



MAXIMIZING PROJECT SUCCESS: STOP MICROMANAGING

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Recently, a client said to me, “One of the characteristics of any really good project manager is an obsessive-compulsive personality, a person that checks up on every detail of a project.” I, on the other hand, think that one of the characteristics of a control freak is a person obsessed with micromanaging every detail and he or she makes a lousy project manager. The idea that someone needs to micromanage to be a good PM comes out of an old, now obsolete, paradigm of management.

The command and control paradigm was built on certain beliefs that were assumed to be true. There were that one person could exercise control over another. That in order to get anything accomplished, one had to have authority, and thus control, over others. That people cannot be trusted and do not want to work, and the only way to get them to work is to provide either rewards or punishment. And, the manager knows more and has better judgment than all the people he manages collectively. Based on these beliefs, my client is correct. Micromanagement is a good thing.

Unfortunately for my client, these beliefs have been proven to be false. First, you cannot control other people. Under extreme conditions you may be able to exercise control over someone else’s body, but you cannot control his heart, his mind, or his will to act. The fact is that the only person you can control is yourself and most of us do a pretty miserable job at controlling our own actions, thoughts, and emotions. Secondly, you can get work done without control or authority over others. You do that through aligning the work with larger goals, developing understanding of what needs to get done and why, and creating ownership and buy-in. That en-

gages the minds and hearts of the people involved, creating a will to act, because most people do want to do a good job and most people can be trusted to do so, if we set up the appropriate conditions for success. Finally, we know that teams, not individuals, make the best decisions.

Not only isn’t micromanagement the best way to get the work done, it has some very negative effects.

1. Micromanagement demoralizes people. It takes away their sense of personal capability. People who are constantly being checked up on feel they aren’t trusted and so abdicate any sense of personal responsibility for the work. They no longer take initiative. “Let the PM worry about it,” they decide.
2. People can begin to feel victimized by the micromanager, withdrawing from active engagement in the project. Some may become passive aggressive or even aggressive when feeling victimized.

So, if we can’t control other people, what do we do? We inspire them to want to contribute. But is that enough? No. Some of the other things we need to do include:

1. Create the right granularity of work breakdown. This is usually at the deliverable, not the task level. We then make the person accountable for the deliverable to create a plan to produce it and to manage that part of the process on their own – with feedback loops built in so we know if their process is in control.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY ED MILLER, PMP

As my second two-year term as President nears its end, I want to thank the Chapter Officers, Board of Directors and all of you who have volunteered for chapter duties. Your initiative and dedication continues to make our New Jersey Chapter one of the strongest components in PMI. I also want to thank all our members for continuing to support our programs.

Being part of the leadership of a large chapter like ours is a major challenge. Because we are a not-for-profit professional organization focused on

member benefits, we need to be keenly budget-conscious. And because we are an all-volunteer organization, we all have other jobs with their own schedules and deliverables. As a result, we often can't get things done as quickly as we would like and we can't customize our services to the extent that some members would prefer. On the other hand, being a chapter leader is a great opportunity to learn how to effectively manage all-volunteer, limited resource projects for a sophisticated clientele. And the best part is doing it with a team of commit-

ted and highly-skilled professionals.

I urge all of you to experience the rewards of meeting the challenges of our chapter. The easiest way to start is by joining one of the many project teams that run most of our activities. Please get involved!

It has been a great honor to serve as President of this outstanding professional organization. Best wishes to the new officers who will take over in September.

PMI NJ SOCIAL EVENTS IDEAS AND SPEAKERS SUGGESTIONS NEEDED

The chapter has been looking into social events that would be of interest to the members. One idea was to possibly have a picnic along with swimming and other activities. Based upon the feedback obtained from the survey from the June 2004 monthly meeting, there was not sufficient interest in a picnic. At the same time, we are looking into other alternatives. The Board welcomes any suggestions.

As the chapter is in the process of selecting speakers for the monthly meetings, it could use the creative input from the members on excellent speakers whose focus is in project management. To award you for your effort, everyone who submits a suggestion will have the chance of winning one of up to ten free registrations for a monthly meeting.

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PMI NJ CHAPTER 2004 PROJECT OF THE YEAR

The PMI NJ Chapter 2004 Project of the Year Award goes to "Virtual Corporation" for the "Kaiser Permanente Business Continuity Program Implementation".

On June 15th, the NJ Chapter held a dinner meeting to honor and award the NJ Chapter Project Of The Year recipient. The purpose of the POY award is to recognize the accomplishments of the recipient and project team for their superior performance and exemplary Project Management.

Scott Ream, President, Virtual Corporation and Skip Skivington, MBA, CBCP, National Director, Kaiser Permanente were the key project leaders and presenters at this year's dinner meeting.

Virtual Corporation is a consulting firm based in Flanders NJ who specialize in Business Continuity Planning. Virtual Corporation leveraged its proven business continuity methodologies and project management expertise to meet and exceed Kaiser Permanente's business continuity and disaster recovery objectives.

Kaiser Permanente is the largest health maintenance organization (HMO) in the United States. They have over 137,000 employees, 17,000 physicians and 30 medical centers.

Virtual Corporation teamed with Kaiser to implement over 6,000 departmental recovery plans within an 18 month period. There were 50 individual projects implemented in all. It turned out to be the largest BC program launch ever undertaken. The project's success was due in large part to the extraordinary teaming effort and constant communication between the two corporations.

In all there were five key project leaders and nine other project leaders awarded from both Virtual and Kaiser.

