# A Peek Into The Fabulous Life Of Project Managers

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO BECOME A PM

Stepping into
Project Management
Begin your journey today

# You have got mail!

Dear Readers,

This e-book is a gift.

This July (2011), I complete three years of blogging and as a Thank You to all - this one is for you.

It's a collaborative project of numerous friends who have agreed to take the time to contribute, volunteers who agreed to help with designs and over time with launching of the [beta site](), readers who emailed and showed their support and closest of friends who kept me going.

This e-book "**A Peek into the Fabulous Life of Project Managers**" takes you through the journey of 9 Project Managers from all over the globe who didn't have it easy. They talk about their inspiration, mistakes and their stepping into project management tales.

I hope this inspires you dear reader when you decide to step into the domain of project management.

This is an attempt to give you an outline of what lies ahead of you as a Project Manager.

All the best for your success,
Soma Bhattacharya
@Soma_b

# Introductions

## Let's get introduced.

### Andreas Splett

I met him through Twitter, talk of connecting in the social sphere! While he Heads the Project Management (Maintenance & Engineering) at Abbott Laboratories Ludwigshafen (Germany) he is always on the hunt for some more inspiration.

He can be found at twitter @splett and posts notes at http://splett.posterous.com . Lives with his wife and two daughters at the German wine route.

### Deepa Koshy

Deepa emails you, makes sure you are doing alright and is very clear on what she wants. No mincing words for her.

She is a PMP with over 11 years of experience in aerospace domain and has worked for leading aircraft manufacturers like Bombardier, Airbus and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. She lives in Bangalore (India) with husband and two daughters. She loves to read and to travel and understand and appreciate different cultures. You can reach her at deepask75@gmail.com

### Elizabeth Harrin

She is a super woman, who can take it all in her stride. A [blog](blog) that bags all the awards, APM fellow, PMI media council founding member, [books to her name](books to her name) , a [business](business) and yes even a full time job! She is a PRINCE2, MSP and P3O Practitioner from London (UK).

Her [blo g](#) which I read everyday during lunch while I interned opened up a new world for me- a blog and a career in project management. You can also find her at @pm4girls

## Geoff Crane

His enthusiasm has to brush off. Encouraging and with a lovely flair for writing he brings with him 22 years of experience to all his client engagements.

As a former executive of two global banks, he's overseen the development and implementation of countless multi-million dollar projects. Visit his blog, [Papercut Edge](#)  to read his thoughts on project leadership, or say hi to him on Twitter (@PapercutPM).

## Josh Nankivel

Josh takes pride in helping and puts in his hours through courses he designs for new project managers.

He [coaches](#) new and aspiring project managers through his writing and training courses. He founded pmStudent in 2006 to help himself and others learn more about project management as a discipline and career.

He has been managing IT and non-IT projects in Computing, Financial Services, Telecommunications, and Aerospace for over a decade. Josh's educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Project Management and he is PMP certified.

Josh lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA with his wife and 3 children.

## Peter Taylor

He taught us the art of [effective laziness.](#)

He is a professional speaker and author - of 'The Lazy Project Manager' (Infinite Ideas) and 'Leading Successful PMOs' (Gower).

His background is in project management across three major business areas over the last 26 years, MRP/ERP systems with various software houses and culminating in his current role with Infor, Business Intelligence (BI) with Cognos, and product lifecycle management (PLM) with Siemens. He has spent the last 7 years leading PMOs and developing project managers and is now focusing on project based services development with Infor.

He is from London (UK).

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## Raj Menon

A true leader, Raj steps in to nurture, lend a hand and inspire others.

The founder of 13apples.com and a PM with over 10 years of experience in the IT industry, and an early and successful transition from a Developer role to a Program Manager, Raj currently works for a leading Healthcare IT company in Nashville (US) managing successful Scrum teams in India.

Raj has also co-authored books titled "Age Of Conversation 2: Why People Don't Get It" and "The Black Book of Agile Project Delivery with Distributed Teams". In March 2011, he launched his podcast called the "The Agile Hotspot" about Agile Project Management & Working with Distributed Teams.

Raj is a Project Management Professional (PMP) and a Certified Scrum Master (CSM) . You can reach him @ _13apples_

## Robert Kelly

There are surprises in life and Robert is definitely one of them. He inspires to bring out the best.

