



News Letter

Making project management indispensable for business results®

President's Corner

www.pmi.org.uk
November 2010



Apologies for the slight delay in the publication of this newsletter, as per usual down to the late arrival of my contribution holding up proceedings. I have been holding off in the hope that I may have some very exciting news to share concerning Synergy 2011 - more of which later. First of all I would like to extend a very hearty congratulations and well earned thanks to all those involved in the 2010 International Project Management Day which was hosted by Microsoft on 4th November. For those that were able to make the event I am sure you will agree it was a magnificent success and builds on the tremendous achievements of previous years. I would like to extend my thanks and those on the Board to the entire organising committee, particularly this year's Project Manager, Penny Farrar. I would also like to thank the host Microsoft, our other sponsors and the speakers who all contributed ensuring a successful day. Once again I would like to highlight the fact the IPM Day 2010 was free to attend as compared to previous similar events of this kind. The fact we are uniquely placed to be able to offer events in this way is very important to the Chapter.

I would like to use this opportunity to provide a brief update on some of the exciting initiatives that we have planned for the coming months and in particular look ahead to 2011. As usual we will have a number of Board members leaving us at the end of December when their terms comes to an end and whilst we will be sorry to see them go, we will also have a number of new faces joining us and to that end I would like to extend a warm welcome to Neil Coutts who will be joining us as Director of Membership. I hope to convince a couple of the existing Board members that will be stepping down to remain with us given we have such exciting plans for 2011 and hopefully I will be able to say more on this in a later edition. On that note I am flattered to be asked by the Board to remain in post for a further 12 months in order to oversee some of our exciting plans. We have however set in train some organisational changes including the creation of a vice-president role to ensure we improve succession planning.

In previous articles I have mentioned we are keen to establish a PMI UK Corporate Council. Well I am delighted to be able to announce that we have recruited far more organisations that we had hoped possible for the initial meeting that will take place early in the New Year. The focus of this initial meeting will be to ensure a clear terms of reference for the Council and ensuring that it is well placed to influence the development of the Project Management Profession in the UK. I hope to invite a couple of guest speakers to the initial meeting to share on the key emerging themes within the UK Project/Programme Management space. The creation of the council forms a landmark in the progress of the Chapter towards developing closer relations with the UK and global organisations that have a significant impact on how we manage projects here in the United Kingdom.

Last but not least I would like to share the latest news concerning Synergy 2011. Synergy 2011 is the event we are planning for International Project Management 2011 which falls on Thursday 3rd November 2011 - mark your diary! Synergy 2011 will take celebrating the Project Management profession to a whole new level. We have secured an iconic Central London venue that can accommodate literally thousands of people and we want to fill it with Project Managers, yes you heard right, an iconic Central London venue filled with Project Managers. We want employers, professional bodies, academic institutions and of course practicing Project Managers to come together in recognition of the contribution we make as a Profession. I am delighted at the level of interest already shown in the event and would like to take this opportunity to share some of our plans with you in the hope that you too will begin to feel the same sense of excitement.

Synergy is not 'just another conference', in fact it's not a conference at all rather it's a landmark occasion aimed at celebrating the Project Management profession. This is important. Whilst being organised by the PMI United Kingdom Chapter we hope to benefit the professional at large. We truly hope all elements of the profession will wish to participate be it Professional Bodies, Corporations, Government, Education or Individuals. We have made it our business to ensure the event is as inclusive as possible.

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Presidents Corner— continued.....

Given the global dimension to PMI we expect to attract participants from all over the globe, including the PMI executive leadership team, global Board of Directors and in excess of 200 Chapters worldwide. For us to achieve this we plan to host the event at an instantly recognisable, iconic London venue. We plan to announce the venue in a press release shortly and there will be accompanied by a marketing campaign aimed at raising the Project Management professions profile so watch this space!

