475 Project Management Discussion Board Questions:

**Week 1:**

Which stage of the four stages of the project life cycle do you think is most critical for project success? Discuss and explain your choice.

Given the four stages of the project life cycle, (Definition, Planning, Execution, and Evaluation/Closure), I view execution as the most critical for project success. One could make the argument that all stages are critical for project success, but the question specifically asks to choose a stage.

I view the stages definition, planning, and evaluation as revolving around execution as well as supplementing execution. The rubber hits the road when the project is in the execution phase in that the projects visibility, vulnerability, and impact is in full stride and the project impact is most likely seen from management. Execution also has margin to iterate the stages definition and planning as actual developments happen. It is obvious that all stages are necessary, but without solid execution the other stages are bureaucratic process without real purpose to carry to fruition (I’m sure there are going to be response posts to this statement).

Tom has been a project manager at ETW Nautical Supplies for about five years. Today, like most days, Tom arrives at his office an hour early. He spends the first 30 minutes reading his e-mails and catching up on voicemails. Then he saunters down to cafeteria where he gets his morning coffee and chats with his coworkers and reports as they filter in to get their own coffees. He gets delayed by Marge, a member of one of his core teams, who is excited to show him photos of her new grandson, Oliver. This means he gets back to his office a little later than planned. He spends about an hour sending e-mails and returning phone calls, before he takes a stroll through Cubicle Alley, as he calls it. He stops by each team member’s desk to check in. “What’s happening?” he queries each person. These ritual stops have become known at ETW as drive-bys. Just as he begins to prepare for a project meeting with his team on the crucial Sail2020 project, he gets an angry phone call from a vendor for Sail2020 complaining that the team is now asking for extra features that were not in the original specs and that adding those features will double the price of the parts. Tom tells him that he will find out what is going on and get back him. After slamming the phone down, Tom returns to Cubicle Alley and begins yelling, “What the heck is going on here? Why didn’t anyone tell me this earlier?” After spending 45 minutes getting to the bottom of the problem, Tom learns it is the client who is making these demands to the team. Tom stomps back to his office, and calls the client, who doesn’t answer. Now Tom is behind schedule getting his meeting organized, so he works through lunch to get the agenda for the Spinnaker2014 project finished. There’s no sense sending it out, as they will meet in 15 minutes at 1:30 p.m.

Tom arrives at the meeting room on time, but team members trickle in until 1:45 p.m. During this time, Marge pulls out the photos of Oliver and shows them to the team members present. They then pull out the photos of their kids and grandchildren to share. The meeting doesn’t get started until 1:50 p.m. At 2:14, Tom’s boss Mary Sue arrives. She apologizes for being late and explains why she is so busy. Everyone listens. Then, Tom summarizes what Mary Sue missed. The meeting gets back on track at 2:25 p.m., only to have two critical members of the team leave, explaining they have another meeting at 3 p.m. across the expansive ETW corporate campus. Mary Sue gets impatient, and wants a quick summary of just where the project is in terms of deadlines. She hears a summary of what the team has done. At 2:55 p.m., Mary Sue leaves, saying she wants an update on her desk by the end of business that day. The meeting breaks up shortly after 3 p.m. Tom announces he will send out a Doodle to find a time for the next meeting. When Tom returns to his office, he has an irate message from the client, who says he isn’t satisfied with the progress on the project. Tom immediately calls him and tries to explain that the added features the client wants are out of scope and will drive up the cost of the project. The client threatens to fire ETW and take his business elsewhere. Tom manages to arrange a meeting at the client’s office tomorrow morning. Hanging up the phone at about 4 p.m., Tom feels exhausted, so he shuts his office door, turns off the computer and turns down the ringer on his desk phone and cell phone and takes a 20-minute power nap. When his alarm awakens him, he begins writing that project update Mary Sue has asked for but has to make a couple of calls to the team to get some of the specific information she wants. It is shortly after 6 p.m. when Tom e-mails the update to Mary Sue. Victoria, another ETW project manager, stops by his office. She is in a crunch with a key project and needs to get more hours this week from the IT person she and Tom share. They work out a schedule, and Victoria leaves saying, “Thanks, Tom. I owe you one.” Tom answers a few critical e-mails and packs his briefcase for his meeting with the client tomorrow and leaves his office around 7 p.m.