A blessed man married for 8 years to a beautiful wife that supports him in every way. "We met in New York while both working for a large financial service firm and she couldn't help but pursue me. Hey, this is my version of the story. She is a great mom, successful analyst, and an awesome friend. She really makes our home &

family the great success that it is. I have three wonderful children (1 boy, 2 girls) and I am amazed everyday at their growth and achievements."

Professionally, a program/project manager with more than 11 years of experience and PMP certified; he doesn't simply track projects & populate templates, but adds-value by taking ownership and driving results. By leveraging exceptional interpersonal & thought leadership capabilities, he is able to develop & lead high performance teams through vision casting, goal setting, and project delivery.

He pens his thought at [Kelly's Contemplation](), shortlisted for Computer Weekly's Top 10 PM blogs in 2010. In 2010, he launched Kelly Project Solutions ,LLC. a Project/Program Management firm focused on delivering relevant, focused, and efficient solutions to our clients. He is from US.

## Samad Aidane

Having a bad day? Call Samad. A true mentor like approach, he helps you see the light at the end of the tunnel.

A certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with over 15 years of IT experience in Telecom, Finance, Health Care, and Government on projects in U.S, Germany, Austria, and Belgium.

For the last five years, Samad has been focusing on two specialty areas: Large complex system integration projects and troubled project recovery.

Samad is the founder of PMTelesummits.com and PMTeleseminars.com. He also writes about project management on his [blog and hosts podcast]() s. e is from Seattle (US).

# Chapter 1

## How I stepped into Project Management

*"Project management with lot of documents is not project management" - Unknown*

## A.Splett

In school everyone was telling me to use my organizational skills for work but I tried different. After civilian service at a ward with handicapped children and taking an apprenticeship as photo editor I studied media production. I found out that many people create better designs or be able to deliver program code faster than myself. But never the less they never worked together very well. So I started to concentrate on project management. And suddenly the media production projects went smother. So I specialized on project management.

My first job after university was for a consulting company that was specialized on saving failing projects. As PM Firefighter I was assigned to projects within different industries and business units. It wasn't necessary to know everything but to ask questions and listen carefully. Training on the job on one side was completed with basic project management training to a IPMA Level D® - Certified Project Management Associate. This is a good set to start into the consulting business.

## D. Koshy

It is my passion to lead and drive positive outcomes that made me step into project management role.



Our company had bid for projects from a big aircraft manufacturing company. They expected to win big on some of these. Contrary to expectations, they won a few bids which they had not expected to win and hence were not prepared. Since i had worked in a related domain (though not exactly the same technology or tools) and had already expressed my interest to work in newer areas, I was given the opportunity to lead this project.

From the time I have stepped into this role there has been no looking back. I have loved the learning in this role and I love the way I can apply project management principles in my personal life as well. I

love to interact with people and learn from their varied perspectives. Project management role allows me to do just that.

## E. Harrin

I never grew up thinking I would be a project manager. Who knew what one of those was? I wanted to be an ambulance driver. My goal was changed when I realized I could join the ambulance service straight out of school and I really wanted to go to university first. At university it changed again.

I joined a blue-chip company's graduate recruitment scheme and did 4 placements in different business areas. I ended up working in HR but I had most enjoyed the project management placement, so once I realized HR wasn't my thing I started looking for project management jobs.

I got a wonderful job with a wonderful company who gave me the latitude to learn to be a proper project manager and I haven't looked back since.

## G. Crane

Oh man, I definitely wouldn't recommend my approach to becoming a PM. I was a kid. I'd just taken a job with a brokerage that I had *no* business actually getting. I was responsible for desktop support of the entire organization's trading operations. But this was back in the days when nobody really knew what that meant. I think we all figured I'd just be teaching people how to bold in WordPerfect.

One day, a few months after I'd started, management came to me and said, "we're opening a trading facility in New York...you need to go there and deal with it. Today is Tuesday and we'd like traders in there working by Monday. No problem? kthxbye."

A short flight and taxi ride later I found myself at the facility, staring at a huge spool of Cat5 cable. And nothing else. The only sound in the barren office was the whimper of impending failure coming from the back of my throat.

After I decided I was completely inadequate to the task, and realizing I'd quite likely lose my job if I went home without having at

least tried, I looked in the yellow pages and found a computer store that had a big ad (and presumably resources that could pay for that ad).

I proudly marched in and asked to speak with the manager. He came out and looked at me like an insect, but I was on a mission. Summoning all my courage I brazenly blurted out, "My name is Geoff Crane. I represent a big Canadian brokerage and we're opening three offices here in the United States. I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing, no training, hardly any formal education and I don't even know what I need. But I can't go home without setting up our New York trading office. For production. By Monday."