Traditionally Project Management conferences have been costly affairs running into hundreds, if not thousands of pounds. We aim to challenge this model and charge much less, but offer much more. For us this is not about profits, it's about putting something back into the profession of which we are all a part. An iconic venue, world class speakers and an unparalleled opportunity to celebrate the profession are all important ingredients. Through a combination of professional and personal networks I am confident we will be able to offer an unparalleled bill of speakers and performances from the UK and overseas, acts that inspire, speakers that truly make us proud to be Project Managers, both of which only a global organisation can attract.

For the past five years the UK Chapter has been successfully running an International Project Management Day event to recognise the success of the Profession and to celebrate Project Management. Synergy will continue in this tradition and be held on International Project Management Day in 2011, Thursday 3rd November. On that same day other events will be being held all over the world. We hope these events will share in our celebration and through a variety of media even participate.

As you can see we have big plans and in order to ensure we are able to realise these ambitions we will need the support of our members. If you are interested in learning more about how you and your organisation can get involved then reach out to one of us, will be only too happy to speak with you in detail. I hope I have been able to give you at least some sense of the excitement we are feeling about our 2011 plans. If so why not consider getting involved?

Best regards.
Chris Field BCS CIP PMP



Dates for the Diary

We thought you might find these events of interest

London—Evening Event—1st December

The next event for London Members is in December at the Resource Centre, Holloway Road at 6pm.

Jonathan Buck from ESI International will be presenting:-

Managing Projects in the Private and Public Sector

For more information about this event and to book your place visit :

<http://www.pmi.org.uk/en/events/london.cfm/Lond1Dec>

Webinar—2nd December

The next PMI UK webinar will take place from 1-2pm on 2nd December

Greg Githens, Author and PMI SeminarsWorld® Leader will be presenting "Turning strategy into reality"

For more information and to book online visit:

<http://pmi.org.uk/en/events/PMI-UK-webinars.cfm/Web2Dec>



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Risk Doctor Receives PMI Fellow Award

Dr David Hillson has been an active contributor to the global Project Management Institute (PMI®) for over a decade, especially in developing the field of project risk management. PMI has recognised David's achievements by appointing him as a PMI Fellow, the only person to receive this award in 2010. The PMI Fellow Award is PMI's highest and most prestigious individual honour. It is presented to members who have made a sustained and significant contribution to PMI and to the project management profession, advancing the state-of-the-art and promoting professionalism. Dr Hillson received the award at a ceremony in Washington DC, USA, joining an elite group of about sixty project management pioneers and experts.

- Dr David Hillson is known globally as The Risk Doctor. He is an international risk management consultant, and he is recognised as a leading thinker and expert practitioner in risk management. David has made several innovative contributions to the field. In particular he is known for championing the inclusion of opportunity in the risk process, and he has also developed a practical application of emotional literacy to support appropriate risk-taking.
- David consults, writes and speaks widely on risk and has received several awards for his work. He publishes regularly in the field, with eight major books on risk management and over a hundred journal papers and articles. David's motto "Understand profoundly so you can explain simply" ensures that his work represents both sound thinking and practical application.
- David has over 25 years experience in risk consulting and he has worked in more than 40 countries, providing support to clients in every major industry sector. His input includes strategic direction to organisations facing major risk challenges, as well as tactical advice on achieving value and competitive advantage from effectively managing risk.
- David received the PMI Distinguished Contribution Award in 2002 for his work in developing risk management. He has made a significant contribution to the risk chapter of the *PMI Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK® Guide) in every edition since the year 2000, as well as co-authoring the *PMI Practice Standard for Project Risk Management*. He was also a founder member and director of the PMI RiskSIG, and was influential in developing the Global Congress model used by PMI since 2003.

- David has worked to build bridges between PMI and other professional associations, notably the UK Association for Project Management (APM) where he is an Honorary Fellow, and the Institute of Risk Management (IRM) of which he is also a Fellow. David was elected a Fellow of the UK Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (RSA) to contribute to its Risk Commission. He is also a Chartered Manager and Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).





Certification – worth the hassle?

