

## From the August 2006 Issue of [ProjectNews](#)

### **BEST PRACTICES FROM THE EXPERTS**

This month, we asked **50 top-notch industry experts** to answer a few questions for the project management and business analysis community - and they kindly took the time to share their insights and best practices with us. Get to know a little more about the 2006 ProjectWorld & World Congress for Business Analysts presenters while gaining valuable tips!

These were the questions:

- 1.** What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?
- 2.** What is your best tip for new PMs?
- 3.** What do you see as the next step within your career?
- 4.** Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

[Read on for the answers...](#)

# **Best Practices from the Experts:**

## **Insights from 2006 ProjectWorld/World Congress for Business Analysts Presenters**

### **Judy Balaban**

Dow Jones & Company

1. PM challenge: Cultural adoption. Understanding that good project management practices doesn't mean more bureaucracy. In a society that demands results 'yesterday' helping people understand that a good planning process will save them, in the long run, both time and money is difficult. It requires a huge intellectual and emotional shift for us in America to understand that a more deliberate approach will be faster in the end.

2. Best tips...

Keep your sense of humor; it will get you through some very stressful and difficult periods. Sometimes we have to be willing to laugh at ourselves or a difficult situation to get past it.

Work to stay strong and positive in front of your team. You set the tone of the project and the team. How you act and react influences how the team members will conduct themselves. You are one of the best motivators for your team.

Show appreciation and provide feedback and encouragement to all the team members. It must be sincere, and should be informal as well as formal as the individual prefers.

3. Next career steps... I enjoy being in charge of project management in a corporation. Setting best practices, establishing processes and sharing expertise. Encouraging my staff into continuing to grow into top performers is very rewarding. Like many of my colleagues within PMI, I look forward to the day when there is a Chief Program Officer role recognized in the marketplace.

4. Funny story..."Snap out of it!" A project manager on my team had come to me for counsel. She was clearly frustrated. I stopped her just before she repeated the multiple causes of her distress for a second time. We both knew that she had to show a confident demeanor with her team. We brainstormed on things that could be done and what actions she could take. This project manager was still overwhelmed by the situation. Before she had the chance to say anything else I blurted out, "Snap out of it!!" It shocked her into action and she was able to successfully implement our suggestions and complete the project. To this day it's become a by-word. We can share not just the pain, but the lessons – and our senses of humor remain intact. Sometimes you simply need to "Snap out of it" and laugh.

### **Steven M. Barger, PMP**

Greenbrier & Russel Inc. A Fujitsu Company

1. Convincing senior management of the value of structured PM processes

2. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Do it in-person. Don't hide behind email.

3. Director of Project Management Office

4. I recently had to replace a PM who was not a good fit for a project. I set up an early morning meeting to transition and the PM, who knew he was being replaced, showed up late (surprise!). He explained that "his driver woke up late". We came to learn that he was independently wealthy and was just doing PM work for fun. But once the fun of the project turned to serious events like running behind schedule, he lost his drive to continue.

### **Mila Bozic, M.Sc, PMP**

Scotiabank

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Mila: Make a business case for executive management to adopt Industry best practices in Project Management.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Mila: Learn to communicate effectively and often!

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

Mila: Become an OPM3 assessor!

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

I was a PMO manager in a telecom company, 500 employees, 1995's. I took over a new department and I realized that team leads spend 5 hours creating reports. I was determined to create web based project management tool for Actions, Issues, Risks, Decisions, and automatic status report creation. I recommended to my management that we hire a student to do that work. I got approval, and I hired a 4th year high school student. The young man created a web based tool in only 3 days! Never underestimate the power of young people!!!

### **Janet Burns**

Viacom

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management? **I implement** PMO's and methodology and the biggest challenge is making the process simple and flexible so it can be adopted more readily

2. What is your best tip for new PMs? Learn about the corporate culture where you will be managing projects and adjust your approach accordingly - one size does not fit all.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career? Producing a project management reality show or starting my own consulting business.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role I have too many to pick from, it's all been fun and interesting to me. Plus, I have to save the good ones for my presentation.

### **Paul Capello**

Bayfront Health Systems

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management? Resource allocation and associated cost has always been my biggest challenge and continues to be.

2. Try to work as many projects with different scope and resources to give you a better understanding from the sponsor's perspective.
3. The next step would be a VP level PMO directorship.
4. The PMO here at Bayfront is a newer concept to the Health System and consequently one of my roles has been one of buy in at the Executive level. My initial cost and resource documents that I shared with the CFO and COO gave them a better understanding of where and how much Bayfront Medical Center was spending on projects. This has led to credibility and projects coming in an organized methodical way. Yes, project management works. We currently have 250 projects in our portfolio.

**Brad Carroll, PMP**  
COMSYS IT Partners

After managing more than 40 technology projects during the last fifteen years, I have learned this is a profession that requires courage, integrity and perseverance. Managing projects is a great deal of fun for those who enjoy a challenge. There is the excitement of defining the product scope, building the team, managing risks, developing a schedule and meeting client expectations. Although the science of project management has improved immensely, the fundamental problem has remained the same: building a unique product or service, within budget and schedule, that satisfies the customer.

These lessons became especially clear to me when I was assigned to a project in late 1999. My employer, COMSYS IT Partners, was engaged to audit an ongoing project for a company in Provo, Utah. The client company manufactures and sells nutrition, beauty and health products through a network of independent distributors worldwide. Initially, this was to be a one month assignment. When I became involved, the project was about a year behind schedule, had no documented requirements and was in a contract dispute with the company that sold them the new software to calculate commissions across multiple currencies for their distributors. After spending a month reviewing the project plan, interviewing the project team, and analyzing the software technologies and the vendor, I discovered that the software provider had sold the nutrition company a "smoke and mirrors" demonstration of a product that didn't exist. After investing several million dollars and a calendar year in this project, the client had nothing to show but slipped schedules, excuses and promises. The vendor company was using the money from this contract to develop the software product without the client's knowledge by hiring groups of software developers in Mexico City, Michigan, and Arizona. The project team at the client's site was a cover to lead the client into believing they were collecting requirements and customizing the commission software package.

Once this discovery was made, the client asked me to lead a new project with four primary business objectives: 1) Assess the remote development offices to see what work had been completed and collect salvageable code components for the client's use. 2) Form a multi-national team of super-users from nineteen countries to create a detailed requirements document for a commissioning system. 3) Make a

recommendation on whether to fix the existing commission system or start this project over with different technologies. 4) Gather evidence for the eventual lawsuit.

Over the next fourteen months, we shut down the old project team, without burning bridges with the individuals that had been hired, and built a new project team of business analysts, technical writers and technologists. The project team conducted numerous requirements gathering sessions in several languages, revised the existing commissioning system to meet the nutrition company's needs and expectations, and closed down the rogue development offices. Although the client won the lawsuit against the software vendor for fraud, there was no money to collect. The commission system was deployed and continues to function to this day.

