Niamh Carr

13417128  COMP 20140

Learning journal

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# Week 1

## Goal Entry

In this module I hope to learn how to be a more efficient, more productive and successful individual. I want to improve my communication skills as I feel this will greatly benefit me in both a professional and personal sense. I will do my best to keep an open mind regarding all material presented in lectures and will embrace the opportunity to put these lessons in to practise as much as I can.

I hope to learn how to become a better leader (in all aspects of my life) and how to manage projects efficiently and with as little stress as possible.

I hope to achieve an A grade in this module by working diligently and consistently. I will do my best to reflect on the material in class and think of how I can apply it to my own life and to the group project. I will not skip any lectures and I will contribute as much as I can to the group project.

## Questions

### What are the other entries for your Learning Journal?

There are two other special entries in the Learning Journal; a book comparison and a module review.  
 The book comparison is to be completed in week 9 and is to be a minimum of 300 words. In this section of the Learning Journal you must compare the book you have studied for the book review with a book that another student has reviewed. The book comparison section should state which of the two books you would recommend to a 3rd Party.

The module review is the last section of the Learning Journal and should be a minimum length of 300 words. It should describe the main things that you have learned from the module and compare them with what you had hoped to learn, as described in your goal entry. It should also summarise your view of the module content and delivery as a whole. In this section you should state the grade you believe that your whole learning journal is worth and why it deserves this grade.

How should the Learning Journal be structured?

The Learning Journal should be a Microsoft Word Document which contains your answers to the Learning Journal questions which have been posted online. These answers should be clearly identified in your workbook and at least three blank lines between each answer. A physical copy of the journal must be submitted in Week 12, with your name and student number pasted clearly on the front cover of the journal. In addition to the weekly questions there are three special entries; goal entry, book comparison and module review. Details of these entries are given above. Goal entry should be the first page of your Journal and module review should be the last page.

### How are the marks for this course allocated? What are the compulsory elements?

The end of semester exam is worth 40% of the total available marks for this module, with practical work making up the additional 60%.

The practical component of the module is divided into three sections; a book review, a Learning Journal and a group project. The book review is worth 10% of the total available marks for the module, the Learning Journal is worth 20% and the group project is worth 30%.

The group project is broken down into three sections; a project report (5%), a Power Point presentation and 4 minute video (10%), and a confidential report (15%).

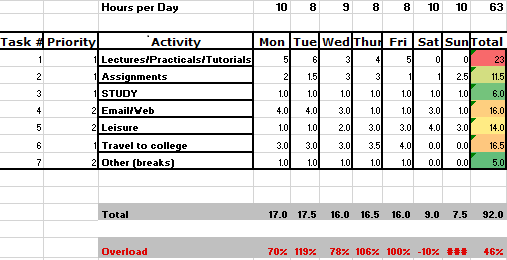
Lecture attendance is mandatory. All students must pass a Microsoft Project Test.

### In the lecture we carried out a “time alignment” exercise. Write a short reflection on what you have learned from this exercise.

From carrying out this exercise I realised that I was not well “aligned” and was not being nearly as productive as I could be. For example, the most important thing for me was my friends and family but when I listed the five things that I spent most of my time on I realised that they did not feature at all. I have made a conscious effort to change this by trying to get my college work done early in the day and setting time aside for my family and friends at the weekend. I have been more proactive in making time for my friends in family, e.g. suggesting going to the cinema or meeting for lunch and texting them during the day to see how they are.

I do not usually enjoy college and saw from my list that I spend most of my time in college/doing college work but it is fifth on my list of important things. I cannot change the amount of time I spend in college (while still attending all my lectures, tutorials etc.) but I have been trying to be more efficient with regards to my college work and more positive with my approach to college in general. It has only been a week but so far I am enjoying this semester and have realised that one of the reasons that I did not enjoy previously was because the time I was spending there was out of alignment with how important it was to me.

### In Lecture 2 I presented an Excel weekly timesheet. Download this sheet and complete it for your tasks. Feel free to add/delete/edit the rows. Print and paste this sheet into your journal.



### What do you notice about where you spend your time?

I noticed that I had a lot more leisure time than I expected. I also saw that I spend a large chunk of my time traveling to/from college. I also spend as much time browsing the web as I do on studying and assignments, which was slightly worrying.

### Does this surprise you?

I was surprised at how much leisure time I had and realised that I had not been using this time productively, i.e. spending time with friends and family or pursuing sports and hobbies but had been watching TV or Netflix instead.

I knew that I was easily distracted when browsing the web but had not realised just how much time I was spending on it.

### Are there obvious changes you might consider making?

I am trying to cut down on the amount of time I spend browsing the web by making a list of the tasks that I need to complete while on the laptop (college assignments etc.) so that I do not get side tracked as easily.

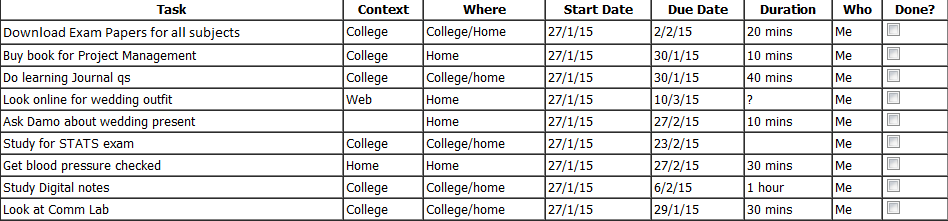
I am also trying to use my leisure time to do the things which are most important to me, instead of wasting it in front of the TV.

Having seen how much time I spend on the bus each week I have looked into getting driving lessons and am currently saving up for insurance. I am also trying to be more productive while on the bus by doing some of my college reading while traveling.

### Download and install Evernote on your PC or smartphone or tablet

### Create a list and store it in Evernote

### Print and paste this list into your journal

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### Why is a cloud-based system useful?

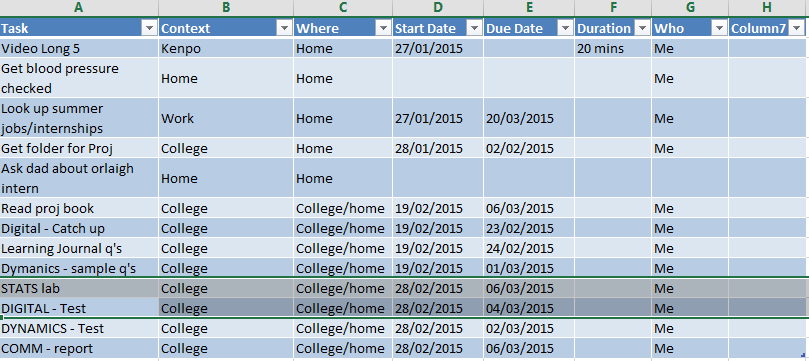
A cloud based system is useful because I can access my lists from my smartphone or tablet, which is helpful when I’m out and about. It also means that if anything happened to my laptop I would have another copy of the list somewhere else.

### When dealing with lists, what is a context and why is it useful to note the context for a task.

In class we used context to mean the place where the task is to be done, e.g. if the task was to pick up milk, the context would be “shops”. When creating my own list I used the context to mean what are of my life the task relates to as this does not always match the place where the task is to be done. For example, one of the tasks on my list might be to print off some notes for college, in this case the context would be “college” but as my printer is at home the “where” is “home”. I found this useful as it allowed me to see what I needed to get done for a particular area of my life and also see where I had to carry out each of those tasks.

Which computer-based list system do you think might be useful for you?

I have found Excel to be very useful as it is easy to use and I can sort my list in many different ways without having to manually rearrange the list.



This is a copy of my To Do List for this week. The only disadvantage of using excel is that the list is not easily accessible from my phone or tablet but as most of the things on my list need to be done in settings where I have my laptop this is not a huge issue.

Explain the idea of filing your “stuff” using the 43-folders methodology.