By Joseph R. Czarnecki, PMP

As a certified PMP®, I often come across the un-convinced who question the value of project management certification and believe that it represents a triumph of book knowledge over experience and common sense. I often hear comments like “*doesn't just taking a test mean that you are good at reading and memorising knowledge?*” and “*how can taking a test really indicate a level of ability on something that is fundamentally an experience based skill?*” However, these un-convinced, or late adopters, haven't quite caught on to the growing ‘tour de force’ that is project management.

As those of us working in project management know, things have moved on quite considerably. The days when an individual was given a project to complete alongside their normal day to day roles are going. Project management is becoming an established profession on its own, like accountancy; it has professional bodies, certification bodies, frameworks and methodologies, protocols, research and best practice. There is a difference between ‘certified’ and ‘qualified’. In my book, to be considered a ‘qualified’ project manager, you have to do more than simply pass a test and manage projects, you have to manage the people, stakeholders, resources and a whole host of other project related soft skills.

As a PMP® myself, I would (predictably!) advocate the PMI®'s certifications. The most popular of the PMI®'s qualification is the Project Management Professional (PMP®). Other credentials offered by the PMI® include:

- The Certified Associate Project Manager (CAPM®) – for those that are just entering the field and may not have the experience required
- The PMI® Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP®) – for those that work in the project environment and are becoming the risk manager for their organisation
- The PMI® Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP®) – for those that are schedule planners and manage the complexities of the schedules and dependencies.
- The Program Manager Professional (PgMP®) – for those individuals that work with multiple related projects and programmes

Project Management Institute (founded in 1969), introduced *The Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* as a way to standardise project management practices across the globe and to raise standards. By creating these common processes, project managers had something to refer to when looking for best practices. To show commitment to meeting these standards and advancing project management all over the globe, the PMI® created a credentialing programme, the first of which was the Project Management Professional (PMP®). In 2004 and again in 2008, the *PMBOK® Guide* became an approved standard by the American National Standards Institute

(ANSI-PMI 99-001-2008), and the process for credentialing PMP® is also approved by ANSI. Both of these ANSI standards lend a huge level of credibility to the credentials.

It is only recently that understanding of the value of disciplined project management processes, has become widespread (obviously not everyone but a large enough number to make a real difference). The PMI®'s most recent stats reported that there are over 370,000 certified PMP®s worldwide.

At this point, I would like to say for the record to anyone who thinks that achieving the PMP® Credential is easy – it isn't. The value of the PMP® is rooted in how challenging it is to obtain, not everyone who tries makes it – even on the second attempt. Not only is there a gruelling exam (especially if you have been out of university for a while), but you also need to show evidence that you have (depending on education level) 3 to 5 years experience in which you have to have accumulated between 4500 and 7500 hours managing and leading a project and working in a project environment. In addition you also need 35 hours of formal project management education. You have to have some serious dedication to get PMP certified!

So, why would I recommend adding the PMP® credential to your name?

1. Put yourself ahead of the pack

Project management as a core skill is growing within organisations, leading some organisations to elevate it from a specialised niche skill to an identified core skill. This means that you need something to set you apart from the other project managers going for the same job/contract/promotion as you. I have seen it many times in the past, where organisations filter out people who don't have the PMP®...before they even get to interview stage. If you are a consultant or a freelancer, often the organisations where you will go to work, are made up of teams led by certified PMP®s and will expect at least this standard for new people coming in. I have also seen the trend in tenders released by government agencies or private organisations where they require that the leading project manager be certified!

2. Position yourself for a better salary (possibly)

Ok – so that's a bit of a crude way of putting it, the more sensitive among you might refer to it as ‘higher billing potential!’ But seriously, if the recent survey done by PMI® showing stats that are to be believed, certified PMP®s , earn 20% more than the non certified Project Managers, on average. I definitely believe that being PMP certified has definitely made me more marketable.

Certification – worth the hassle? Continued....

3. Broaden your experience with global networking

I have mentioned that there are around 370,000 certified PMP@s around the globe. This is a massive benefit in itself. This means that all PMP@s are able to talk to each other in a common language and work to an international standard. For employers, it is invaluable for them to be able to recruit people from anywhere on the globe, if they have the PMP@ credential, they will all speak the same vocabulary! PMI@ also offers a fantastic opportunity for networking through their conferences, chapters, and special interest groups.