What lessons can be learned from this experience that benefits the project management profession? First, a project manager must be capable of discerning fact from fiction in the business world. This requires of a solid foundation in the theory and practice of project management, general business knowledge and a specific set of technologies. Second, work is done by people who have unique needs, personalities, aspirations and motivations. Being an engineer by training, it took me a long time to learn the interpersonal skills needed to communicate effectively at all levels – from a heart to heart talk with a team member who just lost wife to illness, to the Board of Directors of a Fortune 500 company. Third, the project manager is constantly pulled by many interests and influences. Successfully managing a complex project environment requires a strong set of ethics, loyalty, and dedication to balance competing needs and see a difficult project through to completion.

After managing projects for nine years with COMSYS, I was moved into a newly created role of Sr. Project Manager in the Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO) this last January. The mission of the EPMO is to define and train the company's project managers in the best practices of project management, technologies and tool. Additionally, the company has defined my responsibilities to include speaking at national symposiums like Project World / BA Congress, and provide high-level consulting services to Fortune 500 companies, government agencies and non-profits organizations. These engagements focus on establishing project management offices, managing technology portfolios and auditing on-going projects.

### **Debbie Collard**

Boeing

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

My current biggest Project Management challenge is juggling many different projects at the same time. The projects are of varying sizes and impact, and are in different project phases. So, I guess you could say the big challenge is in managing my job as a huge project with many layers of other projects underneath it. I love having this type of challenge though, because it is a dynamic, fast-paced environment that challenges my organizational skills and keeps me engaged in making positive change in the organization.

2. What is your best tip for new Project Managers?

Spend a little bit of time immersing yourself in the project: requirements, timing, budget, etc., - learning from everyone who has any information or experience with that project (even if it seems a little overwhelming at first). In other words, be a sponge - soaking up all the knowledge you can from others. Then sort through all

that information and put it into a prioritized plan that identifies who, what, when, and how much. Run that plan by one or more people you trust to see if there are any important ideas or actions you missed, and revise the plan accordingly. Keep the plan in front of you all the time so you are not tempted to take a different direction. While you must be flexible as a good project manager because things change, you need to execute the plan that will make your project a success.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

My whole career has been project management of one type or another, and I keep getting higher levels of responsibility in the organization. The specific projects, the number of them, and the level of impact changes, but it is still project management. I see the next step continuing in that same theme.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

Ten years ago, I was at a much lower level in the organization and was working only a couple of major projects at any one time. In order to make myself a better project manager, I was taking a class in project management. At around the same time I got engaged to be married. Anyone who has planned a wedding knows how time consuming and labor intensive it can be. I already had a lot on my plate, and was worried that something would suffer with all these things to do at the same time. So, I decided to make planning my wedding my class project. It worked out great. We had a wonderful wedding, that happened on time, on budget, and with high customer satisfaction, I got an A in the class, and I accomplished all my work projects as well. My husband and I are celebrating our tenth anniversary this month.

### **Andy Crowe**

Velociteach

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

I managed projects for about 15 years before becoming the CEO of Velociteach. Typically, we have between fifteen and twenty formal projects going on, and my time is split between the role of senior manager and program manager on most of them. Then on a couple of them, I'm actually the project manager. It really heightens my appreciation of how those roles differ. The biggest challenge I face is managing solid communication up, down, and out, and I think that this tends to be a common point of pain for most project managers.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Get a mentor! I believe everyone in project management should have a mentor, regardless of how seasoned you are, but it is crucial for new PMs. Most of us have learned about project management and process, but we haven't been taught the art of managing projects or shown how. We all need someone in our lives that will give honest, open feedback and advice, and who appreciates the unique challenges of the project management profession.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

For me, I'm enjoying writing and publishing more and more, I am passionate about project management, and so I plan to keep my focus on that. The 21<sup>st</sup> century growth of Velociteach has been hard to fathom. I really feel like there are some areas within the industry that need help, and my career will continue to focus on those areas.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

I have been overseeing a survey of 860 project managers to identify who is really doing it right in our profession. It is fascinating to see how many managers repeat the same mistakes until they just burn out. It has made a big difference in my life in understanding how the top managers operate and how very different that is from how the majority of people do their job. You quickly get the picture that most managers are in survival mode, and this pattern continues from one project to the next.

**Shelley Cudley**

TD AMERITRADE Holding Corporation

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

I am not a PM but a Business Analyst, so my challenges are probably slightly different. At TD Ameritrade, Project Managers run the overall project team, including key business stakeholders, marketing, training, operations, etc. The PM reports the project status and keeps track of key deliverables. The BA is responsible for the development and documentation of the requirements, and their continued care and feeding (including change management) throughout the lifecycle. The BA ends up being the subject matter expert for the functionality that the project is to deliver, and serves as liaison between the business and technology.

One of the biggest challenges as a Business Analyst is to get all the right people involved in the project at the right time, and having them understand how much technology counts on them to read and understand the requirements. It happens fairly regularly that different constituents, from key stakeholders to someone who is impacted in a small way, say: "I thought the project would do x," when x was never documented anywhere. If it isn't in the document, it won't get built! I constantly have to remind people to be diligent when reviewing the documentation and approving what will be done as part of the project.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs (BAs) ?

Listen, listen, listen. Not just to the words that people are saying, but to what is really meant. It is the BA's job to get at the heart of what is really needed. Asking lots of questions and really listening to the answers is the only way to get there.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

While I think I'd always like to keep my hands in project work, I'm also interested in process improvements, training and education of BAs and requirements elicitation methodologies and facilitation. I also would like to do more analysis and problem solving at a system level, instead of just a project level.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

Projects take on lives of their own. The different team members create a subculture that is most of the time very productive and fun, although sometimes can be negative. I find that we subtitle projects or give them some sort of theme or mascot. One project was "A Perfect Storm." For one of my current projects we put a Jenga game in our conference room, because we have so many pieces that have to balance just right. For some bigger projects I'm on now, we pick a cartoon and assign everyone a character. Last time it was Hong Kong Phooey. This one is Rocky & Bullwinkle. We even went so far as to order some little plush dolls of the R&B

characters to hand out. It seems goofy, but the laughs help make people feel part of the team.

## **Jim Depiante**

IBM

### 1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

My biggest challenge currently is really no different than it has always been. There are always tremendous business pressures to take shortcuts -- to circumvent sound project management practices in hopes that somehow we can achieve the benefits of project management without paying the price. My biggest challenge is, and has always been, to spend the time up front to do the kind of work that will allow us to say with confidence what we're going to deliver, when we're going to deliver it, and how much it will cost. In a sense, the challenge is an internal struggle: Do I have enough conviction about the value of project management, and enough courage in the face of the inevitable pressures to insist that the surest way to a good ending is with a good beginning? Or will I capitulate to the pressures, take the shortcuts and deny my sponsor or client the real benefits of project management and the value of my training and experience?

### 2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Have the courage to lead. Project management isn't only about making Gantt charts and producing status reports. And it's not about software, or computer chips, or pharmaceuticals or building bridges. Sound project management skills and a certain amount of domain knowledge are absolutely necessary, but they are not sufficient, nor are they the most important skills a project manager should have. Fundamentally, project management is about people -- it's about leadership. Leadership isn't always easy. People are complex. Relationships are more complex still. Focus on the people. Cultivate your interpersonal skills, your leadership skills, your communication skills, your team-building skills. You take care of the team. Let the team take care of the work.