The 43-folders system is a type of tickler file, which is defined as a “collection of date-labelled file folders organized in a way that allows time-sensitive documents to be filed according to the future date on which each document needs action”.

In the 43-folder system there is one file for each month of the year and 31 additional files for the days of the month. If I were to set up the system today (29/1/15) when I open my tickler file I should see folder number 29 at the front of the file, followed by 30, 31,1,2,3…,28. Behind these numbered folders should be the month folders, starting with February and continuing all the way through to next January. At the start of each month I should take the folder for that month and divide its contents into the corresponding number folders and then place the month folder at the back of the cabinet. At the start of each day I take out a number folder, which contains all the things I have placed in it over the past weeks or months. At the end of each day this folder goes to the back of the numbers pile. Some people also transfer any of the folder’s contents that haven’t been dealt with on the day they were supposed to into the folder for the following day.

While this might be a very handy technique for someone working in an office or someone who has many appointments to keep throughout the year I did not feel that it was the best management system for me.

# Week 2

## Questions

### What does Covey mean by the P/PC balance? Can you give a personal example of it?

This means that you need to balance production (P) with production capability (PC). The example given in lectures was that although running a machine flat out with no maintenance may initially increase production, the machine will break down and eventually stop production altogether.  
I noticed from completing my time usage spreadsheet last week that most days I am getting around six hours sleep. Short term this allows me to get a lot of work done but I need to look at the long term effects of this, e.g. fatigue, irritability and an overall decrease in productivity.

### Explain Covey’s first habit.

Covey’s first habit is to be proactive. I think that this means being responsible for your attitudes and actions by understanding that you have the power to choose how to react to a situation.

### Covey argues that others cannot make us angry – we are responsible for our own response. Do you agree with this view?

I either don’t fully agree with or don’t fully understand Covey here. I accept his argument that we have the power to choose how to react to situations and that for minor things, such as a person constantly being late, we can choose whether or not to react with anger. However, I think that in more extreme situations it would be impossible, in my opinion, to choose your emotional response to a situation. For example, if one of my parents were to pass away I don’t think that I could choose not to react with sadness, at least in the short term. I do think that I can choose how to express this sadness and that I have the power not to allow it to become a long term issue.

### Explain the idea of the circle of concern and the circle of influence. What is your opinion of this idea?

Our circle of influence are the things which we have the power to control/do something about, e.g. the types of food we eat. This is a subset of the circle of concern, which is made up of the things we worry about, e.g. the spread of Ebola. Ideally, we should focus on our circle of influence and not the other components of the circle of concern which are outside of our control.  
I think that this is a good idea as focusing on things over which you have no control can leave you feeling powerless, disillusioned and helpless. I would add that you should focus on changing the things inside of your circle of influence instead of simply worrying about them. I also think that if you really cared enough about global warming or other big issues you could bring them into your circle of influence, in some small ways at least.

### Why is habit 1 relevant to a project manager?

As the leader of the team a project manager must deal with many situations, setbacks and people and will invariably find some of these to be irritating or disappointing. If the project manager choses to react negatively to any of these, particularly people who are underperforming, it can have a detrimental effect on the morale of the team and thus have a knock on effect on the project as a whole. It is important that the project manager take responsibility for their actions and look for solutions to problems instead of simply saying “there’s nothing I can do”.

### How does O’Connell define a project?

O’Connell defines a project as the combination of a noun and a verb.

### According to O’Connell, what is structured PM?

According to O’Connell there are 10 steps to structured PM. These are as follows:

1. Visualise the goal

2. Make a list of the jobs to be done

3. There must be one leader

4. Assign people to jobs

5. Manage expectations, allow error margin and fall-back

6. Use an appropriate leadership style

7. Know what’s going on

8. Tell people what’s going on

9. Repeat Steps 1-8 until step 10 and finally

10. The prize

Steps 1-4 require you to visualise the project and build a prediction of how it may turn out. Step 5 allows you to build in a margin for error, thus increasing the chances of reaching Step 10. Steps 6-10 make the plan happen.

### What is the First Law of Project Management

The first law of Project Management is

**Function(***Functionality, Delivery date, Effort, Quality***) = C**

This means that if any one of the four variables (functionality, delivery date, effort and quality) are changed it will have a knock on effect on the other three variables and thus, the project as a whole.

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### What does O’Connell mean by PSI?

PSI stands for Probability of Success and is a measure of how likely a project is to succeed. O’Connell states that each of the ten steps to structured project management gives an increased PSI but that not all steps are equally important. According to O’Connell the importance of each step is weighted as follows:

Step Weighting

1 20

2 20

3 10

4 10

5 10

6 10

7 10

8 10

9 0

10 0

Total 100

### What is Step One in O’Connell’s 10 steps?

The first step is to visualise the goal. For example, if the project is to build a house then step one should be to visualise what type of house it will be, where it will be built, what it will look like when it is done etc.

# Week 3

## Questions

### Why is visualising the goal so important in O’Connell’s view?

According to O’Connell visualising the goal should give you the reason why you are doing the project and also inspire and motivate you to complete the project. It also clarifies the definition of the project and is the beginning of the planning process. O’Connell states that if the project is being completed by a tam, as opposed to an individual, then visualising the goal will motivate the team.

To illustrate the importance of visualising the goal O’Connell uses the stories of two Antarctic explorers; Robert Scott and Roald Aumunsden. In the case of Scott the initial goal was “to reach the South Pole, and to secure for The British Empire the honour of this achievement”. However there were other scientific goals and different members of the team seemed to have different ideas of what exactly the primary goal of the project was. While Scott succeeded in reaching the Pole he did so over thirty days after Amundsen and his entire team perished during the return journey.

Amundsen, on the other hand, had the sole goal of reaching the South Pole. Many believe that it was due to “his careful preparation, good equipment, appropriate clothing, and simple primary task” that Amundsen was successful in reaching the South Pole before Scott, as well as surviving the return journey.

As Amundsen said “*I may say that this is the greatest factor—the way in which the expedition is equipped—the way in which every difficulty is foreseen, and precautions taken for meeting or avoiding it. Victory awaits him who has everything in order—luck, people call it. Defeat is certain for him who has neglected to take the necessary precautions in time; this is called bad luck*.” I believe that this may also be applied to Project Management in general and the first step in this preparation is visualising the goal.

### What does O’Connell mean by PSI?

PSI stands for Probability of Success and is a measure of how likely a project is to succeed. O’Connell states that each of the ten steps to structured project management gives an increased PSI but that not all steps are equally important. According to O’Connell the importance of each step is weighted as follows:

Step Weighting

1 20

2 20

3 10

4 10

5 10

6 10

7 10

8 10

9 0

10 0

Total 100

### Why is Covey’s Habit 2 important in project management?

While this is very similar to O’Connell’s “visualise the goal”, Covey’s second habit (begin with the end in mind) takes this idea one step further. Covey states that this is a leadership technique as leadership must come before management. He also states that beginning with the end in mind is a personal leadership technique that may be applied to projects/businesses etc. Covey defines this habit as “beginning each day with a clear understanding of your desired direction and destination.”

I believe that this habit is important in project management as it forces you to clarify values and set priorities before selecting goals and beginning work on the project.

Again we may see examples of this in the Amundsen/Scott case in O’Connell’s book. Amundsen and his team spent the winter months testing and modifying their equipment in order to make it as light and durable as possible. They began this first stage of the journey with their end goal of reaching the South Pole in mind. Scott and his team on the other hand spent the winter months giving each other lectures.

### What are SMART goals?

SMART is an acronym which may stand for a few different things, including:

S - Specific, significant, stretching

M - Measurable, meaningful, motivational

A - Agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action oriented

R - Realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented

T - time-based, timely, tangible, trackable

### What is O’Connell’s visualisation checklist?

O’Connell’s visualisation checklist gets you to focus on the day the project ends and asks you to answer the following questions

* What will goal mean to stakeholders when it is finished?
* What is produced? Where will they go and who will use them?
* Will your standard of living have improved?
* Could it (the project) fail?
* Will you have power you don’t have now?

