

Managing the Project of Your Life¹

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Since the 1990s, a recurrent theme has surfaced in studies and at forums on human resource behavior. The theme is known by sundry names. Here are some: Project You, The Brand Called You, Employability, You Incorporated, Looking out for Number 1: are these terms still a sign of the times? Does it confirm the shift in focus for professionals: a trip into egomania where the big “I” is the center of the Universe? Does it mean that organizations will be full of renegades who think more about themselves than the company goals? What does all the rhetoric about You Incorporated really mean?

Now well into the Twenty-First Century, the name “millennial”, also sometimes called the Y generation, has moved to the forefront. Millennials are generally people born between 1982 and 2002, making them a highly digital generation. Due to the aging work force, company personnel have morphed into a mixture of waning baby boomers and the growing number of millennials.

The trend of individuals being choosier about the kind of work they perform is indeed a direct outcome of the times. Mergers, sell-offs, downsizing, outsourcing and reengineering have left the “forever faithful to the company cause” with a bad taste. Hoards of these dedicated professionals found themselves out on streets, with no visible marketable skills. And those who are left within the company ranks know that their time may come.

Even the millennials who haven’t tasted the reality of company life, may have an awareness for what might be in store for them. Working at a job that isn’t what they dreamed of, and knowing that they don’t control their future career has surely left many millennials with a cautious posture

For companies and professionals to survive and prosper jointly in these twirling times of jostling priorities, a major initiative is required to align company goals with individuals’ goals. Such alignment, say for a company that works with gypsy-like “project junkies”, calls for a major shift in behavior on the part of both professionals and organizations. Once these goals are aligned and mutually understood, the probability for achieving mutual objectives is highly enhanced.

Companies are obliged to understand that they need to cater to the changing needs of the professional marketplace. If people can’t count on keeping their jobs, then undying loyalty with no regard for personal survival in a shrinking job market, is not a reasonable thing to ask. Thus organizations need to encourage their employees to develop their “lifetime projects” and share

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that with the company, just as the company must share its goals and objectives with the organization's members. That alignment of individual objectives, ensures that, while the person and the company are jointly collaborating, mutual productivity is boosted.

Individuals, thus, need to have a clear vision of where they are going, and in what way personal goals and interests are complementary to those of the company. To fully understand this, a "life project" is called for, using project management tools based on the premise that life is a project. The development of such plans on the part of employees of all levels generates the basis upon which the alignment of objectives can take place.

Such a "life project" also generates a healthy fringe benefit. By using project management techniques, including a project breakdown structure, and life cycle planning techniques, employees are exposed to the basics of managing projects and will tend to apply them in the daily work place.

Here are the topics for individuals to develop a life plan using project management techniques.

1. Life as a Project
2. Life Models and Strategies
3. Scoping Out Your Life
4. Manage Your Time--Manage Your Life
5. Money and Such
6. The Quality of Life
7. People from the inside Out
8. Farming Stuff Out
9. Communicating Every Which Way
10. Life is a Risky Business
11. Putting All the Pieces Together

1. Life as a Project--a Sign of the Times

Free agents--self-employed, independent contractors and temps--made up 16% of the US workforce, numbering roughly 25 million in 1997. The number grows geometrically as more people are outplaced from companies and others decide to go it alone. By 2020, more than 40% of the US workforce will be so-called contingent workers, according to a study conducted by software company Intuit in 2010. That's more than 60 million people. June Walker of New Mexico is a tax consultant whose says, "Free agency forces you to think about who you are and what you want to do with your life."

Aside from free agents, people still on the payroll question how they want to live their lives, both professionally and personally. Times and values have changed. People are rethinking priorities, goals and dreams. Deborah Risi, for instance, at 40 years old made this size up of her professional life, "I looked back on my work history and realized I had never felt really, really

good about it. “

Sue Burish worked at Southern Pacific Railroad, Crokeer Bank and Raychem Corp. She says, “I used to think that what I needed to do was to balance my life, keep my personal and professional lives separate. But I discovered that the real secret is integration. I integrate my work into my life. I don’t see my work as separate from my identity.”

