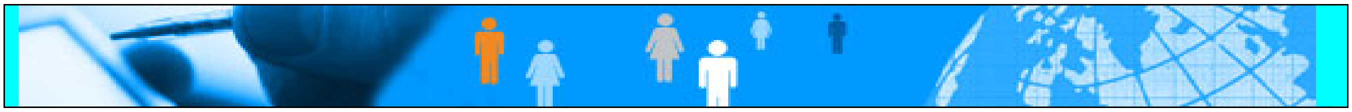

ISSIG Bits

May 2010

For the latest information in Information Systems and Technology Project Management, visit http://www.pmi-issig.org/. The Information Systems SIG (ISSIG) dedicates itself to promoting the value of project management in Information Systems and Technology. It serves as a forum for communicating project management knowledge, principles, and practices by bringing practical solutions to our members and the industry worldwide.

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I. Information Systems SIG Milestones

Our Mission

The mission of the PMI Information Systems SIG is to become *the* professional IS and IT project management organization of choice by providing the greatest value to current and prospective worldwide members through the delivery of quality and unique services and products in a cost-effective manner. The Mission will be accomplished through:

- Disseminating state-of-the-art project management practices.
- Member education.
- Members sharing and exchanging information.
- Championing professionalism of IS and IT project management.
- Serving as a networking and collaborative hub for all industries and all project management practitioner levels by supporting corporations, government agencies, academic institutions, subject matter experts, trainers, consultants, vendors, other components of PMI and other organizations that contribute to the profession of project management.

Looking for PDUs?

Many of our members earn Professional Development Units (PDUs) through the ISSIG to maintain their PMP certifications. From our Web site, click on Learn, Webinars or Podcasts to access a wealth of information and start earning those PDUs!

II. Greetings from the Chair

By Sanjay Swarup, PMP
PMI-ISSIG Chair
chair@pmi-issig.org

Dear PMI-ISSIG Members:

Recognition plays an important role in the success of any project, program or portfolio management. Overall morale of the team is extremely important for the timely completion of any project within scope, quality and budget. By regularly acknowledging the good and hard work of the team members, keep their spirits high. They remain motivated and give their best to the project.

It is often said that project managers have all the responsibilities but no authority. It is very true in almost all situations. The role of a project manager is sometimes like that of a magician. He/she is expected to keep all the project parameters green, irrespective of the difficult competing circumstances. Even if the design is not perfect or the project is understaffed or the budget is improperly estimated, the expectations from the outcomes are all the times the same. It is not easy to produce consistent results in varying situations. The only available option available at times is keeping the confidence of the team members very high to get good results. In these situations, regularly acknowledging the team members can make a huge difference to the project outcome.

As a project leader, with no authority the question remains what can you do to keep the self-esteem of the project high. Well, first treat all the team members with utmost professional respect. By default, every employee has some strong skill set, other than technical or business role he/she is playing. By recognising strengths of individuals and utilising them for the advantage of the project is an art. Some team members are good in leadership while others may be good at documentation. By using their natural skills and appreciating their contributions in direct or team settings, it will boost their productivity.

In another development, PMI-ISSIG has made the difficult decision to cancel the 2010 ISSIG Professional Development Symposium scheduled for Seattle June 27-30. Despite our best efforts, the difficult economic situation resulted in extremely low registration making the event unsustainable. All possible attempts were made to continue it even on a compact format, but in the end the PMI-ISSIG Board had to arrive at the extremely difficult decision to cancel the event all together. The PMI-ISSIG Board and the PDS 10 team extends thanks to you for your willingness to participate and regrets the necessity to cancel the event.

On another note, in one of my direct communication to you recently, I had shared with you information on the virtual communities program and our current status. I am so glad that some of you have responded and asked questions. Our approach has been to be absolutely transparent with you. We have been working closely with PMI to make sure that transition into the PMI Information Systems Community of Practice (IS CoP) happens successfully, in the event PMI-ISSIG members approve this proposal by a majority membership vote. The new IS CoP and PMI will be committed to provide the same level of service to our members in addition to other great benefits.

