

Great Project Managers:

Delivering value and results,
earning influence and respect

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What Great Project Management Looks Like

? Identify a great project manager from your past.

Characterize them – their skills, what they did...

- Managing the work of the project
- Leading the project – direction, goals
- Dealing with people

? Identify a project without a “great Project Manager”.

- What was missing?
- What were the impacts?

The Project Manager's Job – Typical Job Description Elements (PM Ads)

- Proficient in project planning, organizing, team motivation, and delegation.
- Budgeting and data analysis skills
- Excellent written, verbal, interpersonal communication skills.
- Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Excellent documentation skills.
- Team player and able to manage others through teamwork.
- Excellent time management skills.
- Ability to work with tight deadlines in a changing environment

The Project Manager's Job – Less Pervasive Job Description Elements (PM Ads)

- Understanding, experience with related business and development processes
- Goal-oriented, self-directed, needs little direction.
- Fast learner with ability to operate effectively in new environments
- Able to integrate information from multiple sources in order to anticipate issues, come up with solutions, and resolve the problems
- Able to influence individuals at all levels in different departments
- High degree of commitment, flexibility, self-motivation, self-confidence, assertiveness, and high tolerance of ambiguity.

The Signals We Get

- ***First job – Engineer:*** PM = keeper of the schedules and reporter to the feared Customer.
- ***Technical group leader:*** PM = integrator of the schedule puzzle and sync-meister of a very complex set of stuff going on all over the place.
- ***Start-up HW Engr Dir:*** PM = just part of the management job to get things out the door.
- ***Acquired – and given a professional PM:*** PM = someone who makes us fill out paper we don't think we need.
- ***Cross-division PM:*** PM = creative facilitator and solver of complex interdependencies through good working relationships with people.

The Signals We Get

- ***Contract PM:*** PM = split personality: someone execs wanted to trust, someone workers didn't naturally trust. PM = just overhead without value-add?
- ***As I got more practice:*** PM = flexible common-sense enabler working with lots of individuals to get things done in spite of often hairy problems.
- ***As project coach:*** PM = leader, and effective methodology-user, to help the team meet the business goals.
- ***Running a small company:*** PM = goal champion and communication framework provider, no micro-management required or desired

Executive Quote on Great PMs

From a VP of a Product Line:

- “You know, I don’t even know that much detail of exactly how our project managers do everything they do – what tools they use, how exactly they go about scheduling.

What I do know, and look for, is whether they are on top of things and can give me a bottom-line answer whenever I ask for it. By that I mean – “What is the bottom line state of the project? What are the major risks, and are they handled?” The quality of their answer drives my trust in their project management.

And within that, I personally look for thoroughness in areas that I know drive our profitability - have we tested something adequately before we put it out? Has the cross functional team truly considered costs? Our best PMs are those I’ve learned to trust in those areas.”

Career-Expanding “Great Project Manager” Skills and Attributes



Career-Expanding “Great Project Manager” Skills and Attributes

Performance, Expertise

The foundation for credibility, trust, relationships, opportunities

- Results on past efforts
- Known for doing a good and thorough job
- Increasing judgment, maturity

Business Understanding

Understand the business drivers

- What customers need - and priorities
- Business strategy, project drivers
- Able to make tough tradeoffs

Communication Skills and Savvy

Communicate right info at right time, with courage, at appropriate levels. *Source of trust.*

- To Executives- bottom line, hard truths
- To Functions - sensitive to their issues
- To Team - providing context and motivation