So each individual’s life is one big integrated project, involving all kinds of activities and different slants. Your life meets the basic criteria of a project: it starts and stops (at least here on earth as we know it), it is unique, It consists of a series of inter-related phases.it has cost and time constraints, where quality is the highly desirable parameter.

A different kind of Project

In spite of the similarities, the project of your life is a different kind of project. It's like other projects in most ways, but it's really quite peculiar in another. It's the only project where the primary interested party has no control or influence at the beginning. In your early years you were at the mercy of the whims of fate.

The project of your life was initially guided by others—most likely your parents--until such time as you took it over and started becoming the project manager of your life. Your life then as such is a takeover project--one that was initially run by others and is taken over at some point by you.

There’s another striking difference about the project of your life--something that makes it unique amongst projects. It’s about the factor *time*. Normally you want to shorten the length of projects, to finish early. But you want this project of your life to go on for a long time. You aren’t in a hurry to finish it up or terminate “ahead of schedule.” You want it to be highly successful for a long, long time. Part of your objective is to extend the project schedule as opposed to shortening it.

For the sundry projects that make up your life, on the other hand, the standard time-pressure project management techniques apply. The sooner things are accomplished, the sooner you get on to something else in life. So even though you might yearn for eternal slippage on the overall project of life, for the sub projects underway along the route, the maxims of project schedule management surely ring true.

2. Life Models and Strategies

There are differing ways of looking at life. Here are some of the models that relate to project management.

A Project View: The Life Cycle

Human life on Earth follows a start-to-finish cycle. Between the beginning and end are phases like on any other project. People start at conception, go through pre-birth,, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, maturity, the golden years, the waning years, and final transition, and then on to life hereafter, depending on your beliefs

All “life projects” are takeover ventures, since you can’t manage yourself from the beginning of life. Infants, children and adolescents need support for survival and growth. Somewhere between adolescence and old age, people take charge of their lives--either because they are obliged to or because the desire is there. The adage “Tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life” rings loud in the life project scenario. By analogy, tomorrow is the first day of a life - takeover project. Such a takeover posture may take place in late adolescence for some people and for others may be delayed well into adulthood.

This life-cycle view stems from the premise that each phase of life corresponds to a given set of activities and goals. Therefore, it is important that each phase be understood and that the goals be achieved during each phase.

From Meaning to Mission

Another look at the project of life stems from the search for the meaning of life, as opposed to breaking life down into simple units of time shown in the life-cycle model. This school assumes that as the riddles of life reveal themselves, the pathway to living will unfold.

What is meaningful in your life? To become rich and famous? Spiritually fulfilled? To make a contribution to bettering the world. To be a wonderful parent, son or daughter, or a fantastic inhabitant of earth?

The why of life is the starting point for mapping out the project of your life. The why ultimately drives the other five universal questions: what, how, when, where and who. What you do with your life depend on your own answer to the why question as does when, how and where you do things, and with whom you intermingle.

The why of living differs widely from person to person. The quest for the meaning of life is personal, aimed at giving substance and direction to an individual's destiny. Your destiny is thus a unique reflection of your own view of the meaning of life.

If your view of life is crystal clear, uplifting and motivational, then it will easily translate into a personal mission statement that will jettison you onward to your destiny. On the other hand, if your view is unsure, foggy and fuzzy, then your personal mission is likely to be obscure, thus blocking the pathway to your desired destiny.

So a mission statement is needed that says what your life is to be all about. This corresponds to the songwriter who takes lyrics and articulates them into a harmonious song so it can be recorded and played over and over again. The meaning of your life also needs to be articulated into a message that can be played once and again. The mission statement is the embodiment of that harmonious message.

Pulling the meaning of your life into a mission statement means that you have provided focus to your life. It causes the forces of the Universe and the powers of spirituality to conspire with you to make your mission come to pass. This school of thought is based on the premise that the power of the mission will generate the other actions necessary to carry it to completion.