### 3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I have great conviction about the value of project management, and in particular about the importance of leadership as a project manager's most important capability. I'm pursuing a path in my career that lets me share that conviction with other project managers -- through speaking at conferences, giving seminars, mentoring and coaching, and ultimately, classroom training.

### 4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

One funny or interesting story? Where do I begin!? My life as a project manager has been filled with funny and interesting stories. One series of events in particular has been very influential in my career as a project manager. When my first child was 6, I was asked to coach his soccer team. I had not played soccer as a kid and so wasn't a very capable player. But I understood the value of teamwork, and of leadership, and so I set about to learn what it means to be a coach. Being a project manager, I did understand the value of having a plan, and of preparation. I showed up at the very first practice with a whistle around my neck, clipboard in hand, conspicuously

displaying my "certified youth soccer coach" patch, doing my absolute best to look like a coach! The fact that I looked the part, had done some preparation, and had a plan, apparently were enough to persuade the kids that I was, in fact, a real coach! What surprised me though was that the parents were also apparently persuaded that I was, in fact, a real coach! My wife overheard some of the other moms saying that they felt lucky that their sons had been put on a team with such a good coach, and this after only the first 5 minutes of practice! Here's the interesting part. Because of the reaction of the players and their parents, because of the confidence that they put in me, my own confidence increased, and I began to act with greater conviction in my own ability to lead this group of little boys. And of course, their confidence in me soared and they responded even better which made us succeed all the more, and my self-confidence soared as well.

The thought occurred to me that the success of a team has a lot to do with the confidence that the team has in its leader, and that the confidence a team has in its leader depends in large measure on the confidence that the leader has in him or herself. I wondered if I couldn't use this to my advantage with my project team. In fact, I wondered if maybe it wasn't a disservice to my team to appear hesitant or apprehensive and decided that I owed it to my team to exude a justifiable confidence -- in them, in the value of project management, and in myself as their leader. The effect of this was profound. The team dynamic shifted entirely. I came to understand that people need and want and will willingly follow their leaders -- provided their leaders lead with a humble and well-founded confidence. And of course, such a team will surely succeed. This success increases confidence; and this confidence further increases success. But the whole cycle begins with the realization that success, be it on a kids' soccer team, or on a project team, depends on confident and capable leadership.

I began to see the kids' soccer field as something of a laboratory for understanding leadership and team dynamics and would take the lessons I learned there and apply them on projects. I would often, and still do, tell stories from the soccer field to inspire teamwork and collaboration on my teams, and to share the lessons I had learned with my teams. In fact, I've cobbled several of these stories together into a talk\* that I give at conferences on the role of leadership in project management. All in all, it's been a fun ride. I'm still learning, naturally, and I'm deeply interested in sharing my experiences and the lessons I've learned with other project managers.

\* "The project manager as coach: Unforgettable lessons in leadership."

### **Lisa DiTullio**

Harvard Pilgrim Health

1. We continue to be challenged with resource management. Having limited human resources forces us to be smart in placing the "right" resources to the "right" projects. In order to be successful, we must constantly find creative ways to expand and grow project management skills, as well as develop a model to support the growth and development of subject matter experts. It is less about the tools we use to manage resources, more about balancing the development of our staff in order to achieve project success.

2. New project managers are typically well-trained in the technical aspect of project management, but hold little experience in people management. Project success is more than delivering deliverables within deadline; it also requires motivated,

empowered team members. New project managers must acquire the "soft skills" to be successful.

3. Realizing we have quite a story to tell, I have done quite a bit a public speaking over the past year, sharing our experience with others.

In the late 1990's, we at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, the oldest nonprofit health benefits organization in New England, were placed in state receivership. Today, Harvard Pilgrim is recognized by US News and World Report, J.D. Power and Associates and the National Committee for Quality Assurance for outstanding member satisfaction and quality of care. Additionally, we went from being on the verge of financial collapse to realizing \$2.2 billion in 1995. Much of our success can be attributed to the introduction and embracement of project management. Telling our story is a personal enjoyment for me, particularly if it helps others.

4. I have far too many funny experiences to share! The key is to always maintain a sense of humor, regardless of how dire the situation. As a project manager, think of creative ways to keep the spirit alive. Have you ever conducted a project team meeting, with members garbed in Groucho Marx glasses?

### **David Finn**

Texas Children's Hospital

1. My biggest challenge is allocation of IT resources. Where are the people, what are they doing, and are they the right people to be doing what they are doing?
2. From a Technology PM Perspective – This is not about the project or the technology. It is about providing people with tools and resources. Don't forget your end game – you are there to serve people. And always keep your sense of humor.
3. The integration of our people and organizational skill management with our resource allocation management tool.

### **Michael Gordos**

TDS Telecom

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

The biggest challenge I face in project management is the perception that project management is a single person, function or department. Project management is a business process just like any other business process. The primary difference between this business process and other business processes is the transitory nature of the work and the inherent uncertainty of change. One person or department can't do it alone. Project management is a team sport.

2. What is your best tip for new PM's?

Project plans don't do projects, people do. You need a flexible plan to guide the team and be prepared to adapt as conditions change.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

The next step in my career is working on how an organization creates, builds, and maintains an organizational capability to turn strategy into reality using projects.

4. Please share a funny or interesting story that happened to you in your project management role.

Once I used an apparently unsolvable but actually simple brain teaser in a meeting with a group of senior executives. The point was to illustrate that what appears obvious once the problem is solved is quite another matter from the other end. Let's just say I didn't account for the ego backlash on that one!

### **Mark Gosney**

Smith Nephew

1. greatest challenge is always garnering resources: time and money from indirect sources. This requires gaining and maintaining buy-in over long time frame. Often this is in light of changing business situations.
2. Tip: get to know your sources and build trust with them by delivering as promised even if you have to deliver bad news. Also, find someone who can help you determine which battles to fight.
3. Next step: Not sure, sorting that out now. Would really like to help my organization set stage for very successful long term research programs.
4. interesting: my job deals with Orthopaedic Trauma devices that surgeons use to fix fractures. It is always interesting to watch people's faces as I describe the use of our products. It is not for the squeamish. Also, it is great to know that devices that came from projects you lead have helped people all over the world. On average one of our intramedullary nails is being implanted about every seven minutes.

### **Robert W. Green III**

PRICE Systems, L.L.C.