### What is meant by structured project management?

Structured Project Management is based around a series of steps which are followed by the project management. O’Connell’s ten steps are as follows:

1. Visualise the goal
2. Make a list of the jobs to be done
3. There must be one leader
4. Assign people to jobs
5. Manage expectations, allow error margin and fall-back
6. Use an appropriate leadership style
7. Know what’s going on
8. Tell people what’s going on
9. Repeat Steps 1-8 until step 10 and finally
10. The prize

O’Connell states that Steps 1-5 produce a plan and one possible way that your project might unfold. He further states that Steps 1-4 help you to build a prediction of how the project might turn out and Step 5 forces you to create a margin for error within your project. Finally, Steps 6-10 “make the project happen”.

### What is a RASIC matrix and why is it important?

This is a responsibility assignment matrix which describes the participation by various roles in completing tasks/deliverables for a project. It is very useful in clarifying roles and responsibilities in cross-functional/departmental projects and processes.

RASIC stands for *Responsible*, *Accountable/Approver*, *Support,* *Informed*, and *Consulted*.

#### Responsible

Those who do the work to achieve the task. There is at least one role with a participation type of responsible, although others can be delegated to assist in the work required.

#### Accountable (also approver or final approving authority)

The one ultimately answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the deliverable or task, and the one who delegates the work to those responsible. In other words, an accountable must sign off (approve) work that responsible provides. There must be only one accountable specified for each task or deliverable.

#### Support

Resources allocated to responsible. Unlike consulted, who may provide input to the task, support help complete the task.

#### Informed

Those who are kept up-to-date on progress, often only on completion of the task or deliverable; and with whom there is just one-way communication.

#### Consulted

Those whose opinions are sought, typically [subject matter experts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subject_matter_expert); and with whom there is two-way communication.

### What is a role responsibility chart?

A role responsibility charts lists the name of the role, some details about the responsibilities involved and finally, the name of the person assigned to the role. The example below id taken from the lecture slides.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project Role | Responsibilities | Assigned Team Member |
| Project Manager | Many!! | Peter Mangan |
| Project Sponsor | Championing the project with Senior Management  Ultimate authority over it. | T.H Boss |
| Budget Controller | Ensures project is within budget. Costs each task.  Monitors ongoing costs and reports to PM. | John Williams |

### What is a milestone schedule summary?

A milestone schedule summary is a chart which lists the name of the milestone, the original estimated completion date/time, the revised completion date/time, and the variance between these two dates. The example below has been taken from the lecture slides.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Milestone | Original estimated completion time. | Revised completion time. | Variance. |
| Site cleared | 1/10/2007 | 21/10/2007 | 3 weeks |
| Foundations Laid | 15/10/2007 | 15/11/2007 | 4 weeks |

# Week 4

## Questions

### From Step 2, what is a SWAG and why is it an important idea?

SWAG is an acronym meaning “Sophisticated Wild Ass Guess”. Step 2 is “Make a List of Jobs” and as part of this you must estimate how long they will take. In reality you may have no real idea but it is important to make a SWAG and when in doubt, to overestimate how long it will take. I now often apply this to my college work, planning how long I will spend at an assignment before I start it. Often I am wrong about how long it will take but making a SWAG forces me to set time aside for the assignment and so makes me more efficient and productive.

### In the context of Step 3 from the text, write a note on the Scott and Amundsen case studies.

Step 3 is “there must be one leader”. O’Connell states that as a project leader is that your leadership can be subject to challenge by another member of the team. This means that somebody else tries to take over the psychological leadership of the project from you. If this happens you must neutralize the challenge. If you don't, you will end up with multiple leaders on your project.

O’Connell explains that Amundsen’s leadership was challenged during the expedition by Johansen, who from the start compared Amundsen’s expedition unfavourably to other Polar expeditions. After a failed attempt to reach the Pole, Johansen took Amundsen to task for what had happened. This challenge to his leadership was too much for Amundsen. Johansen was removed from the party going to the Pole.

O’Connell also explains that simply completing this step does not ensure the success of the project. He gives the example of Scott’s Polar expedition. O’Connell states that Scott did live, eat and breathe the project. He was going to get it done or die in the attempt. Scott reached the South Pole a month after Amundsen and perished with all four of his team on the return journey. O’Connell states that In terms of structured project management, it was Scott's failure to carry out Steps 2, 5, 6 and 8 which sealed his fate.

### What is Covey’s 3rd Habit?

Covey’s third habit is “put first things first”. Covey states that “the habit of **personal management** which involves organizing and managing time and events around the personal priorities identified in Habit 2.” In order to "leverage" our time, we should devote less attention to things that are urgent but unimportant, and more time to those things that are important but not necessarily urgent. Covey states that 80% of the time spent on a project will be spent on 20% of the tasks. Using Habit 3 helps us to be proactive in getting these tasks done and dealing with other tasks which are perhaps more important.

### Give 2 important points on the slides presented in [*Brian Prays’s youtube video Jar Of Life - Put IMPORTANT Things FIRST*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_N_uvq41Pg)

1. When we put the important things in our lives first we have time for all of them.
2. It does not matter if we don’t always have time for all the unimportant things in our lives like playing video games or menial tasks.

### Explain what type of activities occur in Covey’s 4 quadrants

Quadrant 1 consists of things that are urgent and important, e.g. Crises, Pressing problems and Deadline driven projects.

Quadrant 2 consists of things that are not urgent but are important, e.g. PC activities, relationship building, recognising new opportunities, planning and Recreation.

Quadrant 3 consists of things that are not important but are urgent, e.g. Interruptions, calls, some mail, reports, some meetings.

Quadrant 4 consists of things that are not important and not urgent, e.g. Trivia, busy work, some mail, some calls, time wasters, pleasant activities.

### Give 2 or more examples from you own life of activities for each of the 4 quadrants.

Quadrant 1: finishing my learning journal and other assignments, preparing to teach a grind.

Quadrant 2: finding a summer job, spending time with friends.

Quadrant 3: answering emails/texts, grocery shopping.

Quadrant 4: watching TV, social media.

### What does Covey mean by effective delegation?

Effective delegation involves delegating to people instead of time. Effective delegation gives people a choice of method and makes them responsible for results. It involves

1. Desired results: Agree on what needs to be done

2. Guidelines: identify parameters within which delegate operates (fewer is better)

3. Resources: identify available resources (money, people etc.)

4. Accountability: what standards apply and when reporting/evaluation takes place

5. Consequences: what will happen as a result of the evaluation? (Good & bad).

### What is opportunity cost?

This is defined as “the loss of other alternatives when one alternative is chosen.” In terms of this module it was taken to mean “Return on your time that you lose by spending your time on other things”.

### What is the Pareto principle?

This is known as the 80-20 rule. It states that for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. With this in mind it is important that as a Project Manager you try not to spend 80% of your time on 20% of the project to the detriment of the other 80%.

I am aware that I often spent a lot of my time on one or two subjects that I find difficult and this can sometimes cause my grades in other subjects to suffer.

# Week 5

## Questions

### Why must there be one leader for a project?

A leader is the person who is going to get the job done, they “live and eat” the project. The leader must know what’s going on at all times and if something goes wrong the leader gets the blame. There must only be one leader as they act as a role model for the team and keep the “herd” going in the right direction. They are personally responsible for ensuring all tasks get done. If there are more than one leader many problems can occur, e.g. the blame can be shifted from one leader to another, there may be differences in the directions given by each leader.

### Briefly describe the Amundsen Scott case study on leadership

Amundsen and Scott were two Arctic explorers who both led expeditions to the South Pole at around the same time. While Amundsen reached the Pole first and returned safely, Scott reached the Pole thirty days later and he, along with his entire team, perished on the return journey.