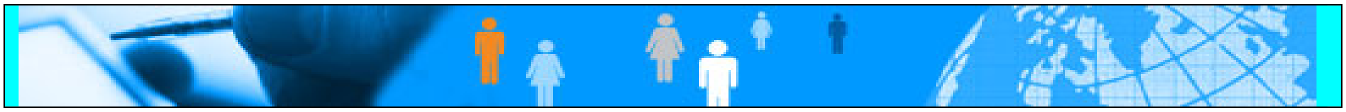
We at PMI-ISSIG believe that our members would be served better by transitioning the PMI-ISSIG into a virtual community of practice (CoP) within PMI. Since we are the largest SIG within PMI, we have taken this initiative very seriously and are working hard to establish the terms and conditions of such a potential transition that would benefit both our members and the project management profession. We have approached this initiative with caution, always acting in upholding of our "Members First" theme.

Your feedback is extremely important to me. Let us keep in touch through two way communication.

With best regards,

Sanjay Swarup, PMP, P.Eng.
Chair, PMI-ISSIG
chair@pmi-issig.org
http://www.pmi-issig.org

2010 PMI-ISSIG Theme: “Members First”



III. From the Editor

By Tolitha Lewis, PMP
PMI-ISSIG Director of Communications
communications@pmi-issig.org

Welcome to your May 2010 issue of the Bits!

We are able to provide this information thanks to the many volunteers within our group. Thanks to everyone who helps contribute to all of the efforts of the PMIISSIG community.

We love to include information written by our members! It's a great way to share your experience and provide critical value to the entire PMI-ISSIG community. PDUs are awarded to authors as follows:

- ISSIG Review articles selected for publication earn 15 PDUs!
- Bits articles allow you the opportunity to be read by our thousands of members; however, they do not qualify for PDUs.

We urge you to document your expertise and send us an article to share in the Bits and/or Reviews. All articles should be in an MS Word format and can be submitted to communications@pmi-issig.org

Remember that you can read past issues of the Bits and ISSIG Review on our Web site under Documents. Visit our Web site at www.pmi-issig.org You will be glad you did.

IV. Articles and Contributions

Common Mistakes of New Project Teams

By Joe Schweitzer
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Note: This article appeared in www.projecttimes.com

We must, indeed, all hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately. – Benjamin Franklin

The Benjamin Franklin quotation is a bit melodramatic for an IT article. Perhaps none of us within IT delivery are at risk of death by hanging when we don't meet expectations. However, the concept of 'hanging together' is the foundation of unity. Unity is established or abandoned at the start of a project. In this article, I will describe two key building blocks for team unity that are often overlooked by project teams.

1. Clearly articulated rules of engagement
2. Clearly articulated roles and expectations.

Have you ever had that experience where you are so eager to get started on a task, that you don't take that small bit of time for planning? Think about mowing a lawn, do you start the mower and just start mowing? Does this put you at risk of inadvertently mowing into the neighbor's yard? Your neighbor wouldn't mind (if you mowed their entire lawn). Now think about joining a newly formed team? What a great opportunity. What a huge mistake if your team does not start out by establishing rules of engagement and clearly articulated roles and expectations. Project teams are often eager to get busy and show some results. This drive is great. However, if you jump into analysis and meetings, without taking a little bit of time to establish rules of engagement, you are likely to experience a needlessly bumpy road.

Project teams often forget to establish ground rules, such as,

Communication - How do we communicate? What are our preferred tools for communication: face-to-face, email, instant messaging, conference calls, etc?

Meeting Management - What are our meeting ground rules? Are we free to block portions of our calendar for heads down work time? Can we establish that we will not schedule meetings before 9AM or after 4PM? Can we ALL agree that we will not read emails during meetings, and that we will put our cell phones on vibrate or do not disturb during meetings? Can we build in time to review action items? Can we all agree to arrive on time or send a note/make a call when we know we will be late? How about "No meeting Fridays?"

Personality Conflicts - Have you ever been on a team where you have that very strong-willed, vocal personality? We know them, we love them, and we can't live without them (but we can try). What a great growth opportunity. You could be the person that engages the conflict and helps Bitter Betty understand how she is being perceived. If your name is Betty and you are reading this, I was referring to someone else named Betty. Honestly! Is there a way to establish ground rules whereby we can rein in the strong personality and ensure that all viewpoints are discovered?

Project teams should establish early, that as iron sharpens iron, we as a team will resolve to address and engage conflict. Engage conflict? What did he say? Conflict is human nature and a consequence of living in an imperfect world. If you are reading this, and you have witnessed toddler behavior, do you think we have to teach our children to not share, or to say with conviction, "MINE!" Can we as a team, set up ground rules whereby we agree to discuss the conflict, and resolve to try to find compromise, prior to escalating, because we would rather resolve this within the team than consume our leader's time. Right?