4. Distinguish yourself through recognition and credibility

Taking the time and making the effort to get certified says something about you. As an employer, I am always impressed by someone had been proactive and fulfilled this commitment to their career, in addition to telling me that they have achieved a set level of knowledge and skill in project management, it gives them just a bit more credibility and says that they will stick it out when the going gets tough. On the flip side, The PMP@ certification is especially useful way for employers to show that they value their employees, as it requires that you invest in continuous professional development. This ensures that your knowledge stays fresh and that project managers remain current and relevant.

5. Be proud of your personal achievement

As mentioned above, getting a PMP@ certification isn't easy. Setting yourself the goal of becoming a PMP@, completing the application review and study necessary to sit the exam, and finally passing the exam is a tremendous achievement. Be proud of your achievement, and you will find yourself in good company, all of whom found the journey as challenging and

exciting as you did. The last step of your certification is agreeing to the PMI@ Code of Conduct, which gently reminds us that as PMP@s we are part of a growing community – one being watched closely from the sceptics.

So that's where I stand on PMP@ certification. However, that is not the whole story...I'm not an idealist, and I don't believe that everyone that becomes PMP@ certified, will instantly morph into a fantastic project manager. Like all credentials, just getting the certificate shows that you have at least the minimum acceptable level. To be that great project manager, you need a whole host of 'soft skills' too. You must have good communication skills, leadership skills and interpersonal skills as a start. And, of course, there really is no substitute for experience. It isn't just the certificate that makes you a great project manager, but what you do with it that counts.

Getting the credential represents a commitment to learning and gives you a solid foundation from which you can continue building your road-tested skills and experiences.

Joseph R. Czarnecki, PMP, Senior Consultant for Global Learning Solutions, ESI International, works with ESI's European and global clients to leverage ESI's expertise and resources to maximise client investments in improving the performance of project management and business analyst professionals and operations.



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Getting Project Management 'Out of the Box'

By Peter Taylor

Introduction

What is a project manager, or put it another way, what are you? What do you do between 9am and 5pm each working day (and that is on a very good working day)?

The web has a number of definitions of what a project manager is:

- A project manager is a professional in the field of project management.
- The person with authority to manage a project.
- The person responsible for the project.
- Individual or body with authority, accountability and responsibility for managing a project to achieve specific objectives.
- The individual in charge of the progress and performance of the project on behalf of the Project Owner.
- The individual accountable for all aspects of a project.

Ask someone that question and demand a fast answer in return then the chances are that they will reply as follows: "What is a project manager?" "Someone who manages projects"

So not a great deal of enlightenment there then; but to be fair it is hard isn't it? How do we describe to other people, people outside our closed world, exactly what we do and why what we do is so important? And how do we make it all sound exciting (unlike the above definitions), because it is exciting isn't it?

But it is important? How important?

'With one-fifth of the world's GDP being spent on projects this year clearly business isn't just about operations anymore. Competitiveness, innovation, talent these are the things you're worrying about every day'. That is about \$12 Trillion!

That is really important. How important?
The whole world is challenged that is for sure!

On one hand we faced the Global Recession, with all the impact that this had on people and business, and on the other hand we are a dynamic, resourceful and ever evolving world that demands change as part of its survival. And change demands projects and projects demand project managers.

On one hand we have a history littered with significant project failure, although there have been spectacular successes as well. The Standish Report 2009 clearly shows that history may well be repeated in many cases.

Now is the time that it is even more critical to succeed, and succeed with a higher level of certainty than seen before since those projects that will be commissioned in the future, as well as the ones that are allowed to continue in the current climate, will be expected to deliver higher business impact, be under closer scrutiny from senior management and be under far more pressure to succeed.

And guess what, who will be the one that is under the most pressure, the project manager!

So it seems we, the project managers of the world, are pretty important in the scheme of things. Mostly not "life or death" important but still important enough.

So why does it remain so difficult to explain to 'outsiders' what we do?

