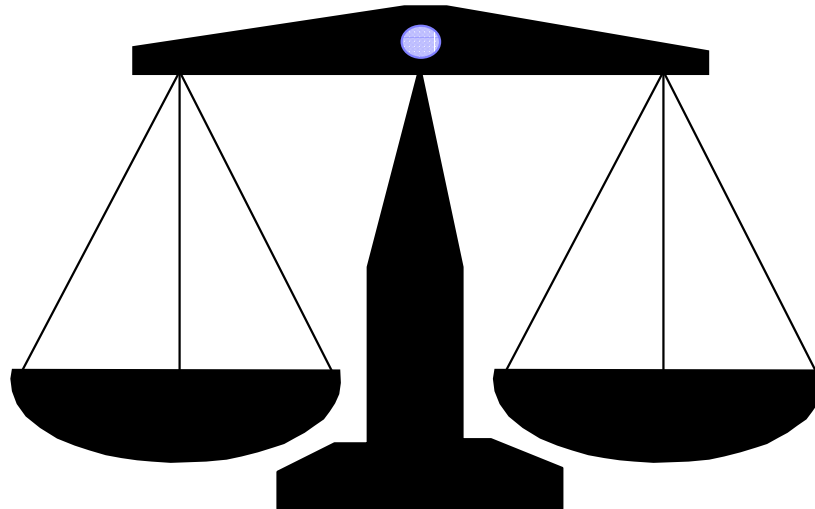
**[agopin@optonline.net](mailto:agopin@optonline.net)**

**732-308-1788**

# The Three Laws Of Project Management



- 1 Everybody lies to the project manager.**
- 2 No schedule survives contact with management.**
- 3 Stuff (a polite euphemism) happens.**



# Everybody Lies To The Project Manager

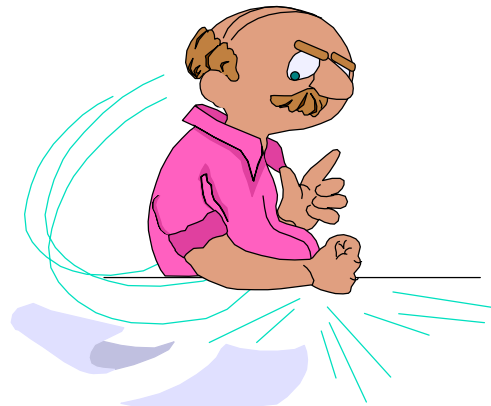


- **People don't want to be the bearer of bad news.**
- **Almost means not.**
- **Tasks are 90% done for 90% of the time it actually takes to accomplish them.**
- **Always say "Show me."**



# No Schedule Survives Contact With Management

- **Somebody always wants it sooner.**
- **Be prepared to defend the schedule.**
  - Estimates based on past experience and/or industry standards.
  - When they make you pull up the schedule, make sure they sign off on the risks.
  - Contingency buffers in the schedule are not optional.



# Stuff (A Polite Euphemism) Happens



- No battle plan survives contact with the enemy and no project schedule survives contact with reality.
- Do risk analysis.
- Have contingency plans.

		<u>Impact</u>		
<u>Probability</u>		H i g h	M e d	L o w
	H i g h	M i t i g a t e	M i t i g a t e	
	M e d	M i t i g a t e		
	L o w			

# **The New Project Manager's Top 10 List**



- **Ten things you need to know to be a better project manager.**
- **Not the only ten.**
- **Your mileage may vary.**

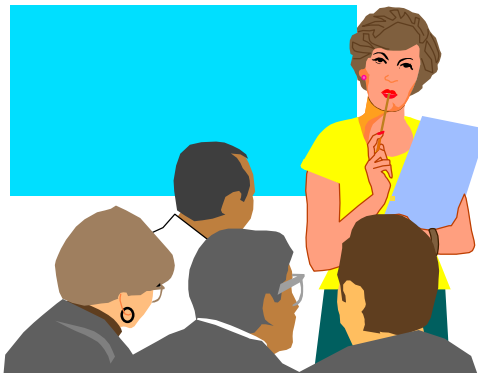
# 10: Those who ignore history are condemned to repeat it.

