

Commentary on the extent to which general management topics are being covered in recent PMBOK Guides¹

By Alan Stretton

INTRODUCTION

Nearly a decade ago I published a series of seven articles in this journal on general management (GM) functions and activities, and their relevance for the management of projects (starting with Stretton 2015g). That series was primarily concerned with the part played by general management skills in effective project management (PM). The series presented a broad coverage of traditional/classical materials on general management and discussed the relevance of each of nineteen basic general management functions to the management of projects.

Although there had long been wide-spread acknowledgement of the importance of general management know-how in the management of projects, the extent of its treatment in the project management literature was very uneven. Overall, some aspects of general management were quite well covered, but others not so well, or not at all. The purpose of my series was to attempt to provide a balanced overall coverage of basic general management functions which were relevant to project management.

At the time I did not attempt to make any direct comparisons between lists of basic general management functions, with project management “knowledge areas” such as those discussed in PMI’s PMBOK Guide up to the 6th Edition (PMI 2017).

However, in the course of writing the above series, I noted that there were certain functions of general management which, whilst evidently equally relevant to project management, did not appear to be adequately covered in those PMBOK Guides. For example, under the broad management function of leading, these deficiencies included project *decision making*, and some aspects of *motivating, selecting and developing* project people. In the broad *organising* domain, *delegation* was largely neglected, along with some aspects of *project organisation structure*, and *establishing relationships*.

However, the format of the 7th Edition (PMI 2021), including its major PMBOK Guide section, was quite radically changed from the previous editions. Amongst these changes was a much broader range of general-management-related materials. This has prompted me to return to this topic and look in more detail at how well PMI 2021 now covers the general management topics discussed in my earlier series. This article summarises some of my findings.

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A FRAMEWORK OF BASIC FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT

The general management functions and activities discussed in the above series were based on a classification by Allen 1964. This article will follow that classification, as follows.

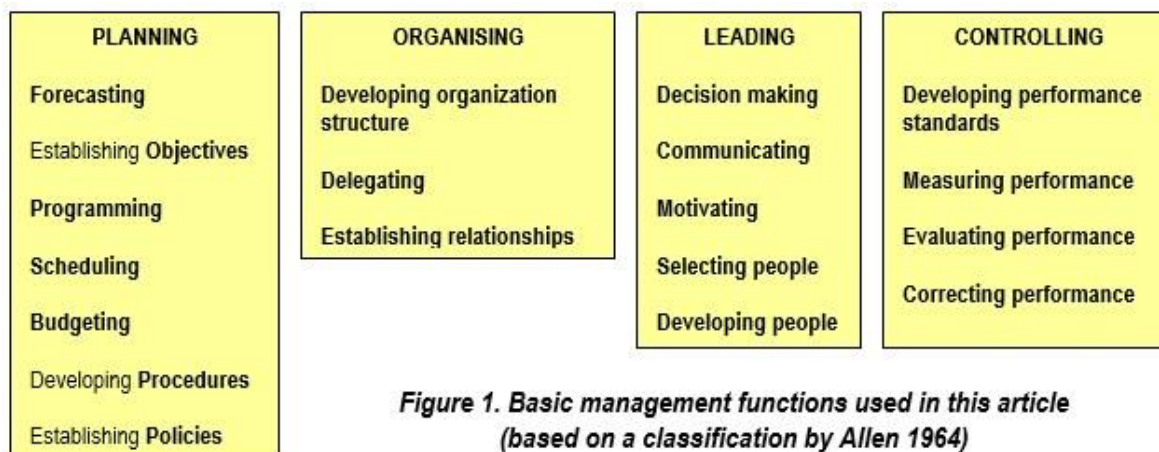


Figure 1. Basic management functions used in this article (based on a classification by Allen 1964)

I believe most of these descriptors of management functions are self-explanatory – but a few will be discussed in more detail in the following explorations.