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

To me, the biggest challenge in Project Management is managing the expectations of opposing parties. There are many people involved and they all want something different. As a Project Manager, you walk the line between Marketing, Business Development, upper-level Management, the Users, the Analysts and the Developers and *its your responsibility to make everyone happy*. On top of that, the requests that come from each of the interested parties are often conflicting and we all know that resource are always a bottleneck. It really is the negotiation and management of expectations that prove to be the most difficult part of the job. It's up to you to make everyone understand exactly what they're getting and when they're getting it. And, you need to do all this while knowing no one will ever be completely satisfied.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

The best tip I could give to any new Project Manager is: *make a decision*. One of the most damaging things you can do to your project is let questions go unanswered. Of course, realize that sometimes you are going to be wrong. You aren't always going to make the "right" decision, but I still say that a wrong decision is better than no decision. Don't be afraid to make the wrong decision. If you are, then this is not the job for you. Now, the caveat is that you still need to gather as much information as possible. This is not an excuse to gloss over details and make fast decisions. You need to take the information that is available and make the fastest *and best* decision.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I have always had a passion for building software. What keeps me excited about it is striving for the goal of software that is built faster, better and cheaper. I finally feel like I am in a position where I can significantly impact the way the software is built. I would say the next step in my career is directly correlated to any position that gives

me the ability to have a greater impact on my overall goal of better software, built faster and cheaper. Regardless of where my career leads me, I will be happy if I have a hand in helping people and projects succeed.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

Out of everything that I've experienced since taking on the role of Project Manager, there is one story that stands out. It was during the development of a Program Affordability Management tool called TruePlanning, which is a part of PRICE System's product offerings. There was an important stakeholder who wanted to know, "what is all this time being spent on requirements and design?". Then, "what exactly do we do during the requirements and design phase?" And finally, "lets save time by just skipping the design phase and going right to coding". I always find it amazing how people sometimes make decisions about running a project, without having any experience or understanding about the pieces that they jettison. In my opinion, I have no problem making trade-offs on anything, as long as I have a clear understanding of the risks that those trade-offs introduce. Needless to say, everything worked out in the end, but it was definitely pretty interesting for a while.

### **Nancy Jeffreys**

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

My biggest challenge right now is dealing with decisions that are out of my control that have direct impact on my program. The state of the economy and the need to make wise financial decisions has delayed my go live twice. We were right on schedule to complete the program two months earlier than the current go live date. The team lost momentum and are discouraged about the delay. We decided to put everything on hold with the exception of go live planning and work flows. This leaves the team with something constructive to work on, yet gives them additional time to do their daily work. Two months before go live we will re-group and do some team building activities to re-energize the team to successfully complete the program.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Be patient in the planning phase of the project. Even though you may get pressure to move forward quickly to start the project. If you don't plan carefully, the project will fail. In addition, higher team participation in the planning process always increases the degree of success achieved. This is not only attributes to better planning by relying on the "experts", but it also gives everyone the impression that the project has begun.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

In the past few years I have continually taken on larger projects and a program. They are often outside of my area of expertise and my comfort zone. I want to continue this progression.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

As a team building activity, we decided to transform the Core Team into a football team. The team will carry the ball across a mock up football field to countdown the tasks to the end of the program. In the kick off meeting I dressed in a referee's outfit and carried a whistle. Every time someone said something good – or bad – during the Core Team meeting, I used my whistle to keep everyone in line. It was

habit forming!! I will be dressed as a referee (with the whistle) in all of the Core Team meetings until go live. We hope to have plenty of fun carrying the ball to the end zone.

### **Brenda Kerton**

Info-Tech Research Group

#### 1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

I have been the Chair for the IIBA Body of Knowledge committee for over 2 years. Our job has been to create the business analysis body of knowledge that will form the basis for IIBA certification.

The core team has 10 people plus there are several sub-committees each with several people. All of these people are volunteers.

Trying to create and manage a project plan and set realistic timelines while only using volunteer time has been quite a challenge. It is not the same as a project in an organization where the people are assigned and the project is their job for a period of time!

On top of that the team is completely virtual. There are still a couple of core team members I have not met face-to-face!

Thankfully, the teams are made up of skilled, passionate people who have remained committed to getting the job done. We've had to reset our expectations a couple of times but have managed to go from nothing to a solid 300 page BOK that was just released in July.

#### 2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

This tip applies equally to PMs and BAs... Establish Relationships Fast!

As my daughter heads into university my tip to her is to quickly get to know each professor and what they expect from her. Learning will happen if she follows the course content and good learning practices. But if she does not meet the expectations of the professor in terms of what she produces or how she behaves, the marks won't reflect that learning has occurred. By focusing early on the expectations (and quirks!) of each professor she can take an active role in negotiating those expectations. At very least, even if negotiation doesn't work, she'll know what to do to succeed. In most cases, she'll have established a relationship that enhances the learning process.

Projects aren't much different. You must identify the core stakeholders and quickly understand their expectations of you. Not their expectations of the project (though that will be important as well), but rather their expectations of you. This is most critical when thinking about the project sponsor. Doing this early allows you to negotiate expectations. And, in the vast majority of cases you'll establish a relationship that enhances the project execution process.

By following good PM practices as outlined in PMBOK or good BA practices as outlined in the BABOK you will do what's needed for the project. But it will be far easier to do it with established relationships.

#### 3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

Over the past 2 years I've actually taken the next steps in my career. The first step was to play an active role with IIBA. This has provided me with an opportunity to work with wonderfully smart people all over North America and from many types of organizations. Through helping create the Business Analysis Body of Knowledge I feel I've been able to give back to the BA community.

The second step was to move into the research analyst role I'm now in. In this role I get the opportunity to actively research IT subjects, like project management and business analysis, for our clients. Through our analyst inquiry service I'm able to advise (and learn from!) IT leaders all over the world. At the same time, I can take on small PM and BA roles with internal projects. How wonderful to be able to be a practitioner, learner and expert advisor all in one role!

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

About 9 years ago I was leading a project that impacted several hundred internal business partners in locations across Canada. We'd committed to a very user-participative approach and had traveled to several of the locations to shadow the users, share ideas and clarify requirements. At one point in the project the office managers of all the offices were at head office. We were asked to do a demo of the system. In part because of the participative process, the expectations were high and there was lots of 'buzz' around the project.

As me and other team members watched the large meeting room/auditorium fill up, we were a bundle of nerves. The system was still just a prototype and like all prototypes it occasionally misbehaved! The business VP introduced us and the expectations just grew larger. As I approached the podium it was so very quiet... So, in the course of introducing what we would be showing them, I asked the whole darned room to help us. I asked them all to stand up and twirl three times as an offering to the 'demo gods', saying that this was a pre-requisite to the demo working at all. Everyone, including the project team and business management stood up and twirled. And then everyone laughed! The tension was gone. As I recall we actually did hit a glitch in one part of the demo, but no one minded. In the end the demo, and eventually the system, was a great success. I'm sure they still wonder about the crazy lady that had them up and twirling!

**Dr. Harold Kerzner**

International Institute for Learning (IIL)

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in project management?

For the past several decades, I have been working (or perhaps I should say struggling) with getting companies and executives to appreciate what project management can do to make the company successful. Project management is no longer merely a luxury; it is now a necessity for the growth and survival of the firm. Unfortunately, companies still haven't come to the full realization that project managers are actually managing parts of a business rather than simply projects, and that projects managers are expected to make business decisions rather than just project decisions.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Project management is a great career path opportunity but too many people enter project management without fully understanding what is involved or expected of them. A proper understanding of the job is essential to avoid burnout. This includes, in no specific order, an ability to handle pressure and stress on a continuous basis; the ability to leave the pressure and stress in the office rather than bringing it home in the evening; recognizing that there is a quality of life and that the project should never become more important than your family; and, finally, periodically perform a self-assessment to understand your own personal strengths and weaknesses and where you need improvement.