And the fun continues. As new people join your team, why not review your rules of engagement with them? Perhaps, the newest addition to your team has some valuable insight or past experiences, good or bad, which are perfect for your team.

Once you have a clearly articulated set of agreed upon ground rules, you can drill down even farther on the expectations for each role on the team.

Many project teams do not take the time to establish and document roles and expectations for the team members. It seems that the teams agree to follow some sort of nebulous standard on each role's responsibility. However, too often, we don't take the time to have an open discussion on what expectations and commitment mean to each person.

For example, as the project manager, I commit that I will establish the project plan; I will use the risk log to bring visibility to issues that are inhibiting our team's success; I will serve as that neutral third party on the team; I will show no favoritism to the business partners nor the technical partners; and I will pair with the business analyst to drive the project towards completion. I will bring donuts on Fridays (it doesn't hurt to ask).

As the business analyst, I will be that neutral liaison between the business and technical partners; I will ask clarifying questions to shape the business idea into clear, concise, correct, complete requirements; I will establish a road map, I will partner with the project manager to synchronize the road map with the project plan; I will ensure that the right persons are at the table while I elicit, define, and communicate the solution requirements; and I will not leave you hanging when we draw near to implementation.

Another suggestion with respect to roles: why not have an elevator speech handy that not only describes your project, but also describes your specific contribution to the team.

Ground rules and clear roles are the building blocks for a good team. I have often overlooked the importance of establishing these on newly formed teams. If your team is struggling, chances are, they did not take the time to establish team ground rules and clear roles. There is good news. It's not too late. Even if you have delivered a few releases, it is never too late to establish or add onto your team's ground rules and/or provide some needed clarity to roles. We all might even have fun in the process

Finding Out Who Owns the Information

By Tim Porter
porter@hundsun.com

Note: Tim is a regular blogger at http://www.pmi-issig.org you can read all his posts there

In China, you'll sometimes hear people refer with a special reverence to a person using the title "Shifu". This Chinese word means "master" and can be used to refer to special "gurus" in any profession. But as in most things Chinese you need to dig deeper for true meanings. "Guru" is not quite the right word.

Shifu is usually translated to "master" and even this misses the connotation embedded with the Chinese word. The word shifu is made up of two characters. "Shi" which means teacher. Teachers are generally held in somewhat higher regard in China as a matter of respect than they are in the West. "Fu" has the connotation of father. So for example you'll hear this term applied to a kungfu master or to a master craftsman. But again in traditional Chinese culture the shifu is not just a master.

There is an expression in China that you are a teacher for a day and a father for life. So the "shifu" is also master for life. The Shifu holds a position higher than both the teacher and the father, and is treated with tremendous respect and honor. The shifu is the repository and the owner of the special skills which are key to making a life in traditional Chinese culture. It's only after years of near servitude that a student can earn the right to be taught the shifu's secrets.

Remembering that this knowledge preservation instinct permeates Chinese culture, what then is the significance for information protection and knowledge management. The free and open transfer of information and knowledge is not the norm. The reverse is true. And when it does occur it is only after a price has been paid. Further distribution is carefully controlled and subject to severe penalties if violated.

Another thing that often strikes a new arrival from the west as somewhat odd is the reluctance of Chinese companies to partner with other companies. Let's say you work for an IT company and you have a hot prospect with a need for offshore outsourcing services. After lining up your qualifications and capabilities you realize you are a little short in some key areas. If you were back home you'd just pick up your rolodex and call a couple of your contacts at a company with the needed skills. At your previous company back in the USA partnering with another company, even a competitor, is quite routine in the pursuit of new business. On one opportunity you are partners and on another you may be competitors.

In China you might find that identifying those companies with the needed skills is straightforward but there is a great reluctance to consider the possibility of joint pursuit of an opportunity with any other company, much less a potential competitor. Of course all Chinese companies are different. Many are tackling these issues and many are having some success. The point is that there are strong cultural instincts at work that should be carefully considered and allowed for when trying to tap into a company's knowledge base. This can be very frustrating for the foreigner.