* What did Tom do that you think are smart practices for a project manager?
  + As a project manager, Tom’s smart practices included listening, patience, facilitating workplace relationships, hardworking, meeting key stakeholder deadlines, and flexibility.
* What might he have done better?
  + Tom needs to set better boundaries, and work to be a transformational leader as opposed to a “hover hawk”, in that he has to check in at “cube alley”. His team should know to come to him with updates and necessary statuses, as opposed to him going to them. I am concerned he is working too long and might succumb to burnout.
* How effective do you think Tom is as a project manager?
  + I do not know enough about the projects to make a solid assessment of his efficacy as a project manager. On a scale of 1-10, I would rate him as a 7 based on the information above and the progress he is making.
* If you were to make one recommendation to Tom, what would it be?
  + Empower more of his team to handle administrative and leadership processes such that he has more time to focus on his core strengths.

How do you think your organizational culture influences projects in your organization?

Projects are a continual process here at Target, and the organizational culture responds positively because projects often transform and keep Target relevant in the retail marketplace.

* What are the advantages of a smaller organization, less than 20 employees, when it comes to managing projects?
  + Visibility is known to all employees, success can transform the organization, and projects can be more nimble.
* What are the disadvantages?
  + Failure can sink the organization, favorites can be an issue, and management can meddle in the process.
* What are the advantages of a large organization, more than 200 employees, for managing projects?
  + In a large organization, project managers have more control of their projects, resources are often readily available, networking to solve issues can be done easily, and management tends to be more lenient on iterations.
* What are its disadvantages?
  + From working at Target here is what I see: Getting “buy-in” from key stakeholders can be very difficult, utilizing cross-functional teams can yield little results, and unnecessary process can lead to project bureaucracy.

Be as specific as possible. Use real world examples wherever possible.

We'll use a similar thread each Session to address MS Project questions, concerns and general collaboration in expressing the current material in the tool.

**Week 2**

What are the Discussion Board expectations per the Session 1 Introductory/Overview Sync Session?

Think of a project you have been or are currently involved with that doesn’t have a project scope statement. What problems have you encountered? How might a project scope statement have helped the project team avoid some of these problems?

Effective and productive meetings are rare. What irritates you the most about poorly run meetings? What best practices can we use to run a good meeting? Let’s share.

Michael has agreed to head the committee to run this year’s pee wee ice hockey tournament. He gathers his committee together for its first meeting and leads a brainstorming session for how this year’s tournament should be run.   
  
  
  
The discussion rapidly disintegrates into a complaint session about prior tournaments. A few people do most of the talking and a couple say nothing at all. The meeting runs long, and several people leave before it is over. Other than making some subcommittee assignments based on who volunteered for each committee, little is decided.   
  
  
  
After the meetings, Jane who has successfully run the food concessions for the last five years calls Michael to say she is just too busy to help out this year. Two other committee members also call to say they don’t think they will have time right now to help out but maybe another time.  
  
  
  
How would developing a WBS alleviate some of the problems that occurred during the first meeting and help Michael organize and plan the project? What might he have done before the first meeting?

**Week 3**

Often top management dictates the deliverables for a project, telling the team what the scope will be, the available budget, and the deadline. In many situations, what they want is not realistic. How might you use the estimates from a work breakdown structure to help them see what is and is not realistic? Have any of you faced such a situation? If so, how have you handled it and how did it work out?

Sometimes estimates are based on a past project, but instead of counting the number of hours an employee worked (e.g. 10-hour days), the number of days is only counted. For example, you might say that for project X, we had two employees spend five days each on this task. But, you only count the five days, not the fact that each employee worked 10 hours each of those days. How can this affect future estimates? What is the danger of this practice? If you have any experience with this in your real life, please share it.

Think of a situation, perhaps on a project team, where you had to make some estimates. How did you go about deriving them? Did you gather information from other sources? If so, who or what? What did you find was most helpful in developing realistic estimates? And conversely, what methods did you try that you did not find helpful? What would you do differently if you had to repeat this estimating?

**Week 4**

There are numerous precedence diagramming software packages available. Select one, preferably one that another student has not already reviewed, and check it out. Write a brief review of it for the class.

Smartsheet.com offers online Gantt Chart software that is very helpful for precedence diagramming. The graphical user interface (GUI) is very user friendly and allows for point and click operation. Another pro is the feature that allows different vantage points. One can navigate at any level of the project with very few clicks. In addition, project iterations are automatically calculated down the chain to move deadlines and progress with ease. The x-axis is easily customizable to see timeframe, deadlines, and hierarchical priorities. The weaknesses I found were along the lines of lack of customization. Given that the GUI is point and click, one cannot easily operate outside of the programmed functions. Also, this tool seems to hands single variable change starting from the top down, which is not always realistic for project management.

https://www.smartsheet.com/c/online-gantt-chart

The longest path through a network also indicates the minimum amount of time needed for a project. What concept does this statement refer to and why is it important to know?