I still remember the look on the guy's face that was a cross between suppressed laughter and constipation, but I went on, "If you sell me the things I need, and more importantly, give me someone to teach me, I swear I will get you all the purchase orders you require, and I'll make sure you get all the sales for this office, and the ones we open in Boston and Chicago."

Well, I'm sure it was more about the pity than it was the potential revenue, but he gave me what I asked for. And I soaked it up like a sponge. Come Monday, we were ready.

The thing was, as rough and scary as that first job was, I got a huge rush from seeing a job like that completed. I wanted to do that again...but before I did, I had to find out if there was an easier way!

## J. Nankivel

In early 2004 I had been laid off from my role as an Operations Manager. My wife was pregnant with our first child too, and for the first time I decided to really get strategic about my career. I asked myself "what parts of my previous roles have I really enjoyed doing?" The list was fairly long, but here is an example of the items on it:

- figuring out what the business needed
- working on something brand new
- leading people

During my research into going back to school and what companies were hiring for, I found out about something called project

management. It was a discipline, with organizations and standards, etc. As I was learning more about it, I was like "Hey, I do that!" quite a bit.  I was shocked and overjoyed!

I had found my calling. I knew this is what I was meant to focus my career on. There were parts I loved and hated about my previous work….nearly all of what I loved was actually this crazy thing called project management that I had been doing all along, but never knew existed as a distinct discipline.

From that point, I looked for organizations that knew about and valued formal project management as a discipline.  I landed a job working on projects in a department where I could easily learn and grow.  Although it was a hefty pay cut from what I was used to, it was worth it.  Shortly afterward, I started going to night school for a degree in Project Management.

In very little time, I was managing projects and opening up new opportunities for myself to manage bigger and more complex projects.  I had moved from call centers and telecom as an 'accidental project manager' into financial services and eventually aerospace a few years later as a very intentional project manager.

## P. Taylor

Like many project managers of my generation I suspect it was less of a 'step' and a lot more of a 'trip' or an accident. I worked on a team implementing an MRP system and then became a manufacturing consultant in a software house. By means of not messing up any project I worked on I eventually became a 'project manager'.

It was actually 5 years after I had that title that I ever went on a PM training course and 10 years before I took any form of certification. Despite all on that, together with a baptism of fire with a very

difficult project in the early days, I felt at home being a project manager and have done so for the last 26 years.

## R. Menon

My foray in Project Management was a natural transition from the low ranks of an Associate Developer in the year 2000, to a Project Leader in 2002, a Project Manager in 2006 and to my current role since 2009 that of a Program Manager.

I'd like to think of my success story as a series of failures. After many failures as a developer, I grew into the role of a Leader and many more failures later I grew into the Manager's role. So failures have paved the path to my Project Management success and it was possible only because I worked in an environment wherein the corporate mindset was open to it. I was allowed to fall down, get back up on my feet and try again until I got the results.

So my steps into Project Management was more a result of the many stumbles I recovered from in order to reach new heights.

## R. Kelly

My big break into project management was anything but big. I wasn't involved in some new technology, didn't solve some great business process, or save the company big money. It was quite the opposite...very low key, low-tech, and zero visibility. Read on, the fun continues...

While working at one of the largest financial services firms in NYC, I was asked to help with a "project". Each year, the firm had a few hundred analysts run through the summer program. Initially, they would be setup in a large auditorium where they would spend a few weeks learning about the corporate policies, portfolio, core applications, and so on. As a part of that on-boarding, they would also be given laptops that they would take with them when moved into a business unit. Until that time, the laptops would be left in this unsecured auditorium at their respective seats. In comes my big break.

As part of IT, I was asked to setup the laptops and test the connectivity, printing, applications, etc. I also had to secure each laptop with a lock. As I started this, I realized that I would end up

with a bunch of keys and not a clue as to which belonged to which. Not sure if there was a master lock or not, I figured I had to do something. So, I grabbed a good old sharpie and some tie wraps and began labeling each key and each lock on the respective laptop. I then took groups of 20 keys and tie wrapped them together. When I was done, I took a box of tie wrapped keys back to the Program Manager responsible for the Summer Analyst Program. When I handed him the box he asked me "What is this?" So I told him "those are the keys to the locks" He chuckled and said, we just bolt cut them off and then issue a new lock.