A good statement to remember here is perhaps this one "Project management is a verb; not a noun"

Getting 'Out of the Box'

Can you name three famous project managers?

If you were asked this question you may well lean towards a number of areas:

Science and Art: Leonardo da Vinci
Engineering: Isambard Kingdom Brunel
Manufacturing: Henry Ford
Military: Attila the Hun
Cultural: Nelson Mandela

On the other hand you might not.

Brunel stated "I am opposed to the laying down of rules or conditions to be observed in the construction of bridges lest the progress of improvement tomorrow might be embarrassed or shackled by recording or registering as law the prejudices or errors of today." So he was no fan of rigid discipline but rather allowing for innovation and development.

Da Vinci said "Art is never finished, only abandoned." So not exactly in line with our project closure theory.

Ford declared "I am looking for a lot of men who have an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done." Again a very open and flexible approach is desired. Attila the Hun probably came up with some great quotes but we don't have those recorded for posterity (probably stuff around attack and kill mostly).

No one, within our project world, has yet been universally recognized in this day and age. It is all about the project and not the project manager.

Getting Project Management 'Out of the Box'

Continued.....

Does everybody 'do' project management these days then?

Perhaps it is because project management is just a commodity? Maybe everybody 'does' project management now?

We know that Project management is fast becoming the preferred way for companies to get things done. In a global economy project management will make a company more competitive than the traditional methods of managing work.

So for all managers there is now the need to understand the dynamics of projects together with the skill and process of project management (verb) in order to make the most out their organization's investments.

The Question

Is Project Management therefore no longer a niche capability, the home of project management office members and external contractors; is it now a core skill that all executives and senior management need to understand?

I recently conducted a survey through a LinkedIn survey (poll) when that very question was asked, 'Is Project Management a core skill and no longer a niche capability?' to see what a wider community of business people thought.

347 people responded to the survey and I am grateful for their time and consideration, as well as the follow up comments that many people left for me to review. These respondents were a good mix across all business areas, job role, title, gender and age.

The Answer(s)

Survey Summary

In the overall results there was a fairly even split between 'A core skill' and 'Both a core skill and a niche capability' with a smaller number believing that it is 'A niche capability'. But I guess it would be fair to say that the survey contributors were divided in their views, and strongly divided in some cases based on the comments exchanged.

Gender played no part in these results with an almost identical view from both groups and job title seemed to influence the results only in a small way. Age played the most significant part.

Age Analysis

The majority of respondents were in the 25 to 54 age range and the younger the viewpoint the more likely it was that there was a belief that it was a 'core skill' or the non-belief that it was a 'niche capability'.

The most consistent argument that can be made is that project management methodology is a 'core skill' that all managers need to be aware of but, the actual project management

activity is still a 'niche capability' that requires additional training and experience in order to be successful.

Managing a small, simple project is no big deal and most people can do it. Managing a large, complex project with substantial risk, diverse stakeholders, a geographically distributed team, multiple constraints and high stakes is best reserved for real experts.

The successful business of the 21st century recognizes the value of 'niche' project managers working under a supportive executive that has a foundation of project 'core skills'.

So does that mean that project management should be understood by a wider audience than it is today?

When will I be famous? It's magic

A project manager asks his administrator what two plus two equals. The administrator states in absolute that two plus two equals four.

The project manager then asks his accountant what two plus two equals. The accountant states in relative terms that two plus two equals four plus or minus.

Finally the project manager asks his project controller what two plus two equals. The project controller turns off the lights, walks over and closes the blinds, and sits down by the project manager to say in a whisper, "What do you want it to equal?" Give a project to a good project manager (supported in all the right ways with sponsorship and resources etc) then "magic happens". So then why can't the skills of the project manager been appreciated by the general public? We should all be famous (if not rich) by now.

Others do it

There is a growing trend in the UK, originating from the US I believe, where children are encouraged to take their parents in to school and get the parents to talk about their jobs.

I have never been asked to go in to my children's school!