The concept being referred to above is Critical Path or Critical Path Method (CPM), and is important based on the following:

* Shows the level of flexibility and amount of scheduling through different paths of the project.
* The forward pass calculation is established from the longest path, and early start and finish times are drawn from the longest path as well.

How can the longest path determine the shortest project duration?

From the forward pass calculation based off of the longest path one can establish the shortest project duration.

Why is slack important to a project manager and what is the difference between free and total slack?

Slack is important to a project manager because it numerically demonstrates the flexibility and rigidity of a specific project highlighting potential bottle necks. Free Slack pertains to a specific activity and the number of days it can be delayed before affecting the next task. Total Slack is the same as Free Slack with the difference being instead of next activity it pertains to the whole project.

**Scope Definition and Realistic Expectations**

You are asked to be the project manager for a state of the art project to develop an interactive TV network for Company CWT. This project included technologies that still needed to be invented and included functions such as video on demand, on-line shopping, interactive multi-player games, etc. At the time of this project, this was leading edge and preceded the functions which we now take for granted on the internet.

When you joined the executive management meeting, each representative described his/her role and re-confirmed that his piece of the project would be done on time. As you were listening, you became concerned at the level of effort and the reconfirmation of the year end completion date (this meeting was in March). At the end of the meeting, you were asked what you thought and you told them that you were still evaluating all the information since this was your initial meeting. The key executive re-emphasized to you the absolute need for a year end completion and that this date has been highly publicized to the media.

Very quickly, you and your team performed analysis which determined some of the following:

• some key work segments had not been identified and responsibility for these had not been assigned,  
• some technology was leading edge and had to be invented and then manufactured, and  
• over 10 outside co-participating companies were involved in this project.

Your team concluded that the year-end completion date was probably infeasible and even completion by the end of year 2 would be a challenge. (You received a "hearty reception" when the analysis was presented.)  
=====================================================================================================

**Questions:** (with the completion of Assignment #4, you have learned to use planning tools and techniques to evaluate this project scope and schedule.)

1. Which tools & techniques (that you have learned in the course so far) would you use to evaluate the deliverables and completion date?  
2. How would you use the tools & techniques?  
3. What would be your response to the following points:   
a) We have plenty of time. It is only March and we have through the end of the year.  
b) What would it take to finish by the end of the year?

  BTW...You were interviewed by the Wall Street Journal after the successful completion of the project. The major question that you got was "Why was the project a year late?" Share an excerpt of your response!

**Week 5**

Read the *10 Golden Rules of Project Risk Management* and select the three you think are the most important. Then, explain your reasoning.

Test early, Report to the client, and Contingency

Of the following *10 Golden Rules of Project Risk Management:*

## Rule 1: Understand the scope

## Rule 2: Understand the win parameters for the stakeholders

## Rule 3: Plan

## Rule 4: Contingency

## Rule 5: Communicate with the team

## Rule 6: Test early/prototype

## Rule 7: Monitor

## Rule 8: Report to the client / Manage expectations

## Rule 9: Deliver

## Rule 10: Hold a wrap up / lessons learnt meeting

The three I find most important are Test early/prototype, Report to the client / Manage expectations, and Plan and Contingency.

Test early/prototype in a project setting allows one to snuff out the match before it turns into a blaze. An issue that originally might take a few hours to resolve has the potential to derail a project. The past two weeks at work I have been working on a project that has been nothing but headaches in regard to established processes not working, ie technology. From the start of this project, I started testing the software literally the day after the project started. As I assumed, there were major problems with project flow as a result of the software failure, but we circumnavigated the crises by hedging our risk by utilizing SAS code to accomplish the overall analytical lifting. I also immediately managed the expectation with the client and they helped to navigate the ambiguity by prioritizing what they wanted.

Report to the client / Manage expectations is a component of transformational leadership. In my opinion, through clarifying ownership and managing expectations it frees up time/responsibilities for the project manager. One can manage expectations vertically with my favorite leadership style, transformational leadership. The case study below validates the efficacy of high autonomy work roles as well as low autonomy work roles in enhancing employee proactive behaviors (the positive desired output) when transformational leadership is applied.

Den Hartog, Deanne, and Frank Belschak. "When does transformational leadership enhance employee proactive behavior? The role of autonomy and role breadth self-efficacy.." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97.1 (2012): 194-202. Print.