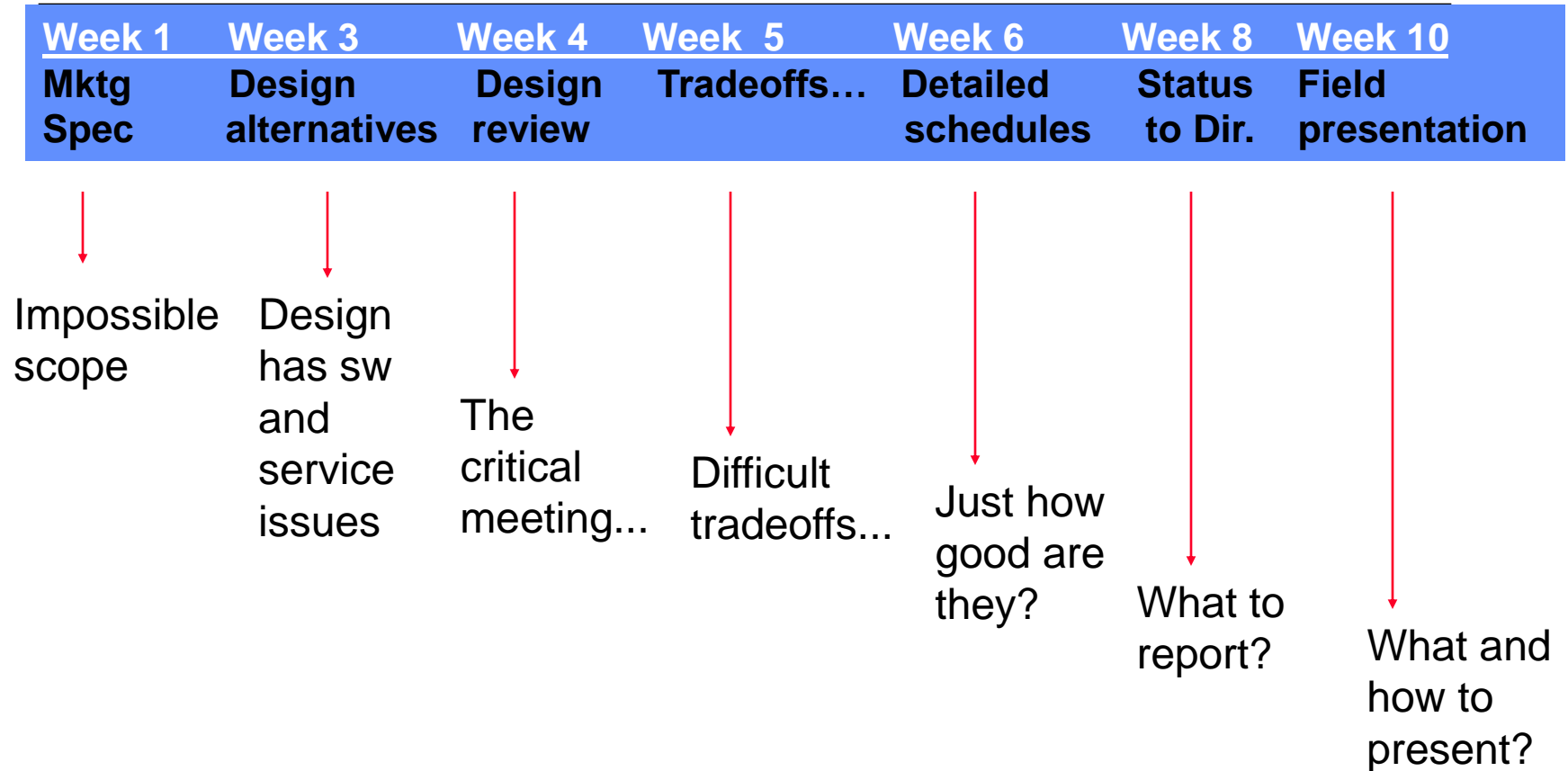
Executive Quotes on Great PMs - Communication

■ *From a Division Director:*

“I’m not an operational detailed guy. I set the vision for our programs and tend to assume it’s all happening unless I see or hear differently. I can’t work with people who bring me copious project detail and expect me to ‘get’ the bottom line.

I value the people who can speak to me quickly, bottom line, with impacts and recommendations. I can make decisions fast in that mode and I develop a trust for the info those people bring me. I cannot adjust to those who can only relay details. They will never be seen as executive material here – nor treated as a right-hand-person to any executive.