- The lessons learned process is critical, and we often don't do it well.
- Estimates for your current project should be reality checked against estimates and actuals from previous projects.
- Lessons learned from previous projects should be reviewed at the start of new projects to see what is applicable.



## **9: People do what they are measured on and try to emulate their bosses**

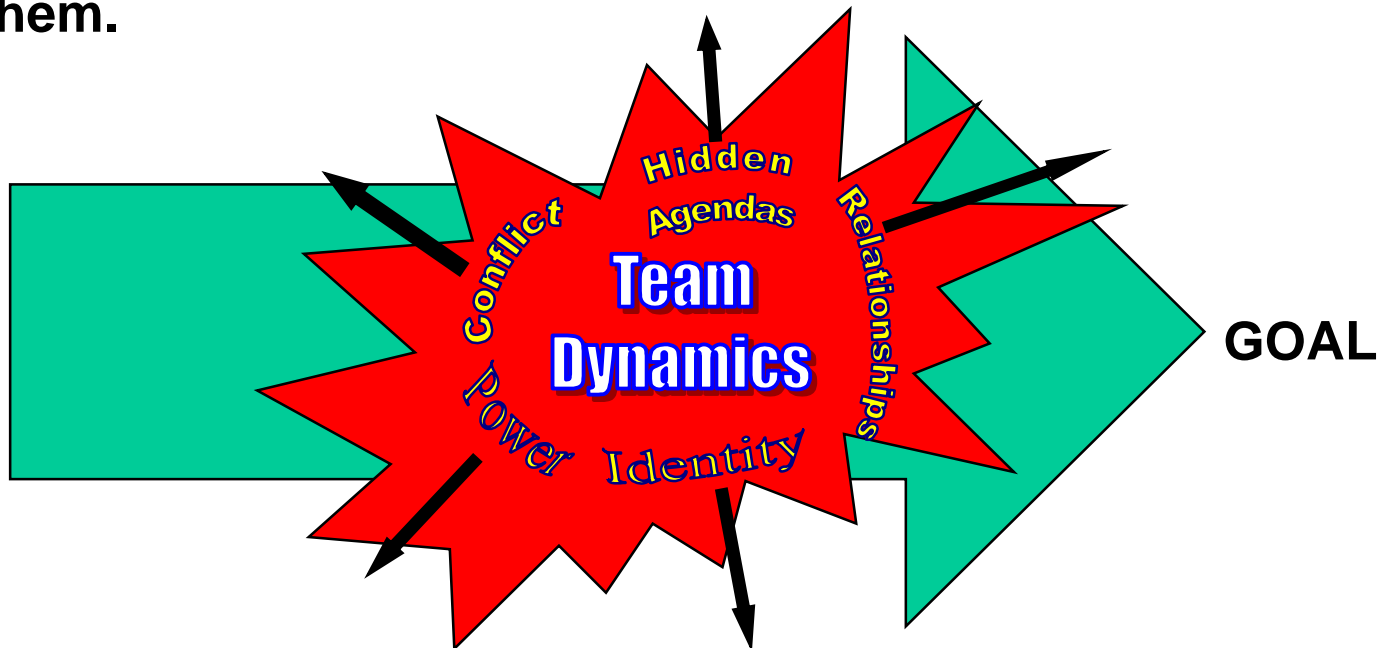
- **To be successful in project management we need to invoke behavioral changes from middle management.**
- **Most projects at Lucent are driven by middle managers. If they support project management, everyone else will, too.**
- **You have to convince these managers that they will get something out of project management.**





## 8: If the team doesn't come together, the project won't, either

- There is no “fun” in a dysfunctional team.
- Interpersonal problems, left unchecked, will kill the project.
- If you have access to team effectiveness consultants, use them.



# 7: Have a project charter

## The Project Charter

- Description (What are we doing?)
- Purpose (Why are we doing it?)
- Project Team Members (Who is doing it?)
- Stakeholders (Who cares about it?)
- Deliverables (How do we know we are done?)
- Success Criteria (How do we know it was good?)
- Assumptions and Constraints  
(What are the boundary conditions?)
- Team Working Agreements  
(What do we expect of each other?)