Risks are a part of project management. Planning and implementing contingencies are what separates seasoned professionals from frantic rookies. I continually strive to implement reasonable contingencies as I move from project to project. The software situation above highlights the most recent contingency that paid off big for me.

Read the *Deliberate Ignorance in Project Risk Management* article. Have you ever observed deliberate ignorance in assessing risk in any projects you have been involved with?

Ignorance from a Different Perspective

When I worked in Afghanistan, I observed deliberate ignorance in assessing risk. This was due in part to the fact where we were working in Afghanistan was very close to a city (Kundoz) that was held by the Taliban (30-40 min drive). I know this situation is not what the discussion board had in mind, but I think it sheds light on an anomaly when to actually ignorantly look past risk. The risk associated to being in that part of the country was life threatening, which rationally meant that we should not have been there, but the conviction to placate specific villages devastated by war over ruled the rationale.

What can be done to minimize this problem?

While this might be an anomaly, minimizing the deliberate ignorance was more of an issue rather than letting certain ignorance’s persist for sanities sake. To assess the safety factor would have led many to simply leave the project, but working in Afghanistan comes with the risks. As I look back, there were certain risks within the project like procuring resources which could have minimized project risk. I would have hired another logistics offer to seek out separate bids as well as transportation bids to the villages, this would have helped us massively once the projects hit that phase.

What will you do as a project manager to ensure the risk analysis of the projects you lead will be thorough but still avoid analysis paralysis?

Having purposeful risk analysis checkpoints is a great way to establish project norms without analysis paralysis. My projects are rather short, and figure 7.8 on page 217 in *Project Management* is a practical tool I will use to gut check my projects.

What are the major differences between managing negative risks vs. positive risks (opportunities)?

Positive & Negative Risk

# I have not had much experience in either positive or negative risk except for when software systems/servers go down, or people quit. I researched a relevant article on risk. Positive risks are meant to be managed such that the risk is maximized. Negative risk is intended to be minimized in order to keep projects on track. In the journal article, *Project risk management methodology for small firms*, (see attachment) the author highlights how to hedge negative risk for small organizations by focusing on the alignment of a company’s strategy as well as being focused on results management. This article highlights basic questions individuals should ask as they work through a project to minimize negative risk. This approach is rather soft compared to the detailed analytical approached we learned in chapter 7.

**Week 6**

Beyond the text reading, I feel we critically overlook the all important topic(s) of resource loading and leveling. Share your understanding of the two techniques, why they're important and any lessons learned you have around their use.

Micro-Management?

Resource loading primarily pertains to the aspects of a project that entail employees and manpower. Within resource planning, employees are assigned tasks, responsibilities, goals that make up a percent the total project. In addition to the project percentage, the employee also carries a percentage booked metric in regard to their individual workload. The upside to resource allocation is the potential to forecast additional manpower. In my experience, project managers that drill down to this level percentage booked metric tend to be overbearing, micro-managers, and not enjoyable to work for. Resource allocation is very important as it straddles the line of project efficacy, but over planning on resource loading can create unneeded animosity. I also realize I am young and I look forward to interacting with a PM that is good at resources loading as well as emotionally intelligent such that teams find it enjoyable to work.

Resource leveling is expanded beyond employees to factor time, budget, and additional project constraints. Resource leveling is concerned more with balancing the project interests with the projects resources. In my project management experiences in Afghanistan, resource leveling was a hot topic based on cultural implications on who we partnered with for implementation. Without proper leveling the project had the potential to loose scope and fail to meet beneficiary requirements.

Take-Away:

The short book and questionnaire *Emotional Intelligence* is a great tool for maturing in ones understanding and interactions with others. The concepts and implementation of resource loading and leveling needs to be balanced with superior communication and relationship skills.

slide 1 of 2

* slide 2 of 2

We’ve considered reducing scope and adding resources to accelerate and/or shorten the duration of a project. Share your experiences of how you’ve seen this done effectively (or not).

USAID & Netherlands

Personal Experience:

Many USAID projects have stringent implementation timelines, the entire project must be finished by a specific date. We could not add additional resources to the project based on the governmental funding process. Thus, reducing complexity through focusing on fewer villages and subsequent construction projects allowed our projects to stay on the targeted time of completion. The senior project management team met together and collaboratively made weekly iterations in an effort to stay on target. As a result of the weekly meetings, larger-scale project decisions were made with rather ease based on the established communication channels and consistent positive consensus.