The Project Status Blog

By Michael Staples, PMP
http://www.pmi.org/Resources/Pages/Knowledge-Shelf.aspx

Note: This article appeared in PMI Knowledge Shelf

Of the many things that contribute to a project's success, few offer as much leverage as effective communication. Those of us who serve in project management roles are always looking for better ways to communicate, including the timely distribution of project status reports. Large projects are particularly challenged in creating and sharing status information. Some communication tools, such as project status reports, may be reviewed and revised a number of times before they are published, ultimately delaying their distribution and usefulness. Informal delivery methods, enabled and expedited by the speed of computer networking, offer more rapid exchanges of information, promote interaction, and provide a historical repository for project work.

One such communication method originated first as a web-based means of recording a log of articles written about specific subjects and published at regular intervals. The blog (short for web log) is typically authored by one person, often containing commentary on specific topics and themes. While we generally think of a blog as a web-based tool to reach thousands of otherwise unconnected readers, it can also be advantageously applied to promote speedy communications to a specific audience of project team members.

This article focuses on the use of a blog to serve as the primary means of quickly disseminating project status. Hence the term blog will be used here to refer to the specific application of a "project status blog." Unlike its web counterpart, the project status blog can and should have many authors, each reporting status for a specific portion of the project. The blog's ability to categorize and archive status entries allows it to serve as a historical repository of the project build with daily activities assigned to categories to promote quick access of project history.

As with any form of communication, the project status blog is most effective when applied within a specific set of circumstances. Status communications consisting of simple, quick updates are easily adapted to the blog format. Other factors to keep in mind when deciding if the blog is the best communication method are:

Is the information to be distributed time sensitive? The longer that communications are delayed, the less valuable they become. Time-sensitive communications are perfect for the blog in which posts are instantaneously distributed to readers. Although it may be argued that e-mail serves the same purpose, the blog has some important distinctions. E-mail requires the use of distribution lists to reach intended audiences. The author may not have access to and/or use the appropriate list, thereby inadvertently excluding some team members who in fact need to know the information being sent in the e-mail. Posting to the blog ensures distribution to all blog users. E-mail also does not offer the full organizational and archival capabilities of a blog and is not as adept at promoting comments, questions, and responses that can be viewed by all. Finally, to best blend the advantages of e-mail and blog formats, consider the use of e-mail alerts that notify users when new blog entries have been created and can be set to display the entries themselves.

Can the subject matter be conveyed simply? Blogs are quite capable of recording detailed entries. However, if the purpose of the blog is to readily and quickly communicate project status, simple entries capturing the essence of what has occurred are the most efficient. Detailed documentation can be captured and stored through more traditional methods, for example, document libraries.

Are a number of questions and responses to the original entry anticipated? Comments and questions can be posted in response to a blog entry. Categories can be set up to permit readers to easily browse the history of comments, questions, and responses without having to view other posts unrelated to the original subject.

Are traditional communications hindered by the project's size and complexity? Reports, e-mails, teleconferences, and meetings all have their place in facilitating project communications. Depending on the size of the project, they may be sufficient to communicate project status. However, most projects suffer from the difficulty of keeping team members and stakeholders informed of the project status in a timely manner. The blog can fulfill this need. Look to the blog to enhance, but not replace, more traditional methods of communication.

Are major project status announcements (completion of milestones, schedule delays and resolutions, etc.) frequent? Blogs can contain a section for important and timely project announcements. This section should be prominently placed to ensure that it is the first area that readers will see.

The project status blog is not without its share of disadvantages. To facilitate speedy communications, it is best to grant all project members access to publish entries. This increases the possibility of publication of controversial or sensitive postings that may serve to distract rather than inform. Consider assigning responsibility to two or three team members to monitor blog posts and work with an author to remove or revise sensitive verbiage. (Often the author may be unaware of the sensitivity of his or her posting.) The blog distribution list must also be carefully considered. For example, granting customers access to the blog is not always appropriate and may generate reactions before management has had time to address and resolve problems.

<u>Tips for Creating a Blog Entry</u>

After weighing the pros and cons and deciding to launch a blog, follow these tips for using it as a positive project status communication tool:

1. Summarize what has been accomplished. The blog can serve as a historical archive of the progression of work. If designated as such, it is important to capture in summary form all that has

been done. Set up at least one archive category for older posts. On more complex projects, several archive categories may be established for specific subjects.

2. Keep it short and simple. Readers want a quick summary of what has been done, what is next, any problems encountered, and proposed resolutions. Leave lengthy detailed narratives to sources of communication not focused on providing quick reads. Keep in mind that complementary detailed narratives can be generated in traditional word processing formats and stored in project document libraries.