The Real World

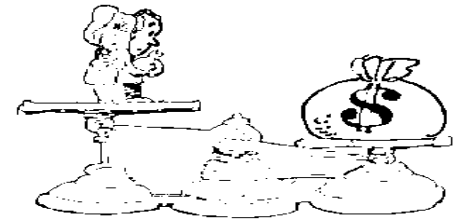


Executive Quotes on Great PMs – The Business

- *From a Director of Software Projects:* “When I consider what PMs I will ‘invest in’ to grow and promote within the company, I value the PM’s philosophy over their initial behavior. I need the PMs who understand the business, and understand the pressure I’m under to balance company financial goals with speed and quality constraints. I need them to be able to work with me to pro-con the best approach and handle the risks of whatever we choose. If they have ‘behavior’ issues – I mean the need to work on people skills, meeting management skills, whatever, I can deal with that as long as they’re also willing to be coached. But it’s much harder in my book to change someone’s basic philosophy toward what the PMs’ role is supposed to be –flexible, driving, business-aware, problem-solving – and *mature*.

The Goals of a Project

- Provide the **RIGHT** product or service to the customer
- **WHEN** it is needed
 - to fulfill customer need
 - to meet company financial goals
- At a **PROJECT COST** that we are ready to pay
- At a **PRODUCT PRICE** they are willing to pay
- At a **PRODUCT COST** that leaves the company with a viable **profit margin**
- Considering **OTHER IMPACTS** on the company
 - E.g. impacts on system architecture and future development



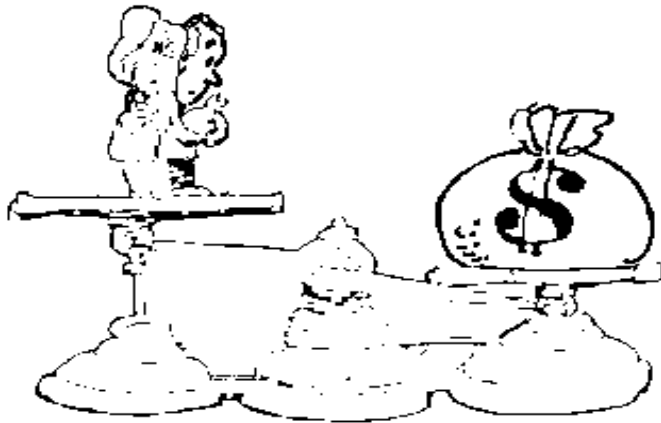
What Project Manager's Role is NOT

- NOT a bureaucratic status collector or paperwork coordinator!



The Project Manager's Responsibility:

RESULTS!



The Project Manager's Responsibility

■ Drive to best balance in timely fashion

- not the dream functionality
- not the perfect design
- not waiting for 100% consensus

- Minimum required to meet user's prioritized needs
- But without significant compromise to the global architecture
- But enough discussion for a coherent vision to emerge.
"Everyone can live with it and support it."

Choices must be made

- in a timely manner, based on incomplete information
- to fulfill user's need within a profitable cost and time envelope

It is the Project Manager's responsibility to make it happen.

Executive Quotes on Great PMs

- *From a Director of Hardware Engineering:* “He cares deeply about making the right product and technical decisions for the company. He speaks up on his convictions – even challenging the CTO on the product definition - and shows leadership on the toughest issues we face - he drives us to solve them, he gets the right people in the room, he doesn’t shrink from tough trade-off discussions - nor wait for us to initiate them. He drives.”

"Word Pictures": Management and Leadership

Management

- Plan and budget
- Organize and staff
- Control and problem solve

Plus

Leadership

- Set a direction
- Champion what's right for the business
- Align people
- Ensure continued alignment
- Motivate and influence
- Make or force tough decisions

What I Mean by a “Business-Savvy PM”

- **A project manager who develops a sufficient understanding of:**
 - Business and market drivers
 - Company goals and priorities
 - Customer needs and priorities
- **....that they are:**
 - able to drive project tradeoffs among schedule, costs, resources, scope
 - seen as a credible “recommender” and decision-maker by their sponsor, other executives, and cross-functional team members

Do NOT replace the business or marketing person’s role

DO use their knowledge to:

- Keep the team moving through fuzzy front end
- Provide critical check and balance and “executive-minded” oversight
- Interact credibly and productively with executives over goals, priorities, risks, status, and tough decisions

Business-Savvy PM and Leadership

Not just managing tasks!