Here's an example of a personal mission statement: *My mission in life is to live in peace and generate spiritual and material prosperity for myself, children, family, work colleagues and all around me by exemplifying, loving, centered behavior and achieving professional and personal excellence through my posture, actions, teachings, and writings.*

A Little Help From My Friends

Another approach to succeeding in the project of life is through gaining and developing sponsorship, support and help from others. In project jargon, this corresponds to stakeholder management, which means dealing intelligently with all parties that directly or indirectly influence the project in question. Here is how stakeholder management can be a powerful tool in managing the project of life.

Champion stakeholder management. Champions in projects are those people who wield a powerful influence on the outcome of events. In the project of life, champions are people like parents and influential relatives, bosses and partners. Some champions are given and others may be chosen. For instance, parents and many work-related champions are given, yet some sponsors and mentors can be chosen. Role models can also be chosen and strongly influence your life. The key to influencing the champion stakeholders is to target each one with a specific objective and a specific strategy.

Participant stakeholder management. Participants in a conventional project setting typically comprise the project team. In the project of life, you will participate on numerous project teams involving people such as childhood playmates, schoolmates, colleagues in associations, at the workplace and in the community. Managing these stakeholders depends on focus and the ability to articulate others to collaborate with your goals and objectives.

Third party stakeholder management. Third party stakeholders are those others that need to be involved to make a project successful. In the case of a life project, third party stakeholders include those who are contracted or solicited to support your cause, such as a professional placement service, a book publishing agent, or a publicity agent. Here the secret is to know what you want, choose carefully and manage the third-party relationship.

The project of life is highly influenced by interactions with others. The degree to which life is successful or not is strongly dependent on the pro-active stance taken with respect to the stakeholders, be they champions, participants or third parties. Stakeholder management then is another strategy for carrying out the project of life and which complements the other two presented.

3. Scoping Out Your Life

Scope signifies defining dimensions and fixing boundaries. Managing the scope of your life means outlining and tracking what is to be included. This involves outlining broad areas much as an artist divides a landscape canvas into “foreground”, “mountains”, and “sea”. Once the general areas of your life have been defined, details need specifying, like the artist’s detailing of background renderings. So scoping out your life means sketching how your own “big picture” should look. Managing your life corresponds to painting within the lines as sketched--and in some cases purposely painting outside the original pencilings, when that improves the final rendering.

Here are the major steps for scoping out life:

- Plan the scope of your life - develop overall project scope statement and a plan for managing scope throughout your life. The scope of your life corresponds to developing a vision of what you would like your life to be like. Since you probably plan for your life to be a long term project, then more than one vision is appropriate. At least four visions need to be brought into focus to make the project of your life get you where you want to go. A short term vision (next three years) is needed to provide initial direction. Mid-term vision (next ten years) is required to insure a further look down the road. Long-term vision (until retirement age) is needed to get a good look at where you want to go in terms of accomplishments. The golden-years vision helps create focus for how the latter years of life should be lived. Since changes are bound to come along, a vision revision policy also needs to be put into place, stipulating that the various visions should be updated say on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- Define the scope of your life - develop a project breakdown structure (PBS), identifying the work packages necessary to carry out the project. This stage involves breaking down your life into major blocks such as “family”, “health and leisure”, “education and professional development”, “financial matters”, etc. Each of those blocks, in turn is broken down into successively smaller items until a detailed project breakdown structure is developed. This very basic project approach can stimulate amazing results.

I started using “life project” techniques in some of my coaching projects in the late 1980’s. One of my “coachees” at the time was Edson Bueno, a Brazilian doctor who owned a couple of hospitals and a fledgling health insurance plan which sold about \$50 million annually in Rio de Janeiro. His business objective was to grow as fast as possible, to build a truly excellent company and expand internationally. The “project of my life” view we agreed to

use, based on a detailed project breakdown structure, represented a turning point in Bueno's career as an entrepreneur. A confirmed "workaholic", he began delegating authority, spending more time on strategic issues, re-thinking his priorities and living a more balanced life. Although other reasons and qualities also contributed to Bueno's accomplishments (his businesses today gross over \$2.6 billion annually), he ascribes much of his success to the structured view of his life as a project.