TWO RELEVANT MANAGEMENT-RELATED SECTORS IN PMBOK GUIDE 2021

Section 2. Project Performance Domains

- 2.1 Stakeholder
- 2.2 Team
- 2.3 Development approach and life cycle
- 2.4 Planning
- 2.5 Project work
- 2.6 Delivery
- 2.7 Measurement
- 2.8 Uncertainty

A full half of the 255-page PMBOK Guide sector of PMI 2021 comprises the eight *Project Performance Domains* shown on the left. Each of these has from three to eleven sub-sections, and many of these have their own sub-sub-sections. In the following figures, I have listed all but the last two sub-sections of each domain (i.e. excluding *Interactions with other performance domains*, and *Checking results*). The other basic components of each domain are fully covered in the following figures.

I have tried to broadly align these domains and their component sub-sections with the above framework of basic management functions, to give a summarised picture of how the latter are now being covered in the PMBOK Guide.

Section 4.2 Commonly Used Models

Another major sector of the latter is entitled 4. *Models, Methods and Artifacts*, and we will be returning to its component *Section 4.2 Commonly Used Models* later, after the

following discussions on aligning the components of the *Project Performance Domains* with the basic management functions.

RELATING “PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS” TO BASIC MGT. FUNCTIONS

Management Planning functions and Project Performance Domains

| FUNCTIONS OF [GENERAL] MANAGEMENT (Allen 1964) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) |
|--|--|
| MANAGEMENT PLANNING | 2.4 Planning performance domain 2.4.1 Planning overview 2.4.2 Planning variables |
| Forecasting | |
| Establishing objectives | |
| Programming | 2.3 Development approach & life cycle |
| Scheduling | |
| Budgeting | |
| Developing Procedures Establishing Policies | |

The first two subsections of the *Planning performance domain* cover a wide range of considerations and have therefore been aligned with the *Management Planning* function heading.

Forecasting is closely associated with Establishing Objectives. Arguably these could be seen as not having a project management equivalent – except for major mega-projects, which do not feature largely in the traditional project management literature but are covered in their own more specialised literature.

Figure 2. Mgt. Planning, & Performance domains

I have aligned 2.3 *Development approach and life cycle performance domain* with the programming, scheduling and budgeting functions. This is not an immediately equivalent matching for all the many subsections of this domain, but I believe is close enough for the majority of these subsections. I do not propose to list the latter in Fig. 2.

Developing Procedures (standardised methods of performing specified work) and *Establishing Policies* (standing decisions that apply to repetitive questions), do not normally have a project equivalent, as the latter typically follow the broad procedures and policies laid out in their parent organisation.

Management Organising functions and Project Performance Domains

| FUNCTIONS OF [GENERAL] MANAGEMENT (Allen 1964) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) |
|--|--|
| MGT. ORGANISING | |
| Developing organisation structure | 2.4.3 Project team composition & structure |
| | 2.2 Team performance domain |
| | 2.2.1 Project team mgt and leadership |
| | 2.2.2 Project team culture |
| | 2.2.3 High performance project teams |
| 2.5.3 Maintaining project team focus | |
| Establishing relationships | 2.1 Stakeholder performance domain |
| Delegating | |

The main *Project Performance Domain* subsection aligned with *Organisation structure* is *Project team composition & structure*. The PMBOK Guide’s *Team Performance Domain* focuses on project teams, so I have added this section and some relevant subsections to this entry. Regarding *Relationships, Stakeholders* are only one group of many with whom project managers must establish mutually cooperative relationships. I did not find any Project Performance Domain component

Figure 3. Mgt. Organising, & Performance domains

which aligns with the management *Delegation* function.

Management Leading functions and Project Performance Domains

| FUNCTIONS OF [GENERAL] MANAGEMENT (Allen 1964) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) |
|--|--|
| MANAGEMENT LEADING | 2.2.4. Leadership skills 2.2.5 Tailoring leadership styles |
| Communicating | 2.4.4 Communications 2.5.4 Project communications/engagement |
| Motivating | 2.2.4.3 Motivation |
| Selecting people | |
| Decision making | 2.2.4.4 includes Decision making |
| Developing people | 2.5.8 Learning throughout the project 2.7.6 Growing and improving |

Figure 4. Mgt. Leading, & Performance domains

Two broad *Leadership* sub-sections in the *Project Performance Domains* have been aligned with *Mgt. Leading*. The *Communicating & Developing* functions also each have two sub-sections from Performance Domains. I had to go to a sub-sub-section in the latter to find an entry for *Motivating*, and into even further detail for *Decision Making*.