Case Study:

# I found a project from the International Journal of Project Management titled “*Keeping it simple? A case study into the advantages and disadvantages of reducing complexity in mega project planning”*.

The Beneluxlijn infrastructure project took place in Rotterdam, Netherlands. This was considered a mega project based on the time and cost. The end result was a project that finished near the deadline and stayed on budget. Why this project garners so much attention is the fact it is an anomaly for such large project to finish within project timelines and on budget.

The Good:

- A great deal of time and energy went into mitigating risk throughout the project (think last week)

- Optimism and miscommunication were neutralized.

- Project simplification was continually used from start to finish in an effort to keep progress flowing.

The Bad:

- Community impact was less than desired.

- Esthetics were lacking

- Future land utilization was overlooked

Conclusion: We read about many projects, especially large ones, that epically fail and it was refreshing to read about a mega-project that succeeded. Ultimately this project is a wonderful example of project management done well, and it reflects that the community needs to decide long term goals outside of a project.

One common solution for getting a project back on schedule is to throw more resources at it by having everyone work longer days. What are the dangers of this? How might this practice end up driving up the total costs for the project? Real life examples are welcome.

Transformational Leadership

Personal Experience:

Throwing more resources in an effort to get a project back on schedule can backfire without careful implementation. The more brain power one has working on a project the more time it can take to get the project completed. Having employees work longer days can result in negative sentiment, burnout, and poor work, which results in greater project costs. I was recently working on a marketing project at Target Corporation and adding more analysts to the project only delayed the stringent timeline because allocation needed to be re-established. I believe that adding more resources can positively impact a project getting back on schedule, but it takes humility from leadership and vulnerability from employees to flush out where the extra resources are needed and how to implement the additional resources.

Research:

Very rarely have I seen a situation where a team member will speak up about their need for help or additional resources. I think this exemplifies why PMs need to understand leadership. In the book *Leadership* *Theory and Practice*, transformational leadership is explained as inspiring others and encouraging vulnerability. The reference below validates the efficacy of high autonomy work roles as well as low autonomy work roles in employee proactive behaviors (the positive desired output) when transformational leadership is applied. This validates my belief that focusing on the person is key for positively influencing a situation and seeking a desired outcome.

Conclusion:

Transformational leadership is a technique I would use to assuage throwing more resources at a problem through better understanding my work force.

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**Week 7**

Most project teams have members from all generations—baby boomers, Generation X, and the millennials. This is presenting some new challenges to managing these teams. Read the article posted under Course Content regarding managing millennials. What does a project manager need to keep in mind when managing a multigenerational team?

The categorization of people based on a time span is rather arbitrary, but it provides a way to discretize a continuous variable, which in this case is age. An issue with established generations is that individuals born in 1980 tend to have more in common with individuals from generation X than the majority of millennials. A helpful result of grouping people by different generations is the ability to make blanket generalizations about a specific demographic. Given the different events, parenting styles, and issues through time, different generations see the world slightly different and knowing the differences is key for motiving, inspiring, and maximizing potential from different generations.

What advantages does each generation bring to a project team?

The typical stereotypes for each generation brings both advantages and disadvantages, and utilizing the advantages can be very rewarding.

Baby Boomers: Work-centered, defined by job titles, competitive, goal-driven

Generation X: Technologically inclined, flexible, balanced

Millennials: Tolerant-multiculturalism, hopeful, achievement-oriented, inclusive, civic-minded

Jason Dorsey is an author and speaker in regard to generations. In his book, *Y Size Your Business,* he discusses another maturity step for millennials. Adultessence in a phase that the past four generations have not gone through, it is from 21-26 when this generation is no longer a teen and not quite an adult. Majority of millennials in this time frame are/were still living with their parents (moved back in). This minor change in generational maturity has profound impact from buying patterns to work relationships and dynamics. We, millennials , are about 4-6 years behind past generations in their timeframes, and the majority of this is result of the Great Recession.

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What managerial practices distinguish a good manager from an average one?

An average manger connects with the team and carries positive rapport with direct reports.

A good manager inspires the team, the team feels like the manager is genuine and cares about the advancement of each team member, and the team believes that the manger is an advocate for each direct report.

What practices distinguish someone as a leader?

Practices that distinguish someone as a leader include: responsibility, action orientated, empowering, inspiring, realistic, steadfast, and transformational.

What leadership best practices have you observed that you think would serve a project manager well? Why?

As projects develop, greater needs often arise and the best practices I have seen project managers implement are continuing to elevate the direct reports. This constitutes delegation, empowerment, and continual communication. As a result of these actions, the entire level of talent and accomplishment elevates.