- Control the scope of your life - documentation of scope changes, corrective actions and lessons learned. Since your life is already underway when you take it over, you bring some baggage to the takeover project. Although the project approach may take your life on a whole new direction, it's still important to survey initially how you got to where you are. Once the new breakdown structure is established, then the activities specified need to be followed to make sure they are being carried out. A quarterly review is recommended to size up how scope completion is coming along

4. Manage Your Time--Manage Your Life

In this "project of life", time management indeed takes on a different hue when compared with a conventional project. First the objective in life is to *delay*, not speed up, the end of the project for as long as possible and secondly, it is impossible to foresee if the project will suddenly be cut short, or enjoy an extended long life, or systematically suck away precious funds as it rolls steadfastly over budget. This particular piece of life is so important that books and courses are dedicated to it. "Time management" is a basic skill for living life to the fullest. Here's a quick review of three classic approaches for keeping an upper hand on time in your life.

Three Classical Solutions for Dealing with Time

The Time Matrix

PMs, from a classical viewpoint, should focus on activities that will assure completion of a quality project, on time and within budget; i.e., subjects which are really important as far as the project's objectives are concerned. Since the project manager is high on "the most-sought-after-persons" list, it's natural that he has a sizeable "wheat and chaff" problem -- a need for a filter system to insure adequate time is spent on "wheaty" subjects. A big system-clogger in project management is the abundance of mini-urgencies which pockmark the manager's day, and often push aside other subjects of greater project relevance.

Important subjects, in terms of project management, are those that are relevant in terms of meeting project goals. Urgencies on the other hand, are characterized by a pressing need to have a given activity completed in a short time span, yet having no necessary relationship with importance. An abundance of urgent items over an extended period carries the indelible stamp of sloppy planning and/or poor management. The question arises, however, if really important matters are not characterized by urgency and vice-versa. In other words, isn't an urgent subject

automatically important, and an important one therefore urgent? The classic importance/urgency matrix is helpful for putting this relationship into perspective. See Figure 1.

	Important	Not Important
Urgent	1	3
Not Urgent	2	4

Fig.1 Importance/Urgency Matrix

The matrix shows four distinct relationships between urgency and importance. Quadrant 1 indicates a situation of "crisis" characterized by a subject which is both important and urgent (a major casting flaw in a critical path equipment item; or, the client wants to make a major design change). Quadrant 2 represents the planning and control mode - the subjects are important, but somehow aren't red-flagged with urgency (basic planning, training sessions, development of subordinates) Quadrant 3 encompasses subjects which are relatively unimportant but carry the urgent label. Many telephone calls, one-on-one conversations, and "urgent" pieces of correspondence fall into this box. The fourth quadrant represents genuine time-wasters (items which are unimportant and not urgent). Examples of these subjects are: over-emphasis on procedures, excessive efficiency consciousness in detriment to effectiveness, chats about yesterday's football game.

A typical time distribution shows crisis Quadrant 1 demanding (and getting) its fair share of attention, while Quadrant 2 has its rightful share syphoned off by the trivia and time-waters of Quadrants 3 and 4. The result is insufficient planning and control which subsequently produce more crises and urgent trivia. The logical solution for breaking out of this circle is concentration on important matters (Quadrants 1 and 2), which will tend to attenuate the effects of time-gobbling Quadrants 3 and 4.

Pareto's Principle

Pareto's Principle has applications in numerous fields including sales, materials management, maintenance and others. Simply stated, Pareto's Principle says that the significant items in a given group normally represent a relatively small portion of the total items in the group.

Pareto's Principle establishes criteria for discrimination when confronted with a large number of items. Arranged in groups of A, B and C (group A representing the most important subjects), Pareto's Principle applied to the manager's time yields a distribution as shown in Figure 2.