Project Leaders (Key Contributors):

- Scott W. Ream - President, Virtual Corporation
- Skip I. Skivington - Director, Healthcare Continuity Management, Kaiser Permanente
- Larry Fischer - Project Executive, Virtual Corporation
- Aaron Diskin - Senior Consultant, Virtual

Corporation

- Bob Farkas - Senior Consultant, Virtual Corporation

Team Members:

- Cheryl LaTouche - Manager, BCM, Kaiser Permanente
- Patti Collins - HCM Coordinator, Kaiser Permanente
- J. Bostingl - HCM Coordinator, Kaiser Permanente
- Teresa Williams - HCM Coordinator, Kaiser Permanente
- Jacques Browne - HCM Coordinator, Kaiser Permanente
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ESTIMATING THE PROJECT—AN EXERCISE IN REALITY

BY GARY A. HIRSH, PMP

Often there are times, we as project managers are asked to develop a solution and then provide a high-level project plan to support that solution. In our excitement to win the project, we often develop a project plan that addresses the client's desire for an aggressive schedule without really believing in the timeline. We do what has to be done to win the project, and worry about the finer details later. The problem with this scenario is that a high-level project plan is normally presented with a budgetary figure that is, at best, a "SWAG" or to keep this article G rated, a "Scientific Wild Anatomical Guess". This is why many projects, in the strictest sense, fail.

The most common point of failure of a project is during the pre-initiation phase. The pre-initiation phase, is that time before the first phase of a project where ideas are being batted around informally. That pivotal time when a client or superior asks you, "How long do you think it would take to implement, and how much will it cost?" As an expert, this is where the urge to blurt out an estimate is strong, and where the strength to resist it is crucial.

The cost of giving in to the urge to blurt may be reflected in the budget and/or timeline of the project not to mention the impact on your credibility. When you do return with time and cost estimates that are based on reality, you must explain why your estimate is now different. Remember that a "SWAG" estimate is rarely an accurate estimate. How many times have you had repairs done on your car based on an estimate, only to receive a bill that is quite a bit higher than that estimate? Unless *you* are prepared to guarantee *your* estimate, avoid giving it on the spot.

When you explain that providing accurate figures will require research, you may often hear, "Just give me a ballpark estimate." Try to remember that even a

"ballpark estimate" requires that certain questions be answered. Quite literally, if you were building a ballpark, you would need to know how many seats are needed, where it will be built, what is the required timeframe for completion, and much more legal and logistical information. In short, you would need to define the scope. This information then needs to be prioritized. Questions such as, "How important is it to have....", or "If that could not be accomplished, what impact would it have?", can be very helpful towards clarifying the scope of the project. By engaging the client in a question and answer session immediately, you make them part of the process, and it becomes clearer to them that the need for investigation is crucial for a "ballpark estimate".

The rules and lessons that I use to avoid the uncomfortable position of having to provide some sort of reasonable figure in an unreasonable timeframe are:

- I will not exercise poor project management practices to pacify an impatient client.
- A client that truly needs my services will negotiate a reasonable schedule for delivery of an estimate to insure that a more accurate budget and timeline will be defined.
- I will approach each and every phase of every project as if my career is at stake because in the final analysis, it truly is.

When I remember these simple rules, my integrity is protected. I can respond to the client confidently and correctly without putting myself in an unmanageable position. The risk is that I may not have an opportunity to bid on the project. The key to providing an appropriate response without providing an immediate answer is to avoid the use of negative language. There are subtle ways of saying *no* without using the word "No". Here are some examples of possible responses to requests for ballpark estimates:

I need to know more about your needs before I can accurately determine the best approach for you. When can we spend some time talking about your requirements so that I can give you an accurate answer?

This approach states your position and lets the client know that you need more information to give him what he wants. You are not refusing to provide an estimate, merely expressing interest in the client's ideas and requirements so that you can help them achieve their objectives. Asking the client when they can spend time with you engages them in the process.

Thank you for asking me for my input. The complexity of that type of effort requires some research. I can have a response back to you by (date and time).

This approach tells the client that what they are asking for is not the type of thing that can be easily estimated. By stating that you will research the requirements and provide a response by a specific date, you are setting the client's expectations.

In summary, even with the most sophisticated tools and techniques for project timeline and budgetary estimations, it is a challenge to accurately define the parameters of a project. As professionals, we must constantly manage the expectations of clients, managers and coworkers to insure that we deliver a quality product. In the corporate environment, there are many people willing to say whatever the client wants to hear to gain their business, but the real objective is to gain their trust by operating with integrity. Clients will hire people they trust. For us as project managers, integrity is the most important attribute we can bring to the table.

MAXIMIZING PROJECT SUCCESS (CON'T)

(Continued from page 1)

2. Ensure that resources are provided to get the work done.
3. Ensure that team members aren't overcommitted and therefore being set up to fail.
4. Create ownership in the project by using collaborative processes for managing the project, making decisions, solving problems, etc.
5. Make sure the team defines clear accountability for the outcomes re-

quired from the project.

6. Create visible process controls so that everyone on the team knows if the project management and technical processes are in control or not.
7. When problem arise, engage the team in coming up with solutions. This keeps the ownership of the project with the team, not on the shoulders of the PM.

In conclusion, I must disagree with my now ex-client that micromanagement is the key to success. In fact, I would submit that micromanaging is a symptom

that the project is out of control. Better to have a project controlled by a whole team of people than by one, lone individual trying to hold up the world.

Paula Martin is the CEO of Martin Training Associates, a management training and consulting firm. Information on collaborative project management can be found on one of the new MTA web sites:

www.appliedprojectmanagement.com.

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