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Project Management

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Good, Better, Best Evaluation

When I began the semester, I could care less about Project Management. Although I knew I could probably learn something, my mind was on so many other problems and concerns that I didn’t really consider how much I could grow from project management ideas. To me, I was “good enough” at organizing to get by for the rest of my life, and I definitely didn’t plan on ever being in a management position (which is hilarious to me now, since as a mother, I am definitely in a management position!).

After the first few classes, I decided to go through the motions by planning a project. The first project I went through was planning a dinner party. I went into it not expecting to learn anything, honestly. I have been cooking meals for my family for the past 10 years and thought I knew enough about planning a menu to “not need” any improvement (which is extremely lazy thinking). But as I went through the processes, I realized how wrong I was. I learned so much about the V-model and how important it is to test as I go. I have a reluctance to taste test as I cook (except for things like cookie dough) and as I planned out this project and carried it out, I discovered a huge area of improvement that I can work on.

Because of what I learned in the Meal Plan project, I went into my Website project with a much better understanding of the benefits of giving it my all. I created goals that, if completed, would bring me to the “best” learning. But those changed as I developed as a project manager. I mainly desired to build confidence as a leader, learn the current methodologies, and then I had a vague goal of wanting to “learn as much as possible about managing other people”. The Website project really sped up my growth. I quickly realized that although I was organized as an individual, it is very different matter to organize tasks for other people. I learned to implement my own version of scrum, and I grew in confidence in assigning tasks and expectations to my team. It was in the middle of this project that I realized how beneficial this class could be for me if I really tried to learn from it.

After I completed the Website project, I realized that my previous version of best was sadly lacking and that I could improve even more. I decided to think more about daily or weekly tasks (or projects) that could be improved by project management ideas. I found myself thinking more deeply about the things I do and say each day and how I can improve them. For example, one day in October I was doing a puzzle with my 4-year-old daughter, Sailor. Before we started, I said, “Let me clean up this mess first and then we will get started.” She responded by asking me why I said “let me.” I hadn’t even realized that I had used that phrase and it caused me to think about those strange and unclear expressions that I use all of the time, and how there are other ways to express the same ideas. If I was working with people who didn’t speak English as their first language, phrases like that would be extremely confusing!

Although I judged myself as “good” in the beginning of the semester, and I know that I am definitely “better” than I was, I know that I still need a lot more practice and experience to get remotely close to “best” (which probably won’t happen until the next life). I am glad that my perspective of this class changed and that I was able to make that shift of thinking!

Time Tracking Plans

I used the time tracking evaluation method as well, and it was really interesting to see how much time I spent on this class, as well as what I was actually doing each time I sat down to work on things. Although it was time consuming, I really liked the awareness it brought to me on how much time I’m really spending; not only in this class, but in other aspects of my life.

I’ve been thinking of ways that I can continue this awareness, and I’ve decided to modify the time-tracking idea a bit. Instead of tracking every little thing, I’m going to spend about 10-15 minutes at the end of every day pondering what I’ve done in general with every hour of the day. I’m hoping that this will help me become even more aware of the quality of what I am doing each day. For example, in the hour after I get home from work each day, am I spending time helping my children feel loved or am I frantically cleaning? I want to be able to evaluate how I am doing each day and look for ways to improve for the next day.