Project Leadership

- Clarifying and aligning the team to the business goals
- Ensuring the project is defined to meet those goals
- Influencing team members to accomplish project work in alignment with business goals

Career-Expanding “Great Project Manager” Skills and Attributes

Rapport with Management, Functions

Interactions of mutual understanding, respect. Critical.

- Understand their perspective and issues
- Therefore your assessments are believed
- Change is easier - you have influence

Process Understanding and Flexibility

Apply PM effectively, and be seen as effective yourself

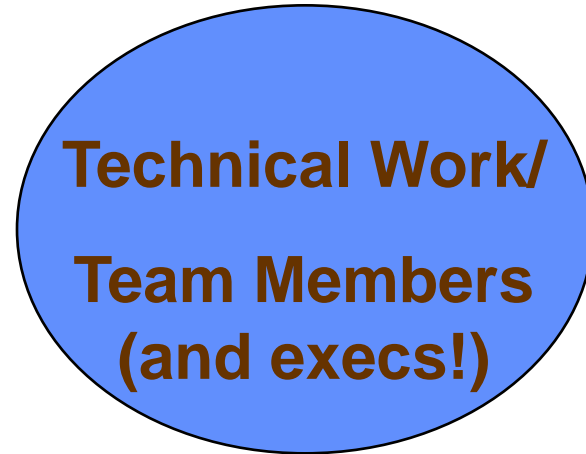
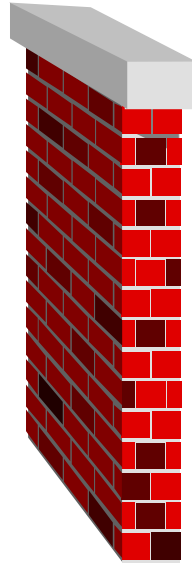
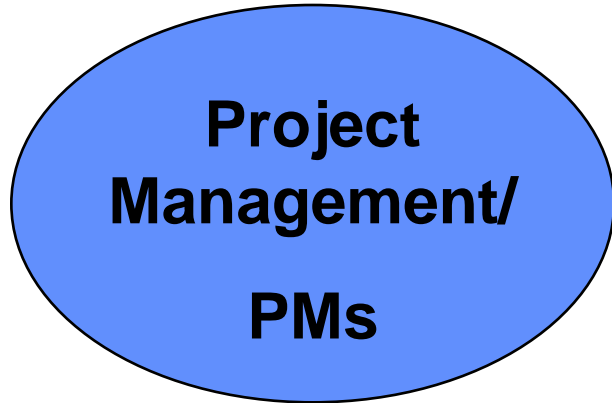
- PM techniques are valuable, not overhead
- Adjust for different types of projects
- Improvements happen faster

Relevant Background, Continuous Learning

Foundation for guiding projects

- Understand risks, make judgments.
- Competent management of largest, most complex, riskiest projects.
- Learn more areas, expand opportunities.

Being “Relevant” to Team Members



Valuable facilitator...
Coordinator.... Driver....
Obstacle-remover....
Integrator...

Help ensure/ enable project
success....

Paper-pusher... Bureaucrat....
Micro-manager...

*“Content-free project
manager”*

Non-value-add creature from
another world...

Solving the Relevance Problem

- Identify language and perspective issues

Talk their work

- *Be a technically-astute-enough project manager*

More eyes, not meddler

- Involve them in the big picture

Business, products

- *Show how PM can handle technical issues*

Lessons learned

- Eradicate ineffective PM, and adapt

Don't be afraid to abandon, innovate

- *Link it to their success*

Career paths, options...

Is your process causing “PM relevance” problems?