3. Post quickly. Work is most relevant the minute it is completed and loses relevance as other work takes center stage. By publishing blog entries immediately after the work has completed, the author communicates quickly the essence of what has been done.

4. Write informally. Write as if talking to your team. The blog is an informal communication method and consequently, the prose doesn't have to be perfect. The blog entry is intended to disseminate information quickly and efficiently. Striving for perfection will delay the process.

5. Review entries before posting. Take a few minutes to proof for obvious typos and grammatical errors. As an alternative, type the entry into a word processing tool first and then copy/paste into the blog. (More recent versions of blog software include editing capabilities). While the tone can be informal, the spelling and punctuation should be correct. Errors distract the reader and may cast doubt on the writer's message.

6. Spell out acronyms. Posts will most likely be specific to the author's work discipline. Keep in mind that others may not be familiar with the acronyms and technical terms you are using. Spell out acronyms that may be unfamiliar to readers. Also limit the use (or provide a brief explanation) of specific terminology understood by only a subset of readers.

7. Use the blog's interactive features. Use the "Comments" function to post questions or follow-up comments on another author's recent post. If the number of comments and responses are large, consider creating a separate category for the topic. The category will organize the comments and responses in one blog section, making it easier to follow the complete subject thread.

8. Follow-up. As the post's author, answer questions or respond to comments as they arise. If the thread of questions and responses becomes too long, set up a separate category for your topic. By quickly posting responses to questions and comments, readers are further encouraged to use the blog's interactive capabilities.

9. Build on the existing thread. If your topic is a continuation of an existing subject, build on the previous posts. Since earlier entries are available for review, it's fine to take up where the previous posts left off without re-summarizing.

10. Keep it professional. Post the facts of a problem or issue without assigning blame. A blog is not the appropriate place to air differences or raise alarming questions about the project's status.

By following these simple tips, a project blog can serve as an easy-to-use, quick, and effective method of keeping the project team current on the work at hand. It requires minimal maintenance, can reach a specific targeted audience, and may also serve as an archive of the project build. Posts are distributed immediately, readers have the option to comment or ask questions, and categories of blog entries allow readers to easily select and review topics relevant to them.

A blog can provide many advantages as part of an overall communications plan. As with any single form of communication, though, don't expect too much. Look for the project status blog to enhance rather than replace more traditional methods of project communication.

V. ISSIG Editorial Calendar & Contribution Guidelines

The ISSIG Editorial Calendar is a work-in-progress as we further streamline the publication process, better serving our members. Please remember your ISSIG staffers and contributing authors are all volunteers with busy careers of their own. A new calendar is under development and will be published when it becomes available.

ISSIG Review and Bits Contribution Guidelines: *ISSIG cannot accept document manuscripts formatted as image files, so please send all manuscripts formatted in MS Word or equivalent, to* **communications@pmi-issig.org***. To facilitate editing, graphics should be included as separate files as well as embedded within the document. ISSIG Review articles are typically 1,500 to 2,500 words in length and provide useful advice or guidance to ISSIG members.*

ISSIG Bits articles are typically 500 to 750 words in length and provide similar value or entertainment to ISSIG members. (Word counts are rough guidelines only.) See "Copyright and Distribution Information" below, for more specifics on ISSIG Bits articles.ISSIG Review articles selected for publication earn 15 PDUs! Bits articles do not earn PDUs at this time.

VI. Contact Information

PMI-ISSIG's Membership Service Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:45 pm EST, excluding holidays to answer your questions about membership and PMI-ISSIG resources. You can reach us at:

Mailing Address:	**Other:**
PMI-ISSIG	**Toll-Free, US and Canada:** 1-877-667-8707
109 VIP Drive, Suite 220	**FAX:** 724-935-1560
Wexford, PA 15090	**e-Mail:** info@pmi-issig.org
USA	**Web site:** www.pmi-issig.org

Attention: *Are you an ISSIG member and not receiving your monthly electronic Bits newsletter? Sign in on the ISSIG Homepage, at* http://www.pmi-issig.org*, and click on "Newsletter Signup." Not receiving the ISSIG Review? Visit the PMI Homepage and update your personal profile. The Review distribution list is based on your contact information on file with PMI.*

Remember: ISSIG receives its member contact information from PMI. Therefore, all changes to your member contact information must be made through PMI. E-mail your details to PMI. Alternatively, you can login to PMI's Web site and change it in the member section.

VII. Copyright and Distribution Information