O’Connell uses both of their expeditions as case studies throughout the book, explaining what went wrong in Scott’s case but also pointing out some of the things that he did right and in Amundsen’s case, pointing out the measures taken to ensure that the project was a success. While there were many differences in the planning that went into both projects another key difference was in Scott and Amundsen’s respective leadership styles.

We are told that knowledge dispels fear. Amundsen and Scott provide conflicting examples of how to handle information dissemination within a project. Amundsen explained the objective and his plan to achieve it. The plan was explained, discussed and posted up in the mess for everyone to see. As we have seen, the plan enabled people to visualize progress and set a finite limit on what they would have to do each day.

Scott by comparison would remain unclear as to his plan until well into his journey to the Pole. Whatever plan he eventually evolved was not shared with anybody until the moment when people had to know. At the last moment he changed one of the cornerstones of the plan: the number of people who were to go to the Pole with him. Even his backup plan, such as it was, was hastily put together, and the result was that when he got into serious difficulty, whatever hope he had of rescue was ruined by the poorly laid and confused plans he had given to his subordinates

Scott also had one autocratic leadership style that he used with everyone whereas Amundsen was very sensitive to his team and their individual needs.

### What does Covey mean by the “abundance versus scarcity” mentalities?

The “abundance mentality” is a concept in which a person believes there are enough resources and successes to share with others. The scarcity mindset is founded on the idea that, if someone else wins or is successful in a situation, that means you lose. People with a scarcity mindset do not consider the possibility of all parties winning (in some way or another) in a given situation. People with an abundance mentality are able to celebrate the success of others rather than feeling threatened by it.

### What are the different options with win and lose?

* Win - Lose
* Lose – Win
* Lose – Lose
* Win
* Win- Win or No Deal
* Win - Win

### Why is the “no deal” a useful option?

If a “win – win” cannot be reached then “no deal” can be a useful option if both parties can agree to disagree and go their separate ways. It means that neither party suffers a loss and so, may help to maintain good relationships for the future.

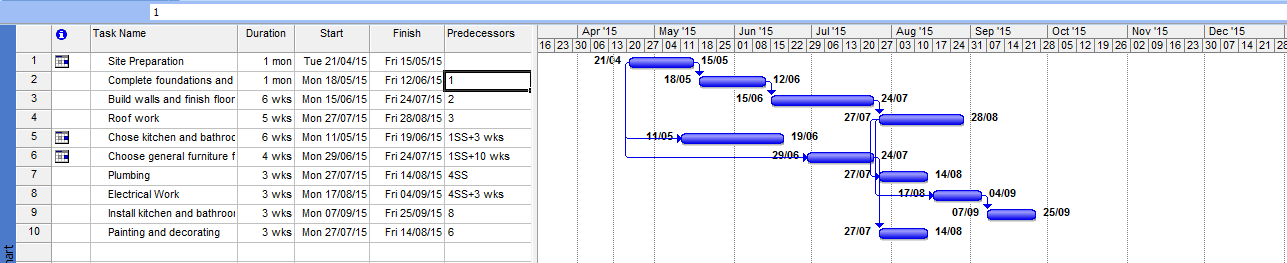
### What is a Gantt chart and why is it useful in project management?

A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart, first developed by Karol Adamiecki in 1896, and independently by Henry Gantt in the 1910s, that illustrates a project schedule. Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the terminal elements and summary elements of a project. It is useful in project management as it helps in the planning stages of the project (all tasks must be thought of and assigned resources in order to complete the chart). It also allows you to keep track of how the project is moving along, whether or not it is on schedule and what tasks still have to be completed.

### Using MS Project (or another PM tool such as Smartsheet), create a Gantt chart for the following Building Project. You should paste the chart into your Learning Journal.

The project starts on May 2nd 2015

* 1. Task 1 – Site preparation taking 1 month
  2. Task 2 – Complete foundations and base, taking 1 month after Task 1 completed
  3. Task 3 – Build walls and finish floors – taking 6 weeks after Task 2 completed
  4. Task 4 – Roof work – taking 5 weeks after Task 3 completed
  5. Task 5 – Choose kitchen and bathroom fittings – starting in week 4 for 6 weeks
  6. Task 6 – Choose general furniture for kitchen, bedrooms, sitting room – starting week 10 for 4 weeks
  7. Task 7 Plumbing – taking 3 weeks starting at same time as Task 4
  8. Task 8 Electrical work taking 3 weeks starting in 4th week of Task 4
  9. Task 9 – Install kitchen and bathroom facilities taking 3 weeks after Task 8 completed
  10. Task 10 – Painting and decorating, taking 3 weeks after Task 6 completed



# Week 6

## Questions

### Write a note on Covey’s 5th habit. What does he mean by an EBA?

Covey’s 5th habit is “seek first to understand, then to be understood”. This means that when you are communicating with other people you should listen to them with the intent to understand, rather than the intent to respond.

EBA is an acronym for Emotional Bank Account. Covey’s idea basically means that we keep an emotional bank account with everyone we communicate with. As with a real bank account the balance starts at neutral and we can make deposits and withdrawals. However, instead of dealing with units of monetary value, we deal with emotional units. The emotional units that Covey speaks of are centred on trust. When we make emotional deposits into someone’s bank account, their fondness, trust, and confidence in us grows. And as a result our relationship develops and grows. If we can keep a positive reserve in our relationships, by making regular deposits, there will be greater tolerance for our mistakes and we’ll enjoy open communication with that person. On the contrary, when we make withdrawals and our balance becomes low or even overdrawn, bitterness, mistrust and discord develops. If we are to salvage the relationship, we must make a conscious effort to make regular deposits.

### What is empathetic listening?

Empathetic listening is when you get inside the other persons frame of reference. You look through their frame of reference and see the world as they see it. You understand their paradigm and understand what they feel.

### What is a bright spot or positive deviant? How can the approach of studying positive deviants help solve project management problems?

Positive Deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviours and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges. The Positive Deviance approach is an asset-based, problem-solving, and community-driven approach that enables the community to discover these successful behaviours and strategies and develop a plan of action to promote their adoption by all concerned.

This can be useful in Project Management as the project is far more likely to be successful if it is community driven and the local community feel that they have an input and a voice within the project.

### What is the key importance of O’Connell’s Step 4?

O’Connell’s Step 4 is “assign people to jobs”. By assigning people to jobs the PM ensures that they have the time to manage the project instead of trying to do the project themselves. In assigning people to jobs the PM should ensure that each job has a name, each job has a name beside it and the strengths of the team are being maximised.

### What is the issue of people’s commitments in Step 4?

The Project Manager must be careful not to assume that people can dedicate themselves 100% to the project. They must realise that their team members probably have other commitments and a life outside of the project.

### What are the 4 villains according to the Heath brothers when it comes to making decision?

Narrow framing, confirmation bias, short-term emotion and overconfidence.

### Write notes on each step of the WRAP process

* Widen your options: Don’t limit yourself to a “yes or no” type decision. Ask for advice from experts or from people who have been in your predicament before. Try and think outside the box, e.g. what would you do to make the best of the situation if you were stuck in it?
* Reality test your assumptions: Make sure you are not falling victim to confirmation bias. Try out a few different options before settling on just one. If you are thinking of making a big change in your life maybe try a few baby steps and see how things go instead of diving straight in.
* Attain distance before deciding: Think of how you will feel after going through with your decision in ten minutes time, in ten months’ time and in ten years’ time. Think about what is at risk by going through with this decision and what’s at risk by making another one of the possible decisions. Try to ignore the short term emotions and think of the long term consequences and goals.
* Prepare to be wrong: Allow for things to go wrong when making a decision/managing a project and always have a safety net. For example if you are purchasing a new laptop you should probably buy insurance too.

### What is meant by “ooching”, “vanishing options”, “setting a tripwire”?

Ooching: conducting small experiments to test one’s hypothesis.