### 3. What do you see as the next step in your career?

Within the next year or so, I expect to be working more closely with E. LaVerne Johnson, the CEO of International Institute for Learning (IIL), in course development for advanced topics in project management. IIL has a certificate program emphasizing advanced concepts in project management. I expect IIL to become the world's leader in developing such certificate programs on advanced project management topics, and I have every intention of becoming an integral part of the design and delivery of such programs. This is my career path passion and how I expect to spend the next decade.

### 4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

As a young project manager, I was asked by one of the vice presidents to respond to an RFP from one of the company's most important clients. It was customary for the project manager to take the lead role in preparing proposals in response to an RFP. I was informed that the customer expected us to respond to the request. However, the vice president informed me that the company did not want to win this contract under any circumstances, and that I should simply write a quick-and-dirty proposal. I was also instructed to submit a price that was so high that we would be guaranteed of not winning the contract. Furthermore, I was not given any bid-and-proposal (B&P) funding from the marketing group, and was expected to perform most of this work on my own time. This meant that I would be doing most of the estimating with limited support from the estimating group.

I prepared the proposal, rather quickly at that, and determined what realistically minimum cost would actually be required to perform the work. I then multiplied the cost by a very large number (significantly greater than one but less than ten), had the proposal and cost blessed by management, and submitted the proposal to the customer.

I was then informed by the customer that I was the low bidder and would be awarded the contract. It seems that all of my competitors DID NOT WANT THE CONTRACT WORSE THAN I DID NOT WANT THE CONTRACT and multiplied by a much larger number than I had done. To this day, I remember sitting in the vice president's office and apologizing for winning a contract while the vice president was rolling on the floor laughing. The vice president then asked me how I was planning to perform the work since there were no employees available for release to my

project. Fortunately, I was given some resources and the job was completed at a much higher cost than I had expected and not much less than the contracted cost.

**Elizabeth Larson**

Watermark Learning

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

A: I think there are several major challenges in project management today.

- Gathering complete business requirements
- Working with teams from different backgrounds and cultures. We have published articles on Projects Without Borders
- Working with geographically-dispersed team members
- Establishing trust and getting buy-in from all levels of business customers
- Having sponsors and business customers take responsibility for the project and specifically the requirements.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

A: Here are a few, all of which relate to getting a solid project definition:

- Make sure you define the business problem that needs solving, before managing a project to produce a solution provided by the sponsor
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- When estimating, start with the deliverables before even thinking about tasks, hours, or dates

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

A: Writing a book on project management

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

This wasn't funny, but was definitely a huge lesson learned. I was managing a project that included a male team member from Southeast Asia. He appeared uncomfortable taking direction from me. The more I discussed the importance of meeting deadlines, communicating status, and teamwork, the more uncommunicative and uncooperative he became. Finally, I realized that the real problem was that I had done nothing to build trust and a strong relationship with him. His cultural work ethic dictated the importance of relationships. Therefore, he completed tasks because of the relationship, not because tasks appeared on a work breakdown structure.

**Marion Lorden, PMP**

Coley Pharmaceutical Group

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

My biggest current challenge is finding the time to complete the processes and tools that I have developed for my projects while working in a fast paced pharmaceutical R&D environment.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Develop and use the PM processes and tools even if you are the only one to use them. It will help you with your projects and others will see their benefit by your example.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

At present I obtain outsourcing and handle vendor relations for the Clinical Operations department and I'm the only person doing this task. As the clinical programs grow and other departments become aware of my ability, the need for my services has increased quickly. I would like to see my role evolve into management as additional members are brought in to assist me in accomplishing the goals of the department and company.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

I've been using PM processes and tools for 7 years trying to show their benefit and share them with my colleagues with some minor success. I was extremely please when I was requested to obtain the services of an experience PM trainer to hold a 2 day training session for the Clinical Operations department to introduce the concepts of Project Management, this past spring. It confirmed that the small steps I've being taking over time, showing how PM processes and tools work, can create changes on a larger scale.

### **John Moore**

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

I facilitate process improvement for project managers. I find my biggest challenge is helping others to develop processes and tools that are truly useful and get used. The problem is that it is very easy to come up with a process. It is very difficult to come up with a process that actually improves quality or performance. I think we fail sometimes to fully recognize that many aspects of IT projects are inherently complex with incomplete, non-existent, or volatile information. Our standard models for process improvement often assume this information can be solidified through a set of logical steps with the ultimate goal of statistical process control. However, I'm not sure that is true in all cases. We need to appreciate these complexities and the challenges that project managers face before we jump in and "help" them with more processes and more measurements. Perhaps fewer processes, but ones that are genuinely useful, is a better approach.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Learn to appreciate and leverage negative information. Negative information (defects, problem reports, screw-ups, risks, etc.) is the most important information you can get for controlling a project. If you handle negative information carelessly, it will blow up on you. If you personalize negative information, you will hurt someone and people will stop sharing it with you. If you collect and act on negative information in a positive and mature way then controlling your projects will be much easier. However, it is not easy to do this!

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

My family is moving to Oklahoma for family reasons. I enjoy teaching and I would like to do more of it. I would also like to write a book.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

As part of working on a proposal for a project, I participated in a risk assessment. When the proposal lead saw that some "high" exposure risks were identified, he strongly suggested these should be reduced to "moderate." To leave them at "high" would imply negative things about the client and/or the team's ability to do the job. The team won the contract. It was a fixed price contract. I guess I don't need to tell you how much money they made.

**Tom Morrissey**  
E&D Systems

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Getting project managers and team members to not lose focus on the basic "blocking and tackling" . In their enthusiasm to get going with their new project many folks loose sight of those "simple things" that are the "insurance policy" for project success e.g. Charter, Roles & Responsibilities matrix, Issues & Risk tracking ....)

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Getting them to understand that project management contains elements of both "art" and "science" and that a balance of both are necessary to be a great project manager. So many times I see a person come in very strong in one or the other and then "lead with that skill set, sometimes to the detriment of project. Getting the right balance for each project is something that comes with experience. New project managers can do well to seek out the counsel or mentoring.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I'm working in the area of Business Analysis (including Seattle chapter of IIBA) to both differentiate the BA from the PM while at the same time promoting the essential nature of their partnership that is necessary for successful project delivery

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

No matter how much I think I've learned about project management in the past 25 years, there is always something more. I've taught project management in North America, Europe, and Asia. Every time I teach I learn something from the participants, either about myself or project management.

**Larry Petretti**

Hunter Roberts Construction Group

1. The biggest challenge in managing any project of any size is to keep the entire team focused on the tasks at hand and the ultimate goal while remaining flexible in an ever changing environment. As the lead manager on a project you have to treat everyone involved as your client. The new paradigm is a "just-in-time" design and build strategy where projects can be started with minimal information and refined as you move along the time line to meet the different milestones.

2. Get a clear understanding of the scope of work. Identify each team members area of expertise and responsibility. Create a mini mission statement that everyone buys into. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

3. I just took the next step in my career by accepting the position as President on Hunter Roberts Interiors (a division of Hunter Roberts Construction Group) where I

can sell clients on my style of project management and teach my employees what I have learned over the last 33 years.