Think of a team project you have been involved with in the past or are currently involved in now, preferably one at work. Would you say that the team was high-performing, dysfunctional, or typical?

The current project I am on is highly-performing. Our team embraces change and communicates often. There is a degree of accountability as well as urgency that creates a sense of efficacy. The project manager is understanding but also holds all team members accountable. When I move into more of a leadership role, I will implement the continuous streams of communication as well as encourage team members with each interaction/

Describe the team dynamics to support your answer. Analyze the development of the team in terms of the five-phase model and the punctuated equilibrium model. If the team was high-performing, what made it so? Did the project manager foster this in some way? If so, how? If the team was not high-performing, what could the project manager have done to improve the team dynamics and performance? What have you learned from your experience on this team that you would apply when you are a project manager?

Have you ever lived or worked in another country? If so, share what you learned about adjusting to a new culture.

I have lived in Jordan and Afghanistan. Each country had a great deal of culture shock that required much adjustment. The three main stages of adaptation are: Honeymoon – I love everything, Hate Everything – I miss my home and things are weird, Adjustment – Functioning in the culture with emotional stability.

When I adjusted to cultures, laying low and studying the culture was huge to becoming a contributing member of the team. Being willing to try new things and apologize were key to winning over the new culture. Forcing myself to learn little phrases of the multiple dialects, learn street names and directions, as well as build relationships with the nationals all help to cope with culture shock. privelage

I have had the privilege of living and working in Amman, Jordan (International Development - Palestinian Refugees) and Taloqan, Afghanistan (USAID - Jr. Project Manager).i

Each country had a great deal of culture shock that required much adjustment. The three main stages of adaptation are: Honeymoon – I love everything, Hate Everything – I miss my home and things are weird, Adjustment – Functioning in the culture with emotional stability. In my title, I also mentioned Brooklyn, NY. I spent 4.5 months there in a training school and found that adjusting to Brooklyn was the hardest culture shock I have ever been through. My main stages I listed earlier were key for me making it in such a different place form Arizona.  The attached URL https://webapp.mis.vanderbilt.edu/studioabroad/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.ViewLink&Link\_ID=1B37F03E-D51C-21FF-B7FBAFB9A1F66972  is from Vanderbilt University and highlights quite well how to prepare and work through culture shock.

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The two greatest highlights and learnings from living abroad for short stints are the following:

* Classifying different cultural norms as "good or bad" does not help one to learn another culture, rather embracing them as different and exploring the culture is truly exciting. (Heck, I was born in WI and trying to explain to other cultures that we wear fake cheese on our head is crazy fun! They think I am crazy!)
* From experiencing other cultures, it allows you take a more holistic view of your own culture and realize where we are a little weird.

﻿﻿﻿﻿﻿

**Author:** Anonymous **Date:** Tuesday, February 11, 2014 7:22:15 PM CST **Subject:** Working and Living in Other Cultures

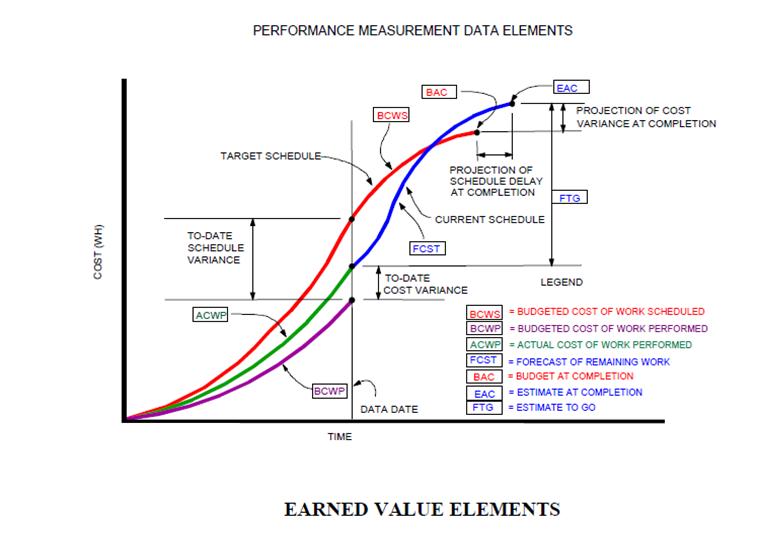
Have you ever lived or worked in another country? If so, share what you learned about adjusting to a new culture.