Vanishing options: This is a tactic used to widen your options. The idea is to imagine that a genie has made your top option vanish and then think “what can I do now?”.

Setting a tripwire: These are alarms that go off when critical factors change so that you will never be blindsided. The example given by the Heath brothers is as follows.

In the 80’s, Van Halen had the biggest stage production in the history of touring bands. With 8 or 9 tractor-trailers (when most bands only had 1 or 2) full of lights, pyrotechnics, and all kinds of other crazy things, setting it all up was an exact science. It had to be done to precise specifications in order to prevent any problems that could ruin the show, or even injure someone. To ensure the set up was carried out correctly the band used M&M’s™.

They buried a stipulation deep within their contract that under no circumstances could there be any brown M&M’s™ in the dressing room. If they showed up to your hometown for a show and found a bowl of brown M&M’s™, they knew they needed to go through the entire stage setup with a fine-tooth comb. The contract had obviously not been gone through in detail, and more likely than not, other things besides the M&M’s™ would be wrong or missed.

They weren’t being rock ‘n roll divas, just creating a “check engine light” of sorts to raise their antenna to more potential problems.

# Week 7

## Questions

### Explain what Kahneman means by System 1 and System2.

These are the two different ways that the brain forms thoughts. In the book I read System 1 was referred to as “Gut” and System 2 was referred to as “Head”. System 1 is “Fast, automatic, frequent, emotional, stereotypic, and subconscious” whereas System 2 is “Slow, effortful, infrequent, logical, calculating, and conscious”.

These two systems make decisions and form thoughts in very different ways. In many cases System 1 is advantageous, e.g. if you accidently place your hand on a hot cooker then it is a good thing that System 1 kicks in and decides to remove your hand straightaway. However, we must also be wary of the decisions made by System 1 as often in the modern world these decisions are perhaps not the best choices. For example, System 1 may tell us that flying is a very dangerous way of travelling and we would be better off going by car. However, if you allow System 2 to take over it is clear that many more people die in car crashes each year than in plane crashes and so flying is actually safer than travelling by car. This decision might seem like a small, inconsequential one but, according to “Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear”, approximately 1.595 Americans died in car crashes in the year 2011/2012 as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attack. This was as due to a decrease of 12-20% in air traffic and an increase in road usage, i.e. people opting to drive long distances rather than fly as they thought it would be safer.

### Explain some of the biases that arise according to Kahneman such as: anchoring, loss aversion, sunk cost, framing and availability.

Anchoring: The anchoring effect is out tendency to be influenced by irrelevant numbers. This is illustrated through the example of an experiment where participants were asked what age Gandhi was when he died. Some of the participants were first asked if Ghandi was older than 35 when he died and others were asked if he was younger than 114. The results showed that those who were shown the smaller number (35) guessed that Ghandi was much younger when he died than the people who had been shown the larger number (114). It is important to be aware of anchoring as many companies try to take advantage of this effect, e.g. by placing a large sign above the entrance to their shop that says “1,000 happy customers” so that the prices in store will seem lower to the consumers.

Loss aversion: Kahneman uses this term to describe people’s tendency to fear losses more than they value gains. Studies suggest that psychologically losses are twice as powerful as gains.

Sunk cost: Rather than consider the odds that an incremental investment would produce a positive return, people tend to "throw good money after bad" and continue investing in projects with poor prospects that have already consumed significant resources. In part this is to avoid feelings of regret. Having read about this in Kahneman’s work I realised that this is something that I’m often guilty of. If I have already spent a lot of time on a project or even a friendship without any kind of return I will often continue to spend time and effort on it as in my mind I don’t want to quit or fail. However, having read about sunk cost I now see that I would usually be better off calling it a day and moving onto something with better prospects.

Framing: Framing is the context in which choices are presented. Kahneman used an experiment to illustrate this. The same operation was described to a number of patients but some patients were told that the survival rate was 90% and others were told that the mortality rate was 10%. The patients who were told that the survival rate was 90% were more likely to opt for the surgery than those who were told that the mortality rate was 10%, even though the situation was exactly the same.

Availability: In “Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear” this was called the “example rule”. It is a mental shortcut that occurs when people make judgments about the probability of events by how easy it is to think of examples. People’s system 1’s tend to think that, "if you can think of it, it must be important." Additionally, the easier it is to recall the consequences of something, the greater we perceive these consequences to be. This, in part, explains why many people chose to travel by car instead of aeroplane in the wake of 9/11. Sometimes, this heuristic is beneficial, but the frequencies that events come to mind are usually not accurate reflections of the probabilities of such events in real life.

### The Heath brothers refer to the elephant and the rider in their text Switch. They refer to 3 ideas that are useful in trying switch behaviour, namely “direct the rider”, “motivate the elephant” and “shape the path”. Explain these 3 ideas and in the case of any one of them, explain how a project manager might use the idea.

These are part of the idea that every person/team has an emotional or “Elephant” side and a rational “Rider” side. The Heath brothers state that in order to cause a change in a person/project you have got to reach both their Elephant and rider. You also have to clear the way for them to succeed.

Direct the Rider: What looks like resistance is usually a lack of clarity. If the Rider doesn’t know where to go, they spin the Elephant in circles. To direct the rider, create a crystal clear vision of the outcome. This includes when or how much, along with a specific set of actions and tactics to get there. This can be done by following the bright spots, scripting the critical moves and pointing to the destination.

Motivate the Elephant: It has been said that “knowledge doesn’t change behaviour”. This means that an analytical approach to why change is necessary will not actually result in change. A project manager needs to Get beyond the knowing and make it possible for people to feel the impact. Win the heart and the mind follows. The Heath brothers state that what looks like laziness can often be exhaustion. They say that you should make your audience feel the need for change.

Shape the Path: This is about creating the right environment to make a change in. The Heath brothers state that what looks like a people problem is often a situation problem. They say that the person trying to make the change should create an environment where making this change is easy. E.g. Brasilata, a company that manufactures steel cans, wanted to empower their employees to take ownership of their work. They launched a programme where employees of Brasilata became known as "inventors," and when new employees joined the firm, they were asked to sign an "innovation contract." Top management challenged employees to be on the lookout for potential innovations and ideas for how to create better products, improve production processes, and squeeze costs out of the system. Procedures developed within the factory made it easy for inventors to submit their ideas. The program succeeded beyond any reasonable expectations. In 2008, employees submitted 134,846 ideas-an average of 145.2 ideas per inventor! Many of the suggestions led to the development of new products.

To change behavior, you’ve got to direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path. If you can do all three at once, dramatic change can happen, even if you don’t have lots of power or resources behind you.

A Project Manager might use the idea of Shaping the Path by making their instructions simple with step-by-step guidance, providing support groups, creating training, pairing people up with mentors, and creating peer pressure and social proof and creating a sense of pride in the project.

### Watch Barry Schwartz’s TedTalk on the Paradox of Choice and explain what Schwartz means by “Choice no longer liberates, it debilitates”

Barry Schwartz talks about how in modern, affluent, western countries we are surrounded by so many choices that it is often overwhelming, draining and time consuming. He states that often people are presented with so many options that they become “paralysed” and can’t choose at all.

He goes on to state that the idea of giving people more freedom by giving them more choices may have been true at one stage but that in our society this is now completely untrue. Schwartz explains that due to the large number of options now available to us our expectations are much higher. These expectations can never be met and so we often feel disappointed by our choices, comparing them to a theoretical “perfect” choice that we imagine must have been among the thousands of options. Additionally, we also feel worse about our choices as we blame ourselves for making the wrong choice when our expectations are not met.

In this way, the large number of options surrounding us in the modern world actually has a detrimental effect; we are doing comparatively better than ever before yet we feel much worse.