4. Project Management has come a long way in the last 30 years. Today we work in a much more collaborative work environment with cross functioning teams and real partnerships. It wasn't always like this. There use to be 5 distinct stages of project management:

- Optimism and Enthusiasm
- Disillusionment
- Panic
- Search for the guilty
- Accolades for the uninvolved

### **Cleve B. Pillifant**

IIBA

1. My personal biggest challenge is in obtaining consensus from senior executives in my company for an enterprise-wide project. This is an IT infrastructure project and everyone has a different idea of what the solution should do and how it should do it! Unfortunately not everyone will get their wish and managing their expectations has fallen to me as the Champion of the project. So, I wrestle with this challenge so the PM doesn't have to and can concentrate on managing the project.

2. My best tip for new PMs is to ask questions and be inquisitive. Talk to other team members and stakeholders involved to make sure you know not only what you're doing but what others are doing and how it all fits together. The bigger your picture is the more effective you will be, no matter what role you play on the team.

3. My next step is retirement. I'm now in the business of managing multiple PMs and ensuring they are delivering successful projects for my own and client organizations. I am able to pass on what I've learned to PMs and gather new lessons learned from their activities.

4. I guess we all remember our first project. Mine was planning the logistical support for a major field exercise in the Marine Corps. Everything was going fine until I was notified that the fuel tankers were not yet confirmed. Now, the Marine Corps needs fuel to operate and the whole exercise was dependent on having the right fuel in the right place at the right times. We had to contract for the fuel delivery and our local contracting office, staffed by civilian employees, wasn't being very responsive. After several frustrating attempts to learn the status I made a trip to the contracting office to talk to the contracting officer personally. Lets just say a vigorous discussion ensued and tempers flared - on both sides. After being escorted out of the building I received the completed contract in short order but had a bigger problem in the form of some very angry people at the contracting office. It took a while to smooth things out and I learned that the "Marine Corps way" wasn't always the best method to use in solving coordination problems. I also learned that they weren't bad folks over there in the contracting office and I needed to engage them differently to get the results I needed. In short, I had to find my "sensitive" side and use different motivational techniques to get all members of the team to fulfill their respective roles. A lesson that I still struggle with occasionally.

### **Carole Post**

New York City Mayor's Office of Operations

1. Currently the biggest challenge in Project Management is convincing agency business representatives to use and rely on project management tools in their daily roles. They tend to see the value the tools can offer such as clarifying project scope, identifying specific personnel to be responsible for specific tasks, using project planning to itemize tasks, etc., but can require extensive effort to continue to maintain these tools on their own and in their regular day-to-day routine.
2. Follow the structure of the program – even when it feels like overkill for a small project. There is so much value to the exercises built into project planning that they should always be used.
3. I recently had a career shift from running a project management type office at a single city agency to running one for the Mayor's Office which is responsible for ongoing projects across a varied spectrum of city agencies. The next step will be to build the office into a successful component of this administration and develop a method for it to sustain into future administrations.
4. I have begun to get a reputation as a "consultant type" because my role is to foster project management across a number of different organizations at differing levels. When people find out I am not a consultant, but rather just an attorney who happened to fall into business process re-engineering by accident - more or less – it sends some people for a loop. Ultimately, it usually helps the cause by convincing them that you don't have to be an "expert" in this to be able to do it – and that can go a long way.

**William J. Purpura**

NCO Architecture Engineering (NAE)

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

One of my most challenging efforts is supporting Boeing's transformation of its Project/Program management processes and methodologies to meet the demands of the next generation of E-enabled business environment. This will be an integrated mix of tailored processes and techniques drawn from LEAN+, Six Sigma, ISO, and Network Centric Operation capabilities.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Always treat the kick-off of a program/project as "Golden Time." In my opinion, decisions made then have the highest leverage on mission success probability as well as the greatest potential to negatively impact a program. The cost to correct such errors can increase by orders of magnitude in each later phase. The results of such errors can include degradations to schedule, cost, performance and quality. The development of an understandable integrated program plan and schedule, based on solid requirements, understood task relationships, and credible/verifiable duration estimates should be your highest priority. However, most program managers know these primary artifacts are always the most suspect of the first deliverables! The one other tip I offer a new PM would be to develop a backbone VERY quickly. Stick to your guns from day one on the criticality of a credible integrated plan/schedule baseline BEFORE ANY significant tasks are started. Abdicating your responsibility at the start out of fear of ruffling feathers assures you zero leverage later when you try to regain baseline as things start to spin out of control.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I would expect to transition to a staff position at the enterprise level in order to play a larger role in transforming Boeing from its traditional structure to a model for E-enabled business. This position would focus on defining and implementing enterprise common processes, tools and skills to allow project/program tasks to be allocated across Boeing in the most cost effective manner.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

The strangest project management effort I have worked has been jointly planning my son and daughter's college education! For those who have been away from college awhile, the path to a bachelor's degree in a world of impacted classes, inconsistent course transfer policies, and yearly changes in course requirements will astound you. Now factor in that both of have completed, or are taking, college courses while enrolled in high school to get a head start. Finding transferable courses, matching AP exams to needed courses, scheduling around sports, and navigating bizarre admission systems at multiple community colleges has taken every trick I know! On the plus side my daughter completes her BFA in 2007 in 3 years while my son should complete his BA in Business in less than 3. Not bad when compared to a 5-year average for these programs. This has been a daunting project that has put many major business assignments to shame!

### **Prem Ranganath**

Northwestern Mutual

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

The biggest challenge is to get the business clients and IT teams to speak a common language that promotes understanding and agreement on the scope, benefits and risks. This would also be valuable to use a common set of metrics to measure value delivery and to manage benefits.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

For new PMs in IT, I would strongly recommend that you make a concerted effort to view project scope from an enterprise perspective and within the context of real business needs. Encourage your teams to also pursue this approach and not get too caught up with product functionality.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

Continue to hone my skills in demonstrating the value of projects in business terms and in the area of enterprise risk management. I am also focused on growing project management as a discipline in academia where many students still perceive project management to be all about budgets, schedule and writing status reports!

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role:

Every PM might have experienced some "Dilbert moments" in their career and I've had my share too!!

### **San Retna**

Enterprise Portfolio Management Council

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

The primary challenge with the conventional approach to project management is that it focuses most project management resources to ensure that they 'are doing the things right'. This is important but these resources also need to pay equal attention to the question of if they 'are doing the right things.' Most of these resources think that is 'senior management' responsibility. I believe this is a seriously flawed view – it has to be everyone's responsibility to further the strategy and maximize value to the shareholders, customers and employees.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Don't assume your stakeholders understand PM language (e.g. critical path, SPI/CPI, stage gating, gantt charts, etc.). The maturity of the PM discipline has led to less seasoned PMs trying to impress their stakeholders with terminology. This is counter-productive. The choice of language is a key communication mechanism, so connect with stakeholders using their terminology and frames of reference while adhering to your objectives.