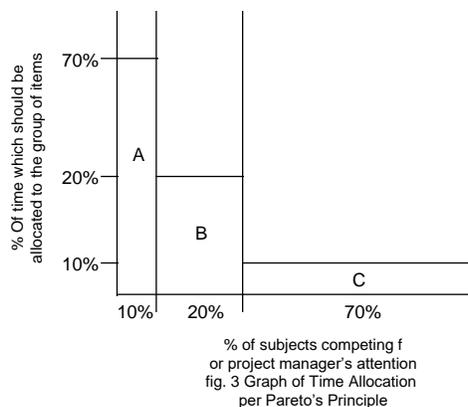
Group	% of subjects competing for project manager's attention	% of time which should be allocated to group of items
A	10	70
B	20	20
C	70	10

Fig.2 Chart of Time Allocation per Pareto's Principle

The 70-20-10 percentage reflects a generally accepted rule of thumb for Pareto distributions. Pareto's Principle applied to time management basically says that unequal treatment should be given to the various subjects confronting the PM. According to the standard Pareto distribution, up to seventy percent of the PM's time should be applied to "A" subjects, such as:

- Selection of key staff members
- Developing project plans
- Establishing overall project relationships
- Review of project budget requirements
- Decisions regarding project control systems
- Establishing reporting criteria
- Developing and motivating staff

"B" and "C" subjects representing lesser priorities, should be put into proper perspective with corresponding allocation of only 20% and 10% of management time.



Scheduling Time Vs Work

After a day of little or no forward progress, many project professionals have asked themselves, "What did I really accomplish today?" And the answer is often not encouraging! One explanation is that the PM is led astray by the whims and urgencies of others, thus draining his time from more relevant subjects. Peter Drucker takes the position that managers don't accomplish what they should because their approach is wrong; i.e., they try to cram an ever-expanding mass (all the work which comes at them from sundry directions) into a limited, unstretchable compartment (their working time). Drucker contends that work should be trimmed and prioritized to meet the immutable limitations of time, rather than using the opposing approach. Trying to make time expand is somewhat like trying to pour more water into a glass than it will hold; it's no wonder that no matter how hard some PMs drive, they still find themselves up to their earlobes in work, and complain that 24 hours a day are not enough!

Drucker says plan your time first, then plan your work. In other words, lay out the day in terms of specific blocks of time, then fit priority items (relevant important subjects) into those time periods. For the lesser important subjects, figure out another way to get them done (delegate, reorganize, eliminate, etc.).

The focus of project time management is to insure the timely completion of the project. It starts from the data generated in the scope management phase and is comprised of these activities.

- Activity definition - Refine work breakdown structure, and make auxiliary lists of all activities to be performed.
- Activity sequencing - Put activities into a logical sequence using precedence diagramming method, PDM, (also sometimes referred to as PERT or CPM). These networks map the logical flow of activities and show parallel paths for simultaneous work.
- Activity duration estimating - define a time duration for each activity, based on a realistic estimate, preferably using historical data as a reference.
- Schedule development - Establish project schedule (normally in bar chart form, using appropriate project management control software), along with criteria for managing the schedule itself and updates on resource allocation that might affect the schedule
- Schedule control - Perform periodic updates and take corrective actions.

Project time management is so basic to the concept of project management, that the terms are sometimes thought to be synonymous, just as schedule control software may be seen as being more than just a piece of the overall management effort. In fact, managing time on a project is one of the most important challenges. Yet no area stands alone in project management. There are other areas that interface and influence what goes on in the schedule.

5. Money and Such

There's a straightforward relationship between project costing theory and how to manage money matters in life. Theoretically, however, this would require estimating the resources required for a lifetime and then pitting the estimate against the costs to be incurred. For most people, especially early on in life, looking that far ahead may be overpowering. A more practical approach from a money standpoint is to look at life as a constantly moving five-year window and break that down into one-year detailed budgets. The five-year numbers are macro goals, while the annual figures are hard-knuckled targets designed to be met an increment at a time.