### Watch Robert Cialdini’s “Science of Persuasion” on YouTube. What are the 6 shortcuts we use to guide decision making. In the case of any 3 of them, explain how they can be useful to a Project Manager.

Reciprocity: This is the obligation we feel to give back when we have received something, be it a circumstance behaviour or service. If we get an invite to John’s party we feel obliged to invite John to our next party. When you ask someone for a favour they are more likely to say yes if they feel that they owe you something. A project manager might make use of this by helping someone with a difficult task before asking them to do a certain job or by approving someone’s holidays during a busy time as “a favour” and then asking them to complete a task when they return. Cialdini references an experiment where it was found that if the waitress brought the bill along with one mint the average tip went up 3%. When 2 mints were brought with the bill this went up by 14%. However, if the waitress initially brought one mint, walked away and then paused before coming back and saying “actually, for you nice people I’ll give you two mints” tips went up by an astonishing 23%. In order to exploit this shortcut you should make sure that you’re the first to give and ensure that the gift it personal and unexpected.

Scarcity: People want more of things that they perceive to be in limited supply. For example, when British Airways announced that they were cutting one of their daily flights from London to the USA their sales for this route rocketed. Cialdini states that it is not enough to explain the benefits of your idea/product, you must also point out why it is unique and what they stand to lose by not availing of your service or buying your goods.

Authority: People tend to follow the lead of credible, knowledgeable experts. Cialdini states that if physiotherapists display their diplomas on the walls of their office then their clients are more likely to stick to the recommended exercises that the physio gives them. He also stated that a study showed that people are more likely to give change to a stranger who needs money for a parking meter if the stranger is dressed in a uniform of some sorts than if they are in normal clothes. People are even more likely to view you as an “expert” if they are told about your expertise by someone else. For example, in a real estate firm when a customer ran up with a query about sales the receptionist would say “I’ll put you through to Jane, she’s our head of Sales and has more than 20 years’ experience in the field”. This was shown to dramatically boost sales.

Consistency: People like to appear to be consistent with their past actions or expressed beliefs and values. Project managers may use this by asking people to make very small commitments or complete small tasks before asking them to take on a larger task. These commitments must be voluntary, active, made in public and confirmed in writing. Cialdini stated that a dentist’s surgery had dramatically decreased the number of missed appointments by getting the patients to write down their next appointment details in the planner instead of the staff writing it in for them.

Liking: People are more likely to be influenced by or do favours for people they like. Cialdini states that there are three factors in getting someone to like you; similarities, complements and cooperation towards a shared goal. He states that we tend to like people who are similar to us, people who pay us complements and people with whom we are working towards a common goal. Project Managers may make use of this fact in negotiations. It has been shown that if, before negotiations begin, you take a minute to find out a little bit about the other party, and in particular find some similarities between yourself and them, then you are more likely to reach a mutually beneficial agreement.

Consensus: When they are uncertain people often look to the actions and behaviours of others in order to determine how they themselves should behave. Project Managers could use to get people to vote in favour of a particular idea. The PM should find other people/organisations who have also used this idea and seen good results, in particular they should point out how similar organisations/people have used this idea.

# Weeks 8-9

## Questions

### What is the issue of people’s commitments in Step 4?

When assigning people to jobs you must be careful not to assume that they do not have other commitments or that their top priority is the project at hand. O’Connell suggests making a list of each person’s commitments and how much time they will take up. This idea also encompasses defining how many hours per week will be spent on the project and what percentage of the actual project the PM will do. From completing our group project I sometimes found that I had volunteered to do a lot of work, but had forgotten about my other commitments outside of the project or underestimated how much time my other commitments would take up.

### What are the four categories of people that O’Connell identifies in Step 4? Write two or three lines on each category.

O’Connell states that there are five categories of people in a team. They are;

1. Can do and wants to do job: These are the best type of people to have on your team but, unfortunately, they will usually be in the minority. They have both the ability and the drive to do the job and so require very little management. This is good for a “lazy” project manager.

2. Can do and is prepared to do job: These people have the ability to do the job and are willing to do it but a bit reluctantly. They perhaps would prefer to take on another task, are quite busy or are simply fed up with being given the same job all the time. O’Connell states that you cannot ask this kind of person to do the job too many times as it is making too many withdrawals from the emotional bank account. If this type of person is called upon too often then they may turn into a type three person.

3. Can do and is not prepared to do job: While these people have the necessary skills to do the job they are, for whatever reason, unwilling to undertake it. This may be because they are very busy or because they were a type 2 person who had been called upon too many times. O’Connell suggests coming to some sort of compromise with this type of person, e.g. they could train in or supervise another member of the team who will do the job that the PM originally wanted them to do while they will be trained or allowed to do another job.

4. Can be trained to do job: These people do not require the necessary skills to do the job at the present moment but they have the desire to take on the job and it is feasible to teach them the necessary skills in the time available.

5. Cannot do the job: These people do not have the necessary skills to do the job and cannot be trained to do it in the available time. These are the worst kinds of people to have on your team and O’Connell suggests trying to get them to move onto another project.

From doing our group project it was clear that the Type 1 person is the ideal group member. We were lucky to have a few of these on the team. We were also fortunate not to have any Type 5 team members.

### Why is Step 5 such an important step?

Step 5 is “manage expectations”. O’Connell states that everything in the project plan is just a prediction and that we must always ask the question” What will I do if part of the plan does not work out?” He says that we must always build contingencies into the project plan, e.g. if you think that a task will take three weeks to complete plan for it to take five weeks. The importance of this step is, I think, best conveyed through the examples O’Connell gives. One of these is the Scott vs Amundsen case. Amundsen built a lot of contingency into his expedition plan, including having four tonnes of food for the return journey. Scott on the other hand allowed very little margin for error and only had 1 tonne of food for the return journey. The Somme is another tragic example of what happens when there is no backup plan. The plan had been to bombard the Central Powers and then the Allies troops would have a “walkover” victory as there would be nothing left of the Central Powers after the bombardment. However, the bombardment did not have the desired effect on the Central Powers but as there was no backup plan the Allied troops were still sent to “walkover” the enemy lines. 19,000 of these troops were killed in the first few hours.

### What does O’Connell mean by not signing up for “mission impossible” in Step 5?

O’Connell means that if a situation arises where the timescale on a project is far too small and for some reason you are not allowed to build in contingencies then you are often better off turning down the project as it is you who will likely to be blamed if things go wrong. I was recently faced with a situation where I was being asked to put together a karate demonstration with 10-15 children for an upcoming event. I would only have had four weeks to choreograph the piece and organise and run rehearsals (which would only take place once a week). From past experience this is far too small a timeframe to do the job in, especially as I am coming up to exams, and as I did not want either myself or the children to put on a substandard show I did not sign up for “mission impossible”.

### What does O’Connell say about committing in Step 5?

He says that you must know when to commit and why to commit. You should try and leave it to as late as possible in the project to commit. The longer you can get away with not having to make this promise, the better for all concerned. Each day that passes you find out more about the nature of the project, and all of these details, when fed into a model of your project, increase the likelihood that the promise you make will come true.

O’Connell states that if it has come to the stage where all of our contingency has been eaten up and we are being asked to make a commitment then we should be honest and explain what has happened.

### What is Step 6 and explain O’Connell’s Table 6.1.

Step 6 is “use an appropriate leadership style”. This involves realising that every team member is different and so needs to be treated differently. O’Connell states that there is no use in asking for daily updates from a team member who is more than capable of working away on their own and who is doing so, stating that it may actually cause this team member to become frustrated and resentful. On the other hand a team member who is struggling or not achieving many results may need this kind of attention.

From my experience teaching children’s karate classes I know that this is true. Every child is different and learns in different ways, there is no use in spending hours explaining something to a child who learns best by “doing”.

In O’Connell’s table 6.1 people are divided into different categories; A, B, C, D and E.

A: You trust this person to do the job. They may have done this task before or at least something similar. They are the experts and can make all the decisions to do with the job. You can leave them too it and they require very little management which is good for a lazy project manager.