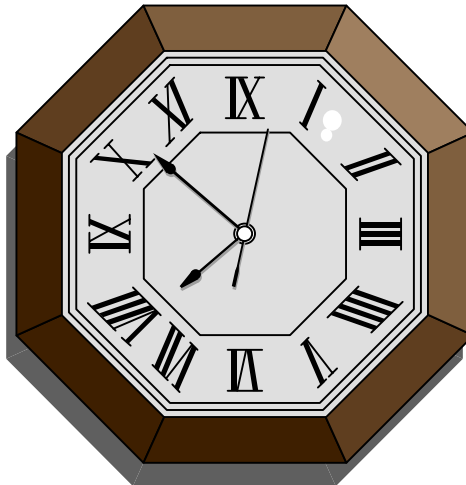
## **6: A project is like a football game. They both start with a kickoff.**

- The project kickoff sets the tone for the project.
- Three goals:
  - Devise the plan
  - Form the team
  - Gain alignment
- Key deliverable is the project charter.



## 5: The earlier the project manager gets involved, the better.

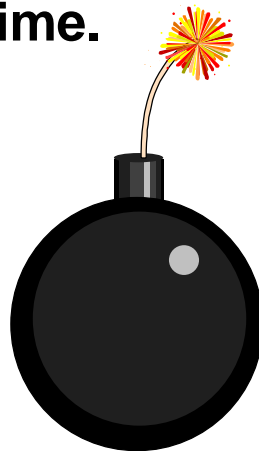
- The later the project manager comes on board, the harder it is to get the project back on track.
- Work for alignment early.
  - Among the team
  - Between the team and sponsor
    - Scope
    - Schedule



## 4: Identify and track issues



- **Issues that are not tracked fester and don't get resolved.**
- **Project meetings should start with a review of the open issues.**
- **Project meeting should end with a review of the new issues opened at the meeting.**
- **The project issues list should be accessible to the project team members all the time.**



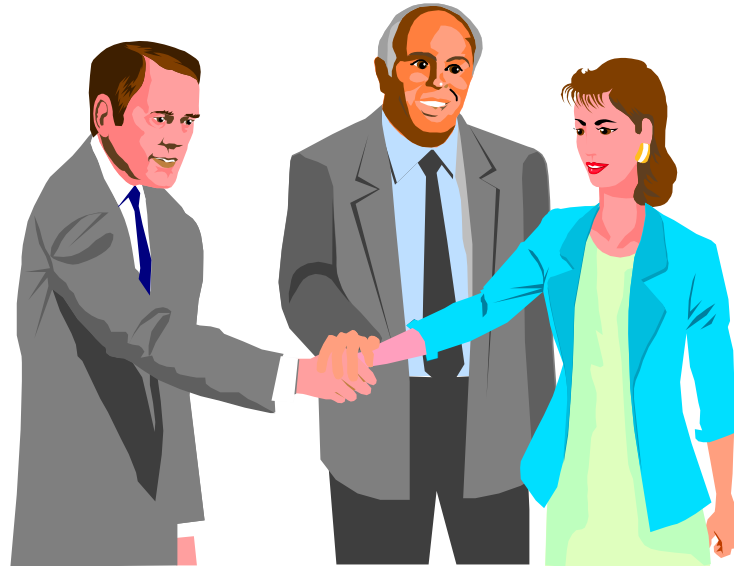
### 3: A task can be as late as its entire duration before you find out

- Tasks need to be broken down into short enough intervals that missing one completely won't kill the project.
- “Short enough” is project dependent:
  - Is the task on the critical path?
  - The rule of thumb is about 5% of the project schedule.
  - For a one year project, two weeks is probably OK.
  - For a three month project, one week is probably too long.



## 2: Tasks need objective completion criteria

- Everyone should have the same understanding of what “done” means.
- “Done” should not require interpretation.
- Completion criteria should be established and agreed to up front.



# 1: Successful completion of major milestones should be celebrated.

- Really productive people work hard and play harder:  
**Miracle Chemical Motto:**  
Work as hard as you have to. Play as hard as you can.
- The celebration of the first major milestone should be an incentive to hit the next one.