The focus for cost management on projects is the cost of resources needed to complete activities. This includes tasks such as planning, estimating, budgeting and control. Here is what these tasks involve:

- Resource planning - Identify and formalize resource requirements (monetary, human, material, equipment, intellectual) for project work packages. In life this means sizing up needs for the resources required for life which include money, material and educational necessities.
- Cost estimating - Translate resource requirements into estimated costs for each work package, and establish a cost management plan. This means estimating costs for these major items and fixing a systematic way for dealing with them.
- Cost budgeting - Establish for the projects a baseline budget based on the estimates. Here the annual budget is the tool for dealing with this aspect of the life project
- Cost control - Controlling the costs means tracking what is really happening against the budget.

There is a subtlety however in the management of resources over the span of a "project of life". Since no one knows exactly how long "the project" is going to last (even though it's known it will finish someday), it's tough to estimate the resources required to finish the project. Some of the ways for dealing with this include contingency planning, savings and investments, retirement planning and insurance coverage.

These matters will be dealt with in more detail under the topic of risk management.

6. The Quality of Life

The concept of quality in project management ranges from the conventional "compliance to specifications" to the disconcerting "satisfaction of the stakeholders after project completion." Part of quality management is to define this concept of quality as it applies to the project at hand, and to carry out the activities of planning, quality assurance and control necessary to make sure

the standards of quality are met. Life as a project needs to be looked at from the same criteria used in project management, starting out with the basic definition of “the quality of life”.

- Quality planning - Define a quality plan with appropriate definitions. Elaborate checklists and criteria for say, professional quality, leisure time quality, quality of relationships, etc.
- Quality assurance - Examine and improve processes so that quality will be improved. Look closely at the overall processes as opposed to concentrating purely on the details. For instance if quality of family relationships is below par, then try to unravel and improve the process that is causing the negative situation.
- Quality control - Check results against what you planned. Do this systematically and evaluate results and establish necessary corrective action.

7. Human Resources: You and Others

In “project you”, the vital human resource is you yourself, although the stakeholders mentioned earlier all influence your project. This project, therefore, calls for a slightly different tack when compared with conventional human resource management. Since you are the project’s basic resource, self-knowledge and self-awareness become of particular relevance. Here is a listing of questions that need responses from you to successfully carry out your project of life:

- What are your basic values?
- What are your strong points?
- What points need strengthening?
- How much of your time do you live in the past?
- How much of your time do you live in the future?
- How much of your time do you live in the present?

Projects happen because people make them happen. So whatever is done right regarding the people side of projects, will boost the project itself on to success. Here are the pieces of the people side of a conventional project:

- Organizational planning - Elaborate staffing plan, fix roles and responsibilities and define working relationships
- Staff acquisition - Formalize and communicate assignments
- Team development - Improve performance through team building, training, recognition and reward systems.

People are the organizers, planners, workers, articulators and controllers of all project activities. People are the true basic resource that makes everything else happen.

8. Buying Things and Farming Stuff Out

Procurement management for projects involves identifying which needs can be best met by buying services or products outside the project organization. It also encompasses issues of how, what, how much, when, from whom and where to procure. In life lots of things need to be procured, from the very basics of shelter, food and transportation to the things required to carry out whatever your line of work may be and the accessories you need to live the leisure side of your life. The concepts used on regular projects are directly applicable to what “you as a project” need to do when procuring or farming out goods and services. Here are the two fundamental points for dealing with major purchasing, contracts and such during your life.

- Overall Procurement Planning - Prepare a procurement plan, defining the major items you plan to procure throughout your lifetime. Once again, as in time and cost planning, this can be done in five year increments.
- Solicitation Planning and Decision Making - Decide on the type of support you may require (a real estate agent and a lawyer for instance, to buy a house). Clearly establish your criteria for purchase ahead of time, make sure documentation is in place. In the case of contracting out work (computer graphics, for instance), do a background check to make sure there is a good record in terms of quality and punctuality.

On many projects, much of the work is performed by third parties. Therefore the success or failure of any given project is directly proportional to the effectiveness of the procurement management.

9. Communicating Every Which Way

Success on projects is directly proportional to the quality of the communication. Most everything that goes wrong on projects can be traced to a communications glitch of some sort. Communication gone awry on projects can range from mildly embarrassing to downright disastrous.