Finally, the *Project Performance Domains* appear to have only indirect materials relating to selecting people.

Management Controlling functions and Project Performance Domains

| FUNCTIONS OF [GENERAL] MANAGEMENT (Allen 1964) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) |
|--|--|
| MGT. CONTROLLING | |
| Developing performance standards | 2.4.8 Metrics |
| Measuring performance | 2.7 Measurement performance domain 2.7.1 Establishing effective measures 2.7.2 What to measure 2.7.3 Presenting information 2.7.4 Measurement pitfalls |
| Evaluating results | 2.6.4. Suboptimal outcomes 2.7.5 Troubleshooting performance |
| Taking corrective action | 2.6 Delivery performance domain 2.6.1 Delivery of value 2.6.2 Deliverables 2.6.3 Quality |

Figure 5. Mgt. Controlling, & Performance domains

As one might reasonable have expected, there are plenty of entries from *Project Performance Domains* which are broadly aligned with management controlling functions. In particular, there are quite substantial sub-sections in the *Measurement performance domain*.

I have added entries from the *Delivery Performance domain* to help complete the listing of the latter. These overlap with, and extend beyond, the *Taking corrective action* function of management.

Coverage of basic management functions in Project Performance Domains

Overall, it can be seen that the components of the *Project Performance Domain* sector of the 2021 *PMBOK Guide* now cover most of the basic functions of management listed earlier. The only exceptions where one could expect to see corresponding project entries are *Delegating* and *Selecting* – and perhaps also *Decision making* and *Motivation*, which are relatively sparsely treated in sub-sub-sections of the *Project Performance Domain* listings.

We will shortly turn to further coverage of materials in another section of the 2021 *PMBOK Guide*.

However, we have not yet accounted for all the sub-sections listed in the *Project Performance Domain* listings. These will now be aligned with four management functions which are more specialised than the above basic management functions, as now discussed.

Additional management functions and Project Performance Domains

| ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS (PMI 2021) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) |
|--|---|
| RISK MANAGEMENT | 2.8 Uncertainty performance domain |
| CHANGE MANAGEMENT | 2.4.7 Changes 2.5.7. Monitoring new work and changes |
| PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT | 2.4.6 Procurement 2.5.6 Working with procurements |
| RESOURCES MANAGEMENT | 2.4.5 Physical resources 2.5.5 Managing physical resources |
| | 2.4.9 Alignment 2.5.1 Project processes 2.5.2 Balancing competing constraints |

Figure 6. Added Management functions, and Project Performance domains

The remaining sub-sections of the *Project Performance Domains* can be aligned with four additional management functions which are rather more specialised than those in the basic category above. These most specialised functions are the management of *Risk, Change, Procurement and Resources*.

I have added these to the above listings so that all the sub-sections of the eight Performance Domains are accounted for in these presentations.

ADDING “COMMONLY USED MODELS” & EXAMPLES TO ABOVE ALIGNMENTS

Overview of the 2021 PMBOK Guide’s section 4.2 Commonly Used Models

| |
|---|
| <p>4.2 Commonly Used Models</p> <p>4.2.1 Situation leadership models</p> <p>4.2.2 Communication models</p> <p>4.2.3 Motivation models</p> <p>4.2.4 Change models</p> <p>4.2.5 Complexity models</p> <p>4.2.6 Project team development models</p> <p>4.2.7 Other models</p> <p>4.2.7.1 Conflict model</p> <p>4.2.7.2 Negotiation</p> <p>4.2.7.3 Planning</p> <p>4.2.7.4 Process groups</p> <p>4.2.7.5 Saliency model [Stakeholders]</p> |
|---|

Figure 7. Commonly used models

As foreshadowed earlier, we now turn to another section of the 2021 PMBOK Guide, which is part of the broad sector entitled *4. Models, Methods, and Artifacts*. This particular section is entitled *4.2 Commonly Used Models*, and its primary components are shown in Figure 7 to the left. This section of the Guide also gives specific examples of the models associated with each of these components, most of which will be added in separate columns in the following Figures.

It is evident that most of these models also apply to broader areas than just project management.