- That's someone else's.
- “Doesn't fit my project.”
- “Lots of stuff I don't need.”
- “Too formal for a small project.”
- “Every project is different, too hard to figure out what to use each time.”
- “Too bureaucratic, all this paper just slows us down.”
- “No value add, just a lot of management paperwork, doesn't apply to MY work on a project.”



***“It makes me tired
just to look at it.***

.... So I won't.”

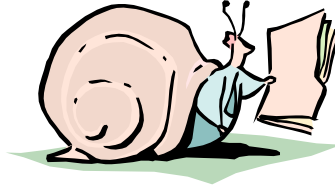
Breaking Through Process Perceptions to be Valued as a PM



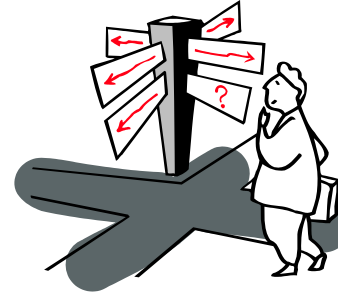
“Not for us...”



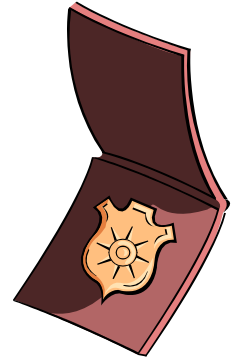
“Creativity-killer”



“Slows us down”



“Too different than before”



“It’s the Law!”
...Rules... Set in stone....

Counter with...

- The RATIONALE for the process.
- The SPIRIT vs. the LETTER of the law.
- The BENEFITS of using the process within that spirit.
- The RELEVANCE of the process to each team.
- The FLEXIBILITY to do what makes sense.

Techniques for “Relevant” Processes

- Simple project framework
- Focus on important project transitions
- Communicate “how to tailor”
- Get buy-in to personal benefits from “customers”
- Focus on project problems and how process helps

Make sure you’re using “just enough project management” !

Leadership Persona

- **How you come across to others and it affects:**
 - Your effectiveness leading the project
 - Team energy and morale and ultimate success

**We ask for hard work in tough situations...
Who makes us believe in great outcome,
inspires confidence and trust?**

- ***Rah-rah style required?***
 - Communicating through more than words
 - Quiet competence
 - Strength plus charisma

Which would YOU prefer?

■ Challenging project – which project manager?

Tentative, nervous

upset, reactionary

always worried....

■ Versus

Calm, confident,

thoughtful, strong,

positive but realistic,

looking for solutions rather than getting upset...

George Washington from *1776*

- "Washington was a man of exceptional, almost excessive self-command, rarely permitting himself any show of discouragement or despair."
- "It was Washington who held the army together and gave it 'spirit through the most desperate of times'. He was not a brilliant strategist or tactician, not a gifted orator, not an intellectual. At several crucial moments he had shown marked indecisiveness. He had made several mistakes in judgment. But experience had been his great teacher from boyhood, and in this his greatest test, he learned steadily from experience. Above all, Washington never forgot what was at stake and he never gave up..."

Boiling It Down

- **Business-driven, bottom-line communication and decision-making:**
 - Lead the project through the craziness
 - Keep the business goals in front
 - Provide executives info they need
 - Push back on unreasonable demands
 - Add value to team members

Boiling It Down

- **Leadership and initiative**
 - Do what's needed
 - in tough situations
 - unbidden
 - with a mature and confidence-inspiring attitude.

A Few Last Admonitions

- Beware the perception of PM as paper-pusher.
- Be genuine with people, treating them as the customer of whatever you as PM are doing. It makes a huge difference.
- Even the scariest-sounding executives really just want a credible partner in getting things done.

Wanted: Great Project Managers!

- **Our work cries out for “greatness”**
 - No simple situations! No two projects exactly alike!
 - Tough constraints! No easy answers!
- **PMs – Where do you need to grow?**
 - Judgment, techniques, best practices are ALL sharable
 - Business aspects are learnable.
 - Best learned in context, on the job.
 - Watch, ask, learn, model, practice...
- **Execs - Find the PMs who want to be great**
 - And support them!!
- **The efforts will be worth the rewards...**

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