**Week 8**

I posted under Course Content\Session 8\EVMS Tutorials eight totorials (they are actually pdfed ppts) of the concepts and techniques of EVMS, soup to nuts. Many posts here suggests there's some interest. Lots of material, and real well done by a prominent Fed sector service provider. Let me know if you have questions/comments!

Use the Internet to find a case in which a project failed to fulfill its projective objectives, with serious financial consequences. Discuss how using EVA earned value analysis might have helped the organization make smarter decisions and avoid this failure.

In 1997, the Canadian government hired Electronic Data Systems (EDS) and SHL Systemhouse to implement a gun registration system. The original projected cost was $2 million to $119 million with annual licensing costs bringing in $117 million. Unforeseen outside forces like gun interest groups and lobbyists managed to force over 1,000 change orders within the first few years of the project launching. In addition, the system had to integrate with other agencies, an unforeseen expense, as well as the government had to pay for these new expenses. When it was all said and done, the project cost $688 million and support cost $300 million. Continuing the program each year costs $75 million, and the overall program only generated $140 million.



The diagram above is a great visual for how EVA might play out throughout a project. Through analyzing the projected to-date variance as well as the projected cost variance at completion, the Canadian government could have taken major discourse to avoid the billion dollar blunder. There are many different calculations for assessing the earned value of project iterations, but the bigger picture outside of the calculations is the accountability they bring. Simply being aware of these factors have the potential to prevent a major derailment.

http://www.brighthubpm.com/monitoring-projects/15893-lessons-we-can-learn-from-three-project-management-horror-stories/

Discuss the advantages of earned value analysis (EVA) in monitoring the progress and performance of a project. If you can, apply this methodology to a real life project you are familiar with, perhaps one you have been involved with. What challenges do you identify in moving an organization to using EVA as a project monitoring tool?

As a project advisor at Target Corporation, I see great value in earned value analysis to monitor the progress and performance of specific projects. On a monthly basis, I receive different project requests and I need tools to assess the efficacy of moving forward. Specifically, a couple of weeks ago I was working on a product migration strategy. The senior stakeholder had established an erroneous value for the project migration with very little primary data. The EVA would have been very helpful in monitoring the iterations the project has taken as well as establishing a more concrete size of prize. The issue with implementing a process like EVA is the timing and politics. A motto at Target is “speed is life” and getting decision makers as well as practitioners to slow down would require a culture shift that is not an easy sell.

I thought I would highlight a successful "public sector" project, the building of the Eiffel Tower.

http://www.managementcanvas.iimindore.in/icanvas/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=120:management-lessons-from-gustave-eiffel&catid=44:other-areas&Itemid=61  
  
We could all learn lessons from Gustave Eiffel.  He may not have had all the technical tools we have, but he clearly had a vision, a seemingly well-defined scope, and an ability to stay on top of the project the rest of the way.  Heck, he believed in it so much, he provided a majority of the construction costs in exchange for 20-year revenue stream.     
  
Though I know there are many failed investments, this example illustrates some pretty amazing managerial prowess.

Express our progress on this weeks DB (a single 7-day activity) at end-of-day (EOD) Weds in terms of EV.

Use 7 day activity duration, last week’s total 565 posts (PV) allocated evenly per day, dollarize posts - $1/post. Actual costs each day are 40, 60, 80, 80, 100, 125 and 80 (M - Su). Use % complete as the # of posts EOD Weds.

What is EV, CV, SV, CPI and SPI? What would a status report highlight?

Responses are due no later than midnight Friday, 16 Aug, on this thread.

**Week 9**

Your organization is losing money and credibility due to a run of failed projects. You want to convince your boss that what is needed is a project office to oversee the organization’s projects. Read the Ibbs and Kwank article and the Pennypacker and Grant paper. What important facts can you glean from these articles that will help you make a case for needing a project office?

Assess where your organization (past or current) is on the project maturity model and make recommendations to take the organization to the next level.

In order to help move Target to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I see project visibility and shared ownership as two major hurdles to overcome. At any given time, Target has hundreds of projects underway. Yet, many of these projects are “siloed” to specific departments of the organization. To inculcate \_\_\_\_\_ in the project maturity model, Target could use incentives to draw more core team members into relevant project life cycles. This would spur on collaboration and overall fluid communication. In an organization of over 13,000 corporate team members, visibility to any project is a struggle. However, as management embraces \_\_\_\_\_\_ visibility to pertinent projects would trickle down to the whole organization.

What support might you expect to have?

I would expect to have the support of technical, operations, and store divisions because of the framework of which these teams operate. In addition the projects sit well with the organizational structure as well as the work flow implementation.