They have had a policeman in who no doubt talked about road safety and not talking to strangers, they have had a nurse in who talked about healthcare issues and how to look after yourself, and they have had a fireman in to explain about the dangers of fires and what to do if you are in such danger. These are all important and seemingly (to children) exciting jobs. But project management is neither apparently exciting nor does it have a uniform (something I note that the people who have gone in to school have in common).

Should we perhaps design a uniform for project managers? We know we are exciting already.

But consider this; we can easily state that 'doctors make people better', that 'policemen catch bad people', that 'builders make homes', that 'authors write books', that 'movie stars



Getting Project Management ‘Out of the Box’

Continued.....

make films’ and so on. But we can’t say ‘project managers manage projects’ because that doesn’t tell people anything. We all know what it means but my children don’t, and my friends don’t, and ‘Joe Public’ doesn’t know either.

So this is where we are. The current situation

This can be summarised as follows:

We are generally good at what we do
 We are generally successful in our endeavours
 We are getting better all the time
 We do deliver “exciting things”
 (We are mostly nice people I’m sure)

So how can we get “out of that box” and into the spot light so that the world in general can understand us and what we do?

Be proud and be happy

So all in all we have a lot to be both proud and happy about; so let’s be proud and happy about it!

Being a project manager is a great job, whether you intend on pursuing a project management career or whether you intend to move in to a business role within a project based business. Projects should never bore you, they are all different and each day will bring new challenges and interest. You will never stop learning those lessons.

Finally reach out with what you do

Consider doing some or all of the following in order to help yourself (and project management in general) out of the box:

- Tell people you are a project manager. Don’t be shy; be brave and come clean about your job, you are not doing anything that you shouldn’t be loud and proud of.
- Have that ‘elevator’ speech ready when people ask you what you do. But whatever you say don’t say “I’m a project manager, I manage projects”. I recently asked the question “How would you explain project management to an Alien from outer space” and one of my favourite answers came from Penny Pullman “Getting something new and exciting done with a group of people!”
- Speak at non-Project Management events. In my role as The Lazy Project Manager I have more and more begun to speak to groups of people outside project management and you know what? They like what they hear about projects and project management (and project managers).
- Network with a broad group of people, again outside project management.
- Start some LinkedIn discussions such as my “Alien” one;

you get some great interaction with people from all over the world.

- Twitter and Blog and Facebook and any and every social networking mechanism that works for you.
- Offer your services outside of your work, you will find that many volunteer organisations are crying out for your projects skills – even if they don’t know what they are.
- And finally why not scare your kids and go to that school or college day and talk about your exciting role of being a project manager.

You are a ‘PM Superstar’

I still want to shout to the world about project management and tell about all the great work that we do and I want you to join me in that ‘shouting’ – be loud and very proud of what you do. It is both essential and exciting.

Taking project management “out of the box” will spread the word outside our community about what a great bunch of people we are and how project management is a valuable to skill to pretty much everybody.

You are a PM Superstar (definition ‘someone who is dazzlingly skilled in any field’) so not only get “out of that box” but climb up and stand on it whilst you let everyone know just what you do and what you are.

You are a project manager.

“Tell me and I’ll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I’ll understand” Chinese Proverb

Crisis, what crisis? How to effectively manage your business contingency plans

By John Lugg, Manager, Moorhouse

As you ride in on the 6:34 train, something isn't quite right. There is restlessness in the carriage. The Blackberries and iPhones that usually spark work and conversation are silent. The networks are jammed. Something has gone badly wrong. A major national crisis. Your organisation's future now rests on your business contingency plans. How confident are you in yours?

Common assumptions about business contingency

The weather, the economy, terrorists, natural disasters - they all have the potential to threaten our livelihood at any time. Yet they remain the nightmare we fail to effectively prepare for.

For too long it has been treated by organisations as a low-priority overhead, and the results are plain to see: passengers walking to safety through the Channel Tunnel when snow caused trains to breakdown; the English tourist industry crippled by the uncontrolled spread of Foot and Mouth disease.