It is therefore proposed to add these *Commonly Used Models* and examples of these models to the *Project Performance Domain* alignments in Figure 2 to 6, to show the extent to which they further cover the management functions listed in those figures.

Adding “Commonly Used Models” & examples to the basic mgt functions figures

| FUNCTIONS OF [GENERAL] MANAGEMENT (Allen 1964) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) | COMMONLY USED MODELS (PMI 2021: 4.2 PMBOK) | SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMONLY USED MODELS |
|--|--|---|--|
| MANAGEMENT PLANNING | 2.4 Planning performance domain 2.4.1 Planning overview 2.4.2 Planning variables | 4.2.7 “Other models” include a Planning model | 4.2.7.3 Boehm’s planning model |
| Forecasting Establishing objectives | | | |
| Programming Scheduling Budgeting | 2.3 Development approach & life cycle | | |
| Developing Procedures Establishing Policies | | | |
| MANAGEMENT ORGANISING | | | |
| Developing org. structure | 2.4.3 Project team composition & structure | 4.2.7 “Other models” include Salience Stakeholder model & Conflict & Negotiating models | |
| | 2.2 Team performance domain | | |
| | 2.2.1 Project team mgt and leadership 2.2.2 Project team culture 2.2.3 High performance project teams | | |
| Establishing relationships | 2.1 Stakeholder performance domain | | 4.2.7.1 Conflict models |
| Delegating | 2.5.3 Maintaining project team focus | 4.2.7.2 Negotiating models | |
| | | 4.2.7.5 Salience Stakeholder model | |
| MANAGEMENT LEADING | 2.2.4. Leadership skills 2.2.5 Tailoring leadership styles | 4.2.1 Situational leadership models (2) | 4.2.1.1 Blanchard’s sit. Lead. II 4.2.1.2 OSCAR model |
| Communicating | 2.4.4 Communications 2.5.4 Project communications/engagement | 4.2.2 Communication models (3) | 4.2.2.1 Cross-cultural communications. 4.2.2.2 Effectiveness of channels 4.2.2.3 Execution/evaluation gulf |
| | | | |
| Motivating | 2.2.4.3 Motivation | 4.2.3 Motivation models (4) | 4.2.3.1 Hygiene & motivation factors 4.2.3.2 Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motiv’n 4.2.3.3 Theory of needs 4.2.3.4 Theory X, Theory Y, Theory Z |
| Selecting people | | | |
| Decision making | 2.2.4.4 includes Decision making | | |
| Developing people | 2.5.8 Learning throughout the project 2.7.6 Growing and improving | 4.2.6 Project team development models (2) | 4.2.6.1 Tuckman ladder 4.2.6.2 Drexler/Sibbert model |
| MGT. CONTROLLING | | | |
| Developing performance standards | 2.4.8 Metrics | | |
| | 2.7 Measurement performance domain | | |
| Measuring performance | 2.7.1 Establishing effective measures 2.7.2 What to measure 2.7.3 Presenting information 2.7.4 Measurement pitfalls | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Evaluating results | 2.6.4. Suboptimal outcomes 2.7.5 Troubleshooting performance | | |
| Taking corrective action | 2.6 Delivery performance domain | | |

Figure 8. Adding “Commonly Used Models” & examples to the basic management functions figures

It can be seen from Figure 8 that *the Commonly Used Models* and examples have rather substantially augmented connections with a few of the basic management functions, particularly in the *Leading* sector. This is particularly relevant for the *Motivating* management function, which was only briefly discussed in the Project Performance Domain sector. But there are also many useful referenced examples against three other Leading headings, plus the *Establishing relationships* function in the Organising category.

The two remaining *Commonly Used Models*, 4.2.4 *Change*, and 4.2.5 *Complexity* (from Figure 7) appear to most directly relate to the additional management functions of *Change management* and *Risk management* respectively, as now illustrated.