The same is true of course in the project of life where communication spans a broader spectrum than that typically depicted in the context of conventional projects. Here is an overview of some of the keys to effective communication in the project of life.

Premise Hunting: It's Worth the Time and Effort

Step one toward establishing a solid base for communication, is to track down basic assumptions. Finding the proper assumption and making it common to the interested parties is theoretically an easy task: as simple, say, as insuring that members of a rowing team are in the same boat before they start rowing. Or that singers in a barber-shop quartet are side by side so they can harmonize.

When parties share the same communication premise, understanding tends to happen. The common premise is what makes good communication possible. Without it, the probability of things going awry is great. Yet finding the common assumption is a tricky task, because it is held to be a self-evident truth by each of the communicating parties. A premise is so obvious to the communicator that no effort is made to make it clear to others. And that's where the problems arise.

Having clear premises can be likened to a cloudless day at a land-based observatory that makes long-range observations into the Universe. The fact that there is no cloud cover corresponds to clarity of premises in the communications process. It's absolutely basic for the process to continue. Telescope experiments conducted on a cloudy day are doomed to failure just as is a communication process based on fuzzy assumptions. Yet unclouded days and crystal clear premises aren't enough to make for successful experiments or guarantee glitch-free communication. Both are much more complex processes.

The probability for efficient communication is thus extremely low. A partial breakdown, in the conception, coding, transmission, medium, reception, decoding, or interpretation can set off a colossal communication crash, even if the premises are fully convergent. For effective communication to exist, great care must be taken to make sure that all the communication phases are effective.

Some Subtleties of Communication

Communication is a complex process that involves different approaches for differing objectives. It calls for overcoming a wide variety of barriers. And it means being able to communicate well in widely varying situations. Here are tips for dealing with some of these subtleties of communication.

Communications on projects involves the timely generation, collection, distribution, storage, and ultimate disposition of project information. Communication implies the exchange of information which is of use to people to carry out the work effectively. Here are the processes necessary to manage project communications:

- Planning - Develop a communications plan based on a stakeholders' needs analysis (Who needs what, for what reason, when and in what form)
- Information Distribution - Dissemination of the planned communications via an appropriate information distribution system.
- Performance reporting - Publish performance reports (time, cost, productivity, etc.) and change requests.
- Administrative closure - Obtain formal acceptance, determine document and data destination, bureaucratic closure.

Other general techniques are also necessary for effective communications to permeate a project.

Subjects like communications barriers, transmission effectiveness, listening skills, choice of communications channels, meeting management, form of presentation, writing style, etc. have a major impact on the success of a project.

10. Life is Risky Business

Event x impact x probability

Risk management on projects encompasses identifying, analyzing and responding to risk. Risk permeates the other knowledge areas of project management and tends to repeat itself throughout the various chronological phases. Here are the risk-related processes for managing projects:

- Risk Identification - Identify sources and symptoms of risk as well as potentially risky events or occurrences.
- Risk Quantification - Evaluate opportunities versus threats using judgment or risk assessing tools
- Risk Response Development - Prepare risk management plan, including contingency plans and allowance for reserves
- Risk Response Control - Take corrective action and update risk management plan.

Type of project strongly affects the need to invest time and energy in risk management. A construction venture may have relatively predicible accident and foul weather probabilities available. Whereas a cutting edge software initiative may face the uncertainties of local competition and the swaying of the global economy.

11. Putting All the Pieces Together

The basics of managing your life, therefore, consist of several areas, all of which have to be managed to make things work. A slip up in any area is enough start a domino effect that that can go crashing into all of the other areas. For instance, a communication glitch in the procurement of a new boat might set off an unscheduled time delay which affects quality and results in a cost overrun as well as delaying a scheduled vacation. This may put the project at risk and have a strong impact on the human resources. So there is an intimate connection between all the areas.

For all the activities described in the knowledge areas to contribute toward overall project success, they must be integrated. Project management integration involves the coordination of the various project elements, including making the necessary trade-offs among the competing objectives and alternatives in order to meet stakeholders expectations. Integration efforts are required in three basic areas:

- Overall life plan--an integrated overall project plan using all the input from the other areas.