When we know incidents like this can and do occur, why do so many organisations continue to get business continuity management wrong? Common mistakes are:

Lack of effective planning

Some contingency plans just don't exist, whilst those that do are often ineffective, overly complex or incoherent. Many prepare for highly specific and anticipated crises, but fail to predict what actually happens. Worse still, many planned responses are well thought out but based on old information or business imperatives that no longer exist. The Foot and Mouth outbreak in the early noughties is a good example of bad practice: the contingency plan was focused entirely on the protection of the meat export trade, critical when the plan was originally drawn up, but at the time of the crisis worth only £592m, not nearly as significant to the UK economy as the at-risk £64bn generated by British tourism - that was left unprotected and unplanned for.

Lack of practice

Plans are essential, but will amount to nothing if they are not practiced on a regular basis. Examples of failover generators failing to start when mains power is lost, or running out of fuel shortly afterwards are too numerous to mention. Then there are the back-up data centres that should take control the moment something happens to the main data centre (such as a flash flood or a power failure), but can't take control because their servers have been gutted for spares to keep equipment running elsewhere.

Then of course there are the staff that don't know their roles and responsibilities because they are different to their day-to-day job. Without practice, no plan will work.

Lack of flexibility

You have a plan and it's a work of art – all the scenarios are planned for, resources have been ring-fenced and you have even practiced failovers from one London office to another. Then a terrorist incident occurs and the security forces use the M25 to seal off the whole of London. Your plan then fails because everything has been practiced except the use of people's initiative to respond to the unexpected – in this case, that nobody could get into either office.

It was the British Army who finally brought the Foot and Mouth crisis under control, not through deep knowledge of the original Ministry plans, but by taking a flexible response to the real situation they found in front of them – vets delayed by hygiene procedures and thousands of unburied carcasses.

You need to retain an element of flexibility in your plans, and stretch staff running them by exposing them to the unexpected on a regular basis.

How do you get business continuity management right?

Planning for a crisis requires a well thought out, methodical approach. Business continuity management (BCM) should be run as a programme with a deferred implementation phase, rather than as a back-office operational overhead that is underfunded and largely ignored.

Good BCM will not only protect your organisation from the negative impact of an incident, but may also allow it to exploit the situation, as less well prepared competitors struggle to keep going. Loyalty to those who are able to help in a crisis is likely to be far greater than to those who save you a few pounds in normal times.

There are three key steps to this approach:

Action 1 – Organise and prepare as a programme

The programme team should develop a BCM strategy that suits the organisation, taking into account such items as critical business activities and their maximum tolerable periods of disruption. The strategy should address resources such as people, premises, technology and information, and cover all three phases of BCM: incident response (typically the first few hours), business continuity (days, possibly weeks), and recovery of normal service (days to weeks, depending on the incident). Major stakeholders including customers, suppliers and the press should be identified and catered for.

Clear roles and responsibilities are of even greater importance in BCM as confusion can paralyze the whole organization very quickly. A person with appropriate authority must have overall responsibility for BCM and be accountable to top management. An incident management location and alternative must be chosen from where the response can be managed.



Crisis, what crisis? - continued....

All pre-incident preparations should then be made and clear plans for the deployment or 'response' phase developed. The plans should address a small but comprehensive set of generic incidents rather than a myriad of variations on a theme (e.g. develop plans for significant absence of staff rather than for swine flu specifically). Plans must be clear, simple and kept up to date.

Action 2 – Practice the expected and the unexpected

There's a saying in the military that no plan survives the first round of battle, yet the military are known for their detailed planning. What must be understood is that their plans get them to the 'start line' and prepare them for the battle ahead. They ensure sufficient ground troops are in the right location with adequate air and artillery cover, and uncommitted reserves are set aside to tackle incidents that cannot be foreseen.

Then they practice, and where possible, they use other friendly troops to play the enemy so that they can practice responding to the unexpected (something the real enemy is always rather good at), as well as the expected, and so they learn to be flexible. This is fundamentally why the British Army was so successful in bringing the Foot and Mouth incident under control: they practice responding to the unexpected, and using their initiative.