What might be sources of resistance and how might you deal with them?

Merchandising, which drives Target, would resist the \_\_\_\_\_\_ transition. This division is rather whimsical and “gut” orientated based on trends and experience. Thus, planned projects and greater project orientation is viewed negatively and would go against the flow of decision making and work implementation.

How would you respond to the COO that requests your input  
and ideas for developing capability in the organization to manage projects with  
much greater predictability?

If the COO reached out to me for developing capability in the organization to manage projects with much greater predictability I would refer him to Roth Associates and give him the personal phone number of the president. Okay, I would not do that.

Given that the graduate degree I am pursuing is in Predictive Analytics, it would be great to have this conversation. I would need to spend time further elaborating on what is meant by “greater predictability”. My first step would be towards building a hierarchical predictive model based on the different divisions within Target, serving as the hierarchy. Project lifecycle stages would be used as response variables and individual project managers would be used as the covariates. The exploratory data analysis would look for correlations with projects and deadlines utilizing project managers as the key metric. From this analysis, one could better understand the project predictability by division along with personnel.

My overall strategy when convincing my boss would be to emphasize the industry standard and where our organization is at in the PMMM. Target prides itself on being a fortune 50 company, yet it is stuck at stage two of the PMMM, which is the average according to Pennypacker and Grant. In order for Target to remain a "best in class" company, it needs to mature as an organization along the lines of the PMMM. MSN recently ranked Target as one of the top ten retailers that are in trouble in 2014. Organizationally, Target needs to change to survive. No one is in favor of lay offs, but we can avoid layoffs if we mature along the PMMM. Projects in my opinion are the tactical plan for strategic change, they answer how an organization goes from point A to point B. The road map for success in 2014 outlines some radical thinking, and in order to compliment that thinking a project office is needed to implement the change across the organization of 300,000.

**Week 10**

What have you learned about project management that you think will be most useful to you in your future career?

The overall framework and phases of project management have challenged me to view my projects differently. This directly adds a sense of efficacy to my overall project implementation as well as long term strategy goals. Furthermore, this class has given me tools and a framework in which to lead, delegate, accomplish, and reflect. The tools will provide an instant template to record, structure, and analyze my projects taking them to the next level. I see all these components as being necessary tools in order to do my job well and continue to develop as a professional.

Your boss asks you to conduct a one-hour lunch-and-learn on what you learned from project management. What will you include in your workshop?

I will include the project phases, demonstrate a Gnatt Chart, and communication tools.

How will you make your selection?

I am making my selection based on the fact my target audience is my fellow teammates, and applying tools and techniques I know they would benefit from.

You’re at a cocktail party and meet a seasoned project manager. What questions would you ask him/her and why?

At this point, I do not think I would ask them any questions beyond what is polite.

My questions would include:

How long have you been in the business?

How have you enjoyed working as a PM?

What are the greatest challenges/ joys in the job?

What is the going salary with someone of your experience.

Where do you see the future of PM going?

All these questions pertain to better understanding why PM is a good field to enter and better understanding the personal side of PM.

Considering the database, analytics software, and statistical programming environments you have seen so far, what is your favorite and why?

From the analytics software, and statistical programming environments I have used in the MSPA program, R, Weka, and SPSS have been my favorite to use. The community around R is amazing as well as the open source nature allows for the small team to win in the giant world of analytics. Weka was very helpful for quickly analyzing complex algorithms and establishing metrics to compare the algorithms. The SPSS platform is unique in that the graphical user interface is used for very different kinds of analytics. For example, one can do data analysis as well as text analytics using the same GUI, which is helpful for ease of use.

How would you describe your ideal system for doing data science?

My ideal system for conducting data science aligns with Bruce Ratners paradigm. Allow the data to drive the mining techniques and modeling methodologies. Following a simple stream of logic is often very difficult in analytics, but should be an end goal for an exploratory data analysis.

Consider the problems, systems, and methods reviewed in this class, as well as the term projects completed by student teams. How would you assess your development and your perspective as a modeler and predictive analyst?

Since starting 412, my confidence and techniques for executing exploratory data analyses (EDA) has grown to a comfort level. Using R opened my eyes to the ease of which analytics can be conducted. Learning how to use training and testing data sets from one original dataset was very helpful and necessary to convince management of modeling revelations. This class was similar to 410 and 411 in that every week one is going to be stretched beyond ones comfort level, but the learning environment assuaged the accelerated learning. My skills and aptitude continues to grow with each class, and I feel more confident to handle ambiguous data requests.