3. What do you see as the next step in your career?

I want to continue to build my niche Project Portfolio Management (PPM) consulting organization to become 'the' trusted advisor in this domain. We currently advise clients on appropriate migration paths to implement sustainable PPM capabilities (one that become the 'fabric of the organization'). Our starting point is process, skills and organizational environment (as opposed to technology). Technology then comes in to make things 'cheaper, faster and better.'

## **Peter Rogers**

Integral Teams

1. Currently, my biggest challenge in project management is how to effectively prioritize programs and projects. In many businesses there is a relative void between the creators of high-level goals and strategies, and those persons who must carry out the projects and operational work that delivers on these goals and strategies. Many businesses do not have a strategic "unit of analysis" (e.g., a suite of agreed programs), nor do these businesses have personnel experienced with prioritizing and effectively managing these strategic units of analysis. There is significant potential value to be realized by focusing on this issue.

2. Best tip for new PMs: People deliver deliverables; process and tools help – Set up a project management infrastructure (processes, methods, templates, tools) that is as simple as possible with minimum overhead. Concentrate on WHY the project is being done – really get the business need and intent clear. Let your smart people figure out, within your project management infrastructure, HOW to deliver on the needs.

3. The next step in my career is to bridge the void between high level goals and strategies on the one hand, and projects & operational work on the other. The majority of businesses fail to deliver on strategy – there is a huge opportunity here.

4. Let me take this opportunity to give some advice to new or experienced project managers that get stressed out on projects. Remember that your job is to deliver to the best of your (and your team's) ability GIVEN THE CONSTRAINTS. Projects are like physics – you cannot get something for nothing. Do your analysis of the trade-offs (scope-schedule-resources) and tee-it up for decision-making. Get a decision

then execute on it. Do not fall into the trap of being a miracle worker – miracles rarely happen – do not count on them!

### **Lou Russell**

Russell Martin & Associates

1. Currently, my biggest problem in Project Management is that everyone says people and influencing skills are critical to a Project Manager's success at project completion BUT companies are still not investing in growing those skills. Projects don't fail because of an invalid critical path, or poorly constructed scope diagram; they struggle because of communication breakdown. If all project managers spent time improving their abilities to communicate, lead and influence, collaboration would drive impressive project results.
2. Best tip for new PMs – Flexible Structure. At all times have a plan; at all times be ready to adapt your plan as the situation dictates.
3. Next step in my career: a new book on Project Management due out in 2007. My new motto is "Insanity is only a project constraint." Have you ever noticed that some people (sometimes me!) get mad at the same nonsense over and over again. For example, every morning after reading their emails they say something like "I can't believe that business customer hasn't sent me the requirements I asked for!!! They are always ignoring me, and always late!!!!". Well, if they are always late, why is it a surprise every morning? If we can learn to mitigate our risks by expecting insanity from people who are consistently insane (from our perspective), and plan for the insanity, we can save ourselves a lot of stress which will save us a lot of project overhead.

### **Nani Sadowski**

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?  
My biggest challenge right now is working with decisions that are beyond my control that directly impact my projects and in turn the resources. With the vast array of projects taking place simultaneously that requires a specific pool of resources, balancing the resources and their time while still allowing them the freedom to brainstorm and timely/accurately complete their work is an extreme challenge. Especially to ensure that they do not reach the point of feeling burned out.
2. What is your best tip for new PMs?  
Communicate communicate communicate !!! This is most certainly a key component in effective and successful project management. This communicating (as we have all learned truly is 90% of Project Management) needs to encompass the good and the bad as well as suggestions and resolutions for moving forward. With this, I also cannot emphasize enough how important it is to document and to organize all project related documentation so that it is easily accessible not only to you as the PM but to all of the project stakeholders. Through the years that I have been involved in Project Management, this has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in vendor hours, lost/missing equipment, SW/HW issues, etc.

With the focus upon communication also arises the need to clearly relay the overall change that the project will bring forth. This includes the importance of guiding your core team through the emerging changes along with demonstrating the numerous positive attributes as well as the manner in which it all ties back to the project goals. I have a quote that I absolutely love for this and that I have posted on my wall as a reminder:

*'Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.'* - John F. Kennedy.

Lastly, I recommend as with anything in life, to learn from your mistakes and to address them "full steam ahead."

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I possess a passion for the large scale and exceptionally challenging projects. Especially those that result in enhancements to processes and procedures. I aspire to continue taking on even larger projects and programs that will noticeably impact productivity and the quality of services delivered.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

One of the Largest projects I implemented was with the roll out MedStations (locked automated medical cabinets - a tad fancier and more advanced- but you get the drift) that provide enhanced tracking and metric functionalities as well as unveil medication distribution discrepancies. The Core Team was large, so, we did a lot of ice breakers and team building to ensure that team members had the opportunity to bond and learn more about each other. One that we revisited a few times involved M & M's. You place a bowl in the middle of the table with colored M and M's. Each attendee takes just a few, from there, the facilitator/PM passes out a sheet that details what each person must say for each color of M and M that they took (ie., If you have an Orange M and M in your hand, tell the team your most embarrassing moment, if you have a Green M and M in your hand- name 2 of the project goals, etc.)...Well, these M & M's made their way to our testing and we utilized them as meds/drugs in the units and had random pop quizzes, ice breakers and teasers with the M & M's that would be available if the MedStation drawers tested 'ok' and opened correctly. This consistent branding of one item (and a tasty one too) allowed the team to create their own questions and incorporated fun, learning, and bonding into a simple/low budget game.

### **Rhonda Schwartz**

American Modern Insurance Group

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Delivering a quality product within the timeframe desired by the business. In my experience, the members of my project teams want to deliver a product that meets or even exceeds the user expectation. Unfortunately, business demands require faster and changing deliveries. A project manager is challenged daily to manage change in delivering defined scope on time and within budget.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Use data to support your messages. For example, we are frequently asked to deliver preliminary estimates quickly without all defined requirements. As you begin to plan the work and develop the schedule, the "hidden" requirements surface causing the new estimates to exceed what was originally forecast. It is important to associate the scope of the new requirements to the newly refined estimates. The sponsors and/or user group can determine if the added cost is worthy of the additional project costs. Also, if properly used by all team members, earned value can be an early warning indicator of project problems. This data can allow the PM to

proactively work to alleviate problems, or at minimum, communicate early to user and sponsor groups.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I am fortunate to work for an organization that embraces the Project Management discipline. The Senior PM's have the opportunity to mentor and coach project coordinators and business analysts within our project teams. Additionally, I have been afforded the opportunity to develop project management training for our organization and even work as a consultant with departments outside of PMO to develop project management processes and disciplines within these areas.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

Last year, I was appointed as Project Manager a very high profile project for our organization. We were entering into a business relationship with a strategically significant business partner. The CEO pulled the entire group together to offer his support and stress the importance of a "flawless" delivery. The team worked tirelessly to pull this off. We planned the work and worked the plan. We also put a considerable amount of time and effort into forming a solid quality working relationship with this partner. We had a strategy for handling any crisis with one exception. Our communication line with this partner did not have a back up. The experts assured me back up wasn't necessary. "These lines never fail." Well it did...and at the worst time possible for our business partner. Fortunately, the strong relationship we had formed in building this interface managed to outweigh this incredible fiasco. Lesson learned - Project planning and execution are important factors for success; however, never underestimate the significance of forming strong relationships in your project work.