- Plan Execution -This involves insuring that all the necessary items for carrying out the plans have been programmed. For most needs, simple scheduling techniques are sufficient. Electronic organizers are normally adequate for scheduling milestone and completion dates.
- Overall Change Control - Since change is inevitable, there needs to be enough elasticity in the overall game plan to plug in the adjustments required due to change.

Conclusions

Each individual's life on Earth is a project because it starts and stops, has specific objectives, and is limited in resources. The PMBOK Guide developed by the Project Management Institute provides some guidance for "project life", yet not all areas of the PMBOK are applicable because of the life's peculiarities. For instance, no one wants to finish the project of life "ahead of time". Also, the primary human resource for this project is you, so major effort needs to be pumped into developing great self-awareness. Procurement of goods and services may not represent a significant part of the project of life for many people. On the other hand, dealing with factors like time, money, scope and quality are all part of life's daily struggles.

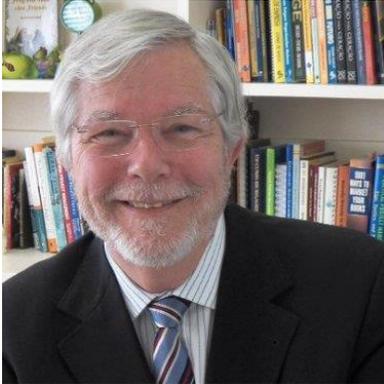
The project approach to managing life gives some order to the surrounding chaos and allows for adjustments to be made as necessary. Thus people have a chance for making headway and for navigating the twists and turns of the times

For companies and professionals to survive and prosper jointly in these twirling times of jostling priorities, a major initiative is required to align company goals with individuals' goals. Such alignment, say for a company that works with gypsy-like "project junkies", calls for a major shift in behavior on the part of both professionals and organizations. Once these goals are aligned and mutually understood, the probability for achieving mutual objectives is highly enhanced.

Companies are obliged to understand that they need to cater to the changing needs of the professional marketplace. If people can't count on keeping their jobs, then undying loyalty with no regard for personal survival in a shrinking job market is not a reasonable thing to ask. Thus organizations need to encourage their employees to develop their "lifetime projects" and share that with the company, just as the company must share its goals and objectives with the organization's members. That alignment of individual objectives ensures that, while the person and the company are jointly collaborating, mutual productivity is boosted.

Individuals, thus, need to have a clear vision of where they are going, and in what way personal goals and interests are complementary to those of the company. To fully understand this, people need to develop a "life project" plan using project management tools based on the premise that life is a project. The development of such plans on the part of employees of all levels generates the basis upon which the alignment of objectives can take place.

About the Author



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Paul C. Dinsmore is an international speaker, executive coach and consultant on project management and organizational issues. He has authored or co-authored 20 management books, and has written more than one hundred professional papers and articles. Mr. Dinsmore is Board President of DinsmoreCompass, a training and consulting group focused on consulting, outsourcing, training, coaching and IT support. Prior to establishing his consulting practice in 1985, he worked for twenty years as a project manager and executive in the construction and engineering industry.

Mr. Dinsmore has performed consulting and training services for major companies including IBM, ENI-Italy, Petrobrás, General Electric, Mercedes Benz, Shell, Morrison Knudsen, the World Trade Institute, Westinghouse, Ford, Caterpillar, and Alcoa. His speaking and consulting practice has taken him to Europe, South America, South Africa, Japan, China, and Australia. The range of projects where Mr. Dinsmore has provided consulting services include company reorganization, project start-up, and training programs, as well as advisory and coaching functions for the presidents of major organizations. He participates actively in the Project Management Institute, which awarded him its Distinguished Contributions Award as well as the prestigious title of Fellow of the Institute.

As Executive Coach, he has extensively coached Company Owners and C-level executives in the fields of Oil & Gas, Construction, Engineering, Organizational Consulting as well as Health Care and Services.

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