So it is with BCM. Plan, prepare and then practice both the expected and the unexpected. If the plans include running operations from a second site – practice doing just that, and then, without warning, evacuate the second site as a result of a fictitious, but realistic reason. Encourage those who rise to the challenge by coming up with innovative solutions; coach those who accept defeat.

Action 3 – Communicate

As with any programme, there should be a communications plan that addresses all the stakeholders, but don't forget - communications need to be reliable, robust and controlled in

a crisis. Mobile phones may well not work (as during London bombings in 2005), and e-mail is too slow to be of use. If the incident response centre can't communicate with the workforce in both directions, then control cannot be exercised, and feedback (on the unexpected), can't take place. Consider using radios or Skype phones, but both must be set up and training given before they are used or they will just add to the confusion.

Then there's the press who want a story. Either give them one or make sure there isn't one. If you leave it to chance then they will make up their own story, based on the little they actually know, putting you on the defensive trying to correct the story after your reputation has been lost. Look at the press pictures from the Foot and Mouth outbreak: Britain in flames did little to help the tourist industry.

Conclusion

The recent ash cloud disaster should be the last reminder you need to get your business continuity right. Natural and man-made disasters can and do happen to everyone. By running business continuity management as a programme with a delayed, but well rehearsed, implementation phase, you stand the best chance of not only protecting your organisation from the negative impact of a major incident, but also positioning it to take advantage of such a situation when less well prepared organisations struggle. If your product keeps working, or your phone lines stay open when disaster strikes, word will get around. Trouble and strife tends to focus the minds of those affected onto those who can help.

John is a qualified project and programme management consultant with over twenty years of business and leadership experience. He has both led and supported a variety of projects and programmes in areas ranging from IT software development and infrastructure deployment, to corporate acquisitions.

Handling Difficult Conversations

By Patrick Bird

As Project Managers we often find ourselves needing to handle difficult conversations in order to make progress on a project. These meetings will happen with direct reports on a project team but also with other stakeholders who we have no direct authority over but are critical to the project success. How often do we plan effectively for any of these meetings, not just data and information, but around how we are going to handle the meeting and the people attending it?

There are a number of ways we can improve the way we handle our difficult and challenging conversations to make them more effective, improving individual and team productivity and our business relationships.

Essentials for Handling Difficult Conversations:

- Preparation
- Self Awareness of our emotional state and our assumptions
- Knowing your Goal for the meeting
- Understanding the other parties goal for the meeting
- Clarity
- Rapport
- Engagement
- Empathy
- Listening
- Authenticity

Being prepared for the meeting is not just about the data and facts; it is also about understanding the other people in the meeting. Are we clear what their preferred method of communication is: face to face, telephone, email so we can establish a two way communication channel that is effective both pre and post meeting. Being aware of someone else's communication preference is important and we need to be able to flex our own style whilst ensuring we maintain our authenticity.

Be self aware of both your emotional state and any assump-

tions that you may be carrying about either the person you are meeting or the situation. Your state and your assumptions will seep out into the meeting unless you are aware of them and keep them in check. This seepage may happen either verbally or through your body language so self awareness prior to and during the meeting is critical to having a beneficial meeting. Having a joint agenda for both parties at the meeting is very important so you and they know the aims and goals of the meeting. How will you know that you have achieved your meeting goal, what are the criteria that you will measure? Rapport between individuals at a meeting is not built just by talking about the football or weather etc. It is built because you are interested in the other party, asking questions, probing and most critically listening so you can reply with pertinent facts and relevant questions, demonstrating your engagement.

Empathy is a big part of rapport and relationship building, putting you in the other party's shoes and acknowledging the issues they may have and how that may affect them will build your credibility and trust.

Project Organisations have systems, procedures and methodologies that will need to be followed in order for the project to make it through the next gate or milestone. Sometimes these processes overtake the need to be able to communicate effectively with people in the organisation which then can lead to the difficult conversation.

Being able to handle difficult conversations benefits the organisation as people are dealing with each other in much more collaborative ways. Increasing productivity and moving the culture towards becoming less confrontational and more collaborative. People can focus on the issues rather than defending their position or themselves.

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