### **Matthew Snowden, PMP**

Centocor Research and Development, Inc.

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

My biggest challenge in project management is unrealistic deadlines. In today's business environment, everything needs to be done faster with fewer resources, yet at the same time quality must not suffer. I am sure that most project managers would agree that their projects encounter some slippage in the schedule. More and more, this seems to be the "norm" as opposed to an anomaly. Project managers need to involve the team to develop creative plans and communicate a realistic status to all stakeholders.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Communicate! A project manager must be able to communicate with many different stakeholders, all playing different roles. The ability to effectively collect, store, and disseminate the appropriate information at the right time, is key in ensuring project success. Moreover, with more and more companies working in global capacity, a project manager needs to have the ability to effectively communicate cross-culturally. Effective communication begins with the receipt of information from the sender, but is not complete, until the project manager feeds back his/her understanding of the information. I see communication as a key component of any project that can either lead to its success or failure.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I have been in the pharmaceutical industry for 13 years, but only project management for the past three. The next step in my career is to assume a position

with more responsibility and entails managing one or more programs and a team of project managers.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

One of the most interesting (and fun) experiences that I have encountered during my role as a project manager was a team building exercise for our PMO. Our entire group went to a school for culinary arts, where we learned how to prepare and cook a full course meal. At the end of the day, we all sat down to eat that, which we just cooked, while sipping some exceptional wines.

### **Paul R. Williams, PMP**

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Breaking down the silos that continue to exist between the business units and IT, and sometimes within IT itself. The challenge is to align project objectives with the business strategy while developing a feasible technical solution that IT can build and support. I have found that adding Business Analysts to the core project technical team ensures that the "voice of the customer" always serves as our guiding design compass and has also helped to chip away at the divide between the two groups

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Learn about and get comfortable with the soft "people" skills side of the work. Being an effective project manager is learning how to lead without authority. Skills in leadership, coalition building, communication, facilitation and creative problem solving are the "delighters" of any project stakeholder group. Speaking of creative problem solving <insert shameless plug>, don't miss my half-day workshop about the creative problem solving process on Tuesday, November 7th!!!

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

I actually have two parallel directions that I hope to take my career. The first is to begin transitioning into more of a program or portfolio director role. The second is to continue pursuing my true passion, which is the study and practice of creativity and innovation in the business environment.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role:

In a previous position, I was managing the technical build-out of a new construction project for one of our customers. During a rough construction inspection, I noticed that the server closet appeared to have been built too small to fit the data rack and mentioned it to my customer. He walked out of the room, grabbed a sledgehammer from a nearby stack of tools, walked back in, and proceeded to demolish two of the stud walls. He just looked at me and said, "There...now tell the contractor how big it is supposed to be." Needless to say, the look of shock on my face must have been priceless.

### **Phil Vincent** Boston University

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

People seem to be afraid to say "No" to unreasonable requests, and so they end up making promises they can't keep. Executives make commitments about dates, team members take on too much work, or they are overly optimistic about their time estimates. And these "doomed promises" often go undetected until it's too late.

Within the Information technology field, many stakeholders, including team members and executives, still believe you can run a project "by the seat of the pants", so although they pay lip service to project management processes, when the going gets tough, they drop the discipline and go for the quick fixes. And that seldom works.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

You need to be just as good at the people skills and business and leadership skills as the other project management techniques.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

Coaching others to be successful is really rewarding; it allows me to contribute to the success of several projects at the same time.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

My hardest project management job was to coach a woman's touch football team. They were all excellent players and were functioning well as a team when I took over as coach. Having just won the city's "B" division championship, we had to move up to the "A" division, and that was a very, very different league. The other teams played harder and rougher, and the players were stronger athletes than any of the competition we had ever faced before. Our old ways of working together just didn't cut it anymore. We implemented some highly disciplined processes that started to give us some success, but in the end, many of our team members couldn't adjust. The players finally chose to go back to the "B" division where they were much more comfortable and had a lot more fun.

**David W McAlonan**

Abbott

**Chris Siefert**

Riley

**Joe Wegrzyn**

Abbott

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Managing the known and unknown expectations and bring out the unknown expectations from clients, engineering, design companies and contractors.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

Be prepared, "know what you and know what you don't know"

Get the right training either through mentorship or formal training such as PMI.

Don't take on more than you can effectively handle, know your limitations.

Learn how to delegate responsibilities.

Having the right people on your project team.

Learn how to multi-task effectively.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

Executive administrative position within your company.

Start your own business.  
Work on other, bigger projects.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role

(CS) Storm water management plan for excavation. During the excavation phase of a major project there was a severe rainstorm that filled up the excavation. The client came up to Chris Siefert (Construction Manager) and asked what type of storm water management plan he had. Chris thought quickly and said I have a sump pump and a storm water sewer up in the parking lot. I think that should cover it!

(CS) Abbott asked Riley to commit to a construction schedule when much of the process equipment had not been ordered or was in a vendor manufacturing queue.

The response to Abbott was, let us know when the equipment will arrive and we can tell you when we can complete the job.

(JW) During construction of a utility pit, there was a severe rain and with all of the parking lots around, the water went to the lowest spot, the vault for the utility pit which was just installed. The next day Joe Wegrzyn went to the site to see that the vault had floated up out of the ground.

### **Wendt, Lynn**

Transunion

1. What is currently your biggest challenge in Project Management?

Effective project management is balancing act - the need to incorporate process improvements with the typical project constraints of tight time lines and scarce resources. One needs to have both a vision of how projects should be managed and executed in alignment with overall company strategies and goals as well as look for small wins in managing projects more effectively. Examples of this include improving project status communication, celebrating milestone completion or implementing best practices such as issues management and risk control.

2. What is your best tip for new PMs?

New PMs need to step back, get outside their projects, and evaluate all the ways that they manage them on a day-to-day basis. This will help them identify ways and/or gaps to apply principles, techniques and tools of project management. The concepts of project management exist in every day life and create a good foundation for success as a project manager. These include planning, communication, assessing resource needs, setting milestones, coordinating activities, comparing costs, choosing vendors and celebrating success. Building a home or room addition, planning a major event such as a reunion or wedding, coordinating a charity event or assembling a model airplane all have elements of project management activities.

3. What do you see as the next step within your career?

There definitely is a progression to project management expertise. Generally, as we move along a project management career path, complexity of and accountability for

our efforts increase. These factors could include responsibility for the budget of a project, managing complex software development efforts that have cross-organizational dependencies, managing programs, portfolios or a staff of project managers. I anticipate to progress along this spectrum.

4. Please share any funny or interesting stories that have happened to you in your project management role.

I always find the aspect of teamwork in project management to be critical to project success. As both an observer and participant of project execution, I find that common commitment, focus on the goal and respect for each other as individuals go a long way to ensure project success. Sometimes this sense of teamwork manifests itself most strongly at the 11th hour when we are confronting a critical deadline. I have experienced this sense of teamwork with several small and larger scale projects for which I have been either a team member or project leader.