B: O’Connell states that with this person “They're doing it, their hearts are probably in the right place, but you're not super-confident that they'll do it right or on schedule”. These people require a little bit more supervision and you must provide this, however there is no need to keep pestering them. In terms of their ability to make decisions you need to help them.

C: O’Connell states that this kind of person has “done other things well in the past and now you're trying them on something new. They've come through on everything so far, but this is a new ballgame.” They need a similar level of supervision as with type B’s. You must remember that your neck depends on it. Decisions can be made as with type B.

D: This type of person is an unknown and will require a lot of management. They've never done it before and you have no reason to believe they can or will do it. O’Connell states that you should inch forward with mini goals which are spelled out in great detail. You constantly need to monitor them for signs of trouble.

E: These are the worst kinds of people to have on a team and they require a lot of effort in terms of management. O’Connell states that “This job isn't happening: we need to make alternative arrangements about it.” As a lazy project manager our first priority is the job and then the person.

### Explain the importance of Steps 7,8,9 and 10.

Step 7, Know what’s going on: The Pm must know where the project is at all times. This involves checking three things daily; what should be finished by now, what should we be starting and how is the work in progress coming along. Each day the PM learns more about the project and can fill in more details for the future. O’Connell states that there is one crime in Project Management; knowing something is wrong but not telling anyone about it in time.

Step 8, Tell people what’s going on: O’Connell states that everyone, both team members and the project sponsors, have an input to the project and need to know what’s going on so that they can see the bigger picture. However, the Pm may sometimes have to filter this information.

Step 9, repeat steps 1-8: By repeating steps 1-8 it means that everyone is still focused on the goal, you use your list of jobs like a compass, you are checking that there is only 1 leader, you are thinking of expectations and fallback positions and you are scouting for danger by thinking “What can go wrong at this stage?”

Step 10, the prize: When a project is complete it is very important to analyse it, both the good and the bad aspects. This helps you do manage your next project better and more efficiently.

### Write a note on dealing with difficult people. What was the most useful information you found from this material?

The first piece of advice was to make sure that the person is not just having on “off day” or is particularly stressed. We can all have bad days and this is very different from persistent difficult behaviour.

Joe Carthy advises that we often generalise too easily and says that we need to be prepared to revise our judgements based on evidence as opposed to the opinions of others. He states that we should treat people as we find them, not on how others tell you they found them and to always assume positive intent. He also states that it is very important to separate someone’s behaviour from them as a person. He gives the example of saying “your comment made me feel angry/hurt” as opposed to “you made me angry”. One of the most useful pieces of advice was “Don’t blame someone for your emotions and don’t expect them to implicitly understand your emotions - they are not obvious!” I know that I am often guilty of expecting my friends and family members to implicitly understand my emotions instead of explaining to them how I am feeling and why I am feeling that way. I also know that I often blame other people for my emotions, e.g. saying “he put me in a bad mood”. I have come to realise that while I cannot control other people’s behaviour I can control how I respond to it. This has been very useful to me in my everyday life.

Roy Lilly states that “There is no such thing as a difficult person, there are just people we need to learn to deal with”. I am not sure that I completely agree with this but I have tried to keep an open mind about it and use it in my day to day interactions. Lilly states that when difficult people there are important words that we should use;

* 6 most important words: I admit I made a mistake
* 5 most important words: You did a good job
* 4 most important words: What is your opinion?
* 3 most important words: Would you mind?
* 2 most important words Thank you
* 1 most important word We
* Least important word I

Lily also states that difficult people tend to be selfish and inwardly focussed. They don’t care about others and so we shouldn’t let them get under our skin by taking their behaviour personally. Lilly says that you can’t change difficult people but they are predictable and can be dealt with, often by planning for what you want and using their predictability. E.g. if someone is very abrupt, then get to the point straight away with them by saying something like “I know you busy so ….”

### What are the economic costs of an AH to an organisation?

Some research suggests that 25% of victims of AH behaviour quit and 20% of witnesses quit. This is a huge cost to organisations as their replacements can cost up to €20,000 per person. Organisations may be sued for damages. Lower performance may result, and thus lower productivity and reduced profits. Theft can increase where employees are badly treated.

### What is a Keystone Habit?

Keystone habits create a chain reaction; changing and rearranging your other habits as you integrate the habit into your life. They have 3 characteristics: they give you numerous small senses of victory; they serve as the soil from which other habits grow; and they give you energy and confidence to do more.

According to Duhigg, “small wins have enormous power, an influence disproportionate to the accomplishments of the victories themselves”, and these are “places where momentum can start to build”. Small wins “fuel transformative changes by leveraging tiny advantages into patterns that convince [you] that bigger achievements are within reach”.

Keystone habits aren’t just a new habit, like drinking water right after you wake up; they’re a platform off of which other habits can grow. For example, I get the bus to college for nine o’clock every morning, even if I don’t have a 9:00 lecture. This started as a new habit, but over time it has spawned other productive habits, like going to bed earlier, preparing a packed lunch the night before (resulting in me eating better), and increased productivity.

Duhigg recommends that you be mindful of “moments when excellence—or change, or perseverance, or some other virtue—seems to become contagious. Keystone habits are powerful because they change our sense of self and our sense of what is possible”. Keystone habits don’t simply stop providing you with energy and motivation after you finish up with your routine; they provide you with an infectious drive to be better and get done long after you’re done.

## Book Comparison

The book I read was “Risk; the Science and Politics of Fear” by Dan Gardner, which I will be comparing with The One Minute Apology’ by K. Blanchard and M. McBride, Harper Collins and ‘The One Minute Manager’ by K. Blanchard and S. Johnson.

At first glance these books seem very different, Gardner’s book is about how the human brain forms thoughts and makes decisions and how this can be exploited or taken advantage of. Blanchard’s books on the other hand are about apologising sincerely and effectively to people, goal setting and tracking, and how to praise/reprimand people who are working for you. However, in a larger sense all three books are about communication; how we are communicated with, how we communicate with others and what the barriers to open, honest communication are. In the world of Project Management good communication is essential to the project’s survival. Knowing how and when to apologise for your actions makes your team respect you and is a sign of good leadership. Likewise, it is important to know how to reprimand others for their actions without belittling them or making them feel incompetent and unvalued. It is equally important to know how to praise someone effectively, in a way that makes them want to continue their good work. Perhaps not as obvious, but just as important, is that a good knowledge of how the brain forms thoughts is essential to good communication. It can help you realise when someone is trying to influence you and can also help you to (ethically) influence others. For these reasons I believe that, despite first appearances, these three books are complementary and reading all three can be extremely beneficial.

I liked that many of the facts presented in “Risk (The Science and Politics of Fear)” are backed up with numerous references to scientific experiments and studies as I felt this added an element of credibility to the book that was perhaps lacking in “The One Minute Apology” and “The One Minute Manager”. However, in terms of Project Management one could argue that “The One Minute Manager” and “The One Minute Apology” are more useful in everyday project management situations. Personally, I think I would find “The One Minute Apology” a very useful book as I often find it difficult to admit that I was wrong and say sorry for my actions.

As for which book to recommend, I really am not sure. Personally, I find that “Risk (The Science and Politics of Fear)” is a more interesting read than the other two books and so, I would be more likely to recommend this book to a friend. However, “The One Minute Apology” and “The One Minute Manager” may be more applicable to Project Management situations.

# Weeks 10-11

## Questions

### What is the difference between a fixed and a growth mind-set? Why is a PM’s mind-set important?

In a fixed mind-set, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success.

In a growth mind-set, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.

If a PM has a growth mind-set it can create a better environment for the team and increase the likelihood that the project will succeed. If they believe that “basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work” then they will be more likely to invest the time and effort into training their team members. They will also be more likely to work hard to achieve their goals instead of relying on talent alone.