Adding “Commonly Used Models” & examples to the additional mgt functions

| ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS (PMI 2021) | PROJECT PERFORMANCE DOMAINS (PMI 2021: 2. PMBOK Guide) | COMMONLY USED MODELS (PMI 2021: 4.2 PMBOK) | SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMONLY USED MODELS |
|--|---|--|--|
| RISK MANAGEMENT | 2.8 Uncertainty performance domain | 4.2.5 Complexity models (2) | 4.2.5.1 Cynefin framework 4.2.5.2 Stacey matrix |
| CHANGE MANAGEMENT | 2.4.7 Changes 2.5.7. Monitoring new work and changes | 4.2.4 Change models (5) | 4.2.4.1 Managing change in org's 4.2.4.2 ADKAR model 4.2.4.3 Kotter: 8-step process 4.2.4.4 Satir change model 4.2.4.5 Bridges' transition model |
| PROCUREMENT | 2.4.6 Procurement 2.5.6 Working with procurements | | |
| RESOURCES MANAGEMENT | 2.4.5 Physical resources 2.5.5 Managing physical resources | | |
| | 2.4.9 Alignment 2.5.1 Project processes 2.5.2 Balancing competing constraints | | |

Figure 8. Adding “Commonly Used Models” & examples to the additional mgt. function figures

At this stage it should be noted that the 2021 PMBOK Guide very specifically maps each of its Commonly Used Models to their likelihood of being used in each of the Project Performance Domain (Table 4-1, p.173). This is most certainly a very useful model, but a little removed from the primary purpose of this article, which we now attempt to summarise.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this article has been to examine the extent to which general management topics are being covered in recent PMBOK Guides.

As noted in the Introduction, my earlier series on general management functions and activities, and their relevance for the management of projects, showed that the extent to which the former were then covered in the project management literature, and in the PMBOK Guides, was very uneven. Some aspects of general management were quite well covered, but others not so well, and some not at all.

The main deficiencies noted at that time included some components of the management Leading domain - notably project *decision making*, and some aspects of *motivating, selecting and developing* project people. In the broad *organising* domain, *delegation* was largely neglected, along with some aspects of *project organisation structure*, and *establishing relationships*.

In this article, we have found that the 2021 PMBOK Guide (PMI 2021) has covered many of these deficiencies and added quite substantial materials to many management functions which had already been covered to some extent. The management functions which are still not well covered in the Guide – but which appear to be equally relevant to projects – are summarised as follows.

- *Delegating*: Although I (somewhat tentatively) aligned 2.5.3 *Maintaining project team focus* with management *Delegating*, there is very little direct material on delegation in any of the PMBOK Guides.
- *Selecting people*: The project management equivalent for selecting people still does not feature substantially in the latest Guide, although it is an equally important function in the project context.
- *Decision making*: Although I noted that 2.2.4.4 in the Project Performance Domains includes *Decision making*, its coverage of this topic is rather sparse. In my view, its importance in the dynamic project domain merits more detailed attention.

In summary, coverage of relevant basic management functions in the latest PMBOK Guide is much more comprehensive than in previous Guides – a development which I applaud.

Finally, I am rather conscious of the fact that many readers will not be particularly interested in the extent to which general management topics are being covered in recent PMBOK Guides. However, in the course of writing this article I have had to condense a great deal of material from the 2021 PMBOK Guide into just a few figures. This helped me in trying to “get my arms around” voluminous materials, and I hope that these summarised figures might similarly help others.

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About the Author



Alan Stretton, PhD

Life Fellow, AIPM
Sydney, Australia



Alan Stretton is one of the pioneers of modern project management. In 2006 he retired from a position as Adjunct Professor of Project Management in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Australia, which he joined in 1988 to develop and deliver a Master of Project Management program. Prior to joining UTS, Mr. Stretton worked in the building and construction industries in Australia, New Zealand and the USA for some 38 years, which included the project management of construction, R&D, introduction of information and control systems, internal management education programs and organizational change projects. Alan has degrees in Civil Engineering (BE, Tasmania) and Mathematics (MA, Oxford), and an honorary PhD in strategy, programme and project management (ESC, Lille, France). Alan was Chairman of the Standards (PMBOK) Committee of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) from late 1989 to early 1992. He held a similar position with the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), and was elected a Life Fellow of AIPM in 1996. He was a member of the Core Working Group in the development of the Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management. He has published 270+ professional articles and papers. Alan can be contacted at alanailene@bigpond.com.au.

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