### What is the Talent Myth?

The Talent Myth is a concept conceived by Malcolm Gladwell. It refers to the notion that the best way to build a business is to hire the most intellectually advanced people you can find. According to Gladwell, "It’s an incredibly narrow definition of what you think is advantageous in your work force.IQ is totally important, but there was such a narrow focus on that particular set of capabilities that it excluded all kinds of other stuff."

For example, one of the things Gladwell points to as an advantage for people like Walmart founder Sam Walton is the fact that, prior to launching Walmart, Walton had failed in another business. This experience allowed Walton to learn unique lessons that would help him be successful later. For this reason, failure in a job applicant's past should be viewed as a positive in many cases, according to Gladwell.

"There’s a reasonable case you could make for that kind of criterion, but when you’re interested in talent, that's not part of the definition of talent. That's almost the anti-definition of talent," he says.

"We use failures to exclude people if we're picking just on the basis of talent. You could make an argument that failure ought to be something that includes you in the pool of potential talent."

Gladwell gives the example on Enron, a former American energy, commodities and services company. He cites how Enron in particular prided itself on only choosing the best and the brightest from its pool of applicants and then offered disproportionate rewards and promotions to what they deemed as 'star' performers. At Enron, employees were reviewed annually and placed into three categories, and from there either rapidly promoted with large bonuses, given moderate bonuses, or, for the worst performing, possibly layoffs. However with the quick rise of inexperienced workers with little in-depth performance review, promotions are often incorrectly made, putting employees into positions they should not have and keeping other more experienced employees from rising. Enron supposedly experienced this many fold, where 'stars' were deemed based on irrelevant factors and thus promoted to positions they were unfit for. Gladwell states that this system of promotion was part of the reason Enron would eventually face its demise.

He also points out that under this system, narcissistic personality types are more likely to climb the ladder, since they are more likely to take more credit for achievements and take less blame for failure. He states both that narcissists make the worst managers due to their reluctance to relate to their workers, look to others' guidance, and accept responsibility for mistakes.

Gladwell believes that the most successful long-term companies are those who reward experience above all else and require greater time for promotions. Under this basic system, real talent can be measured through more accurate evaluations and position employees in the appropriate spots.

### What is Epstein’s view on improving performance in sport and is there a way that a similar approach could be used to improve project management?

Epstein begins by comparing the finishing times of Jesse Owens in the 100m sprint in 1936 and Usain Bolt in 2012. If they had been in the same race Epstein states that Bolt would have come first and Owens would have been last. However, Epstein goes on to explain that Bolt’s faster time is largely due to the surface he was running on and states that if Bolt and Owens had been running on the same surface then Owens wouldn’t have been last, he would have been second.

Epstein also goes on to talk about Roger Bannister and the four minute mile. He states that running on soft cinders slows you down by about 1.5 percent and that when this was applied to modern athletes only 530 men have achieved the same feat as Bannister. Epstein also makes the point that the approach to training is also far more professional now then it was in 1954.

Epstein explains that the gene pool of competitive sport has changed significantly. He states that In the early half of the 20th century, physical education instructors and coaches had the idea that the average body type was the best for all athletic endeavours: medium height, medium weight, no matter the sport. Eventually that idea started to fade away, and as sports scientists and coaches realized that rather than the average body type, you want highly specialized bodies that fit into certain athletic niches, a form of artificial selection took place, a self-sorting for bodies that fit certain sports, and athletes' bodies became more different from one another. He gives the example of basketball where one in 10 men in the NBA is at least seven feet tall. However men who are over seven feet tall are incredibly rare in the general population and states that if you know an American man between the ages of 20 and 40 who is at least seven feet tall, there's a 17 percent chance he's in the NBA right now.

Finally, Epstein states that a large proportion of the increase in athlete’s performances is down to their mindset. He cites ultra-endurance sports as an example, saying “Ultra-endurance was once thought to be harmful to human health, but now we realize that we have all these traits that are perfect for ultra-endurance… s athletes have realized that we're perfectly suited for ultra-endurance, they've taken on feats that would have been unthinkable before”.

Epstein states that “Changing technology, changing genes, and a changing mindset… have conspired to make athletes stronger, faster, bolder, and better than ever.” I believe that this can also be applied to Project Management. For example, using relatively new technology such as Microsoft Project can save massive amounts of time in planning which can then be spent on other aspects of the project. We also live in an increasingly global society where companies in Ireland can see what companies in Japan or China or America are doing and then strive to achieve the same results.

### Why is negotiation important in Project Management?

Negotiations are an unavoidable part of daily life and are especially important in Project Management where the success of the project could hang on the outcome of a negotiation. In negotiations we should seek first to understand and then to be understood.

### What is positional bargaining?

Positional bargaining is a negotiation strategy that involves holding on to a fixed idea, or position, of what you want and arguing for it and it alone, regardless of any underlying interests.

### What is principled negotiation?

This is an approach to negotiation that focuses on the interests of the parties and emphasizes conflict management and conflict resolution. Because the goal of principled negotiation is to find a mutually shared outcome, it is sometimes referred to as “win-win”. This represents a very different approach from the stereotypical view of a tough negotiation where one party will inevitably lose, while the other wins. (A win-win negotiation is one where the agreement cannot be improved by further discussions. There is no value left on the table and all creative options have been thoroughly explored.)

### In the context of running a meeting, what ways do some people use to delay making a decision for as long as possible?

They may try to move the topic of discussion away from the decision to be made, they may look for many flaws in every idea proposed, they may talk about the past instead of focusing on the present and future.

### Why is Covey’s 7th Habit so important?

This is called “Sharpening the saw” and is also known as the habit of self-renewal. Sharpening the saw means having a balanced, systematic program for self-renewal in the four areas of our lives: physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual. Without this discipline, the body becomes weak, the mind mechanical, the emotions raw, the spirit insensitive, and the person selfish.

Coming into exam season I can definitely see the importance of this habit. When I don’t make time to relax or exercise I become grumpy, tired, frustrated and much less productive than normal. This also applies to a Project Manager as if they do not take care of themselves properly they will be performing at suboptimal levels and may also become difficult to deal with. This can have a negative impact on their team and affect the project as a whole.

As Covey says, Habit 7 makes the other 6 possible. You are your own greatest asset and you need to look after yourself.

# Week 12

## Module Review

I have found this module very interesting and beneficial. I did not expect it to be so applicable to everyday situations and have found that my self-management and communication with others has definitely improved over the course of the semester.

The one thing that has really stood out to me from this module is the importance of planning and building margins for error into all aspects of your life. I thought I had been implementing this quite well in my everyday life until recently when using a new software package I managed to delete all my college work from the last two years and realised that I had not backed up the files anywhere. This was a hard way to learn my lesson but it made me realise that planning and margin for error should not just be applied to managing projects but to managing our everyday lives too.

In my Goal Entry I stated that I wanted be a more efficient, more productive and successful individual. I feel that I have definitely achieved the first two of these goals and hopefully the third will follow soon! Making lists which contain actions, start dates and end dates has massively improved my efficiency and productivity. At first I found it hard to believe that adding these categories to my lists would make any difference at all so I was blown away when I realised how important these categories are. This has made me more open to the other material presented in lectures and to new ideas in general.

I found that the material was presented very well and found the examples given in class (such as Peter’s dilemmas) helped to emphasise the importance of what we were learning. The material was also far less “cheesy” than I was expecting it to be, which was a pleasant surprise. The only criticism I would have is that the tutorials, both in MS Project and with Meadhbh in regards to the video for the group project, never took place. I have thoroughly enjoyed the module and have definitely learned much more than I thought I would.

At the risk of sounding arrogant I believe that my learning journal deserves an A. I made an effort to do the questions every week and to really try and reflect on each question and offer my own view on the matter. I tried to apply everything learned in the lectures to my everyday life and made a consorted effort to engage with all aspects of the module.