Just as I began kicking myself (mentally) for doing all that, the moment came. The Program Manager said "I'm sorry, I should not have laughed. I should have been clear on that point. Why did you do all this though?" When I told him I knew they would need locks wherever they would go next, I wasn't sure if we had a master, and cutting them is a complete waste of money and time, he said "Robert, would you like to be my next Project Coordinator". He later told me that the self-initiative to do something with little direction, my concern for the business' money as if it were my own, and my ability to think ahead would make me a great PM one day. And so it began.

## S. Aidane

Before I became a project manager, I spent my entire career doing IT technical work. I started as a junior software developer and moved on to specialize in database development. I then specialized in billing systems for the telecom industry and became an independent contractor working for clients in the U.S and Europe.

After a while, I realized that (1) you are no longer excited about solving the same technical issues, (2) there is a career ceiling to how far you can rise in your career by only relying on your technical expertise and solving technical issues, and (3) that regardless of your contributions as a technical expert, decisions made at the PM level and above have the highest impact on success or failure of projects.

Once I reached this realization, I started my transition to my new role as a project manager. It was not easy to reinvent myself as a PM and it certainly did not happen overnight. The transition process took 3 years. The transition process was a combination of observing other project managers and what made them effective and not, reading a lot about project management, and taking on different roles on the projects I was working on to give me exposure to the duties and challenges of project manager role.

Looking back at my experience, I am glad I took the plunge when I did. If had not made the transition, I would have missed many career growth opportunities that I have had since I moved to my new role as a PM.

# Chapter 2

# My Usual PM Day

*"I love deadlines; I especially like the SWOOSHING sound they make as they fly past"*

## A.Splett

I start the day with a newspaper and a cup of tea at home. The Emails and calendar are checked on a mobile phone before I ride into town. The time traveling into town is used to think about the upcoming meetings or open phone calls.

Arriving at the company I check on my colleagues, starting the computer and prepare for the first meeting. This includes a look into the project specific todo list and time schedule. As I work on project portfolios I used to have responsibilities in more than one project. The real challenge is to maintain enough time slots to think. Thinking about solutions.

## D. Koshy

My usual PM day starts with checking e-mails to see if there are any urgent requests from customer say, which need to be attended to.

I check out the status of the project - work allocation, resource loading, status of deliverables, dependencies, issues/ queries if any.

This is followed by a 'to-do list' of what all i need to accomplish in the day with a prioritization

I have a daily meeting with my boss to appraise him of status and any issues which need his intervention.

Majority of the time through the day is spend in communicating and co-coordinating with customer and vendor by e-mail and telephone, and with team members in person.

## E. Harrin

Let me give you an example of today. I got up, checked my emails, and responded to a client who is enquiring about some website content for his site. I left for the office, and read a bit more of The Get-it-Done Guy's 9 Steps to Work Less and Do More, which is the book I'm currently reviewing. I picked up a coffee on the way, and got to my desk about 8.45am.

The office day comprises of project planning, financial management

and budgets, a team meeting, prep for a meeting next week, following up on outstanding tasks, catching up on emails, reviewing documentation and speaking to suppliers. I left the office after 5pm and headed home, reading a daily paper on the journey.



Once I arrived home, I reviewed personal and Otobos Group emails that I received through the day. Many of the Otobos Group's clients are in the U.S. so they are still at work by the time I get to their messages. I do a bit of writing or office admin, catching up with sources for articles, talking to editors or editing video content. Dinner, more work, an episode of CSI and bed! Like many people who have portfolio careers, I work long hours, but I love what I do so I don't notice it until someone asks the question.

## G Crane

It's tough to say what a usual day is like because it really depends on where in the project we are. Near the beginning of the project, everything's about planning. So it's meetings with stakeholders and subject matter experts, trying to understand the picture well enough that we can articulate our destination.

If it's near the end of the project, it's daily team meetings as we rip through issues and identify roadblocks that are getting in the way, and shore up with testers to make sure stakeholders are getting everything they need.

And if it's in the middle of the project, it's shopping and Starbucks, 'cause I know the guys are busy doing their jobs. They don't need me breathing down their necks, and by then I have systems in place to make sure I know what's going on.

No two days are ever the same and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Before I go to my 'day job' I spend about an hour most mornings writing articles, producing online training courses for new project managers, and answering email questions from new project managers. For me, it's a great way to start the day, and I get inspired by outgoing and talented people wanting to get into project management or who are new to project management.

Then it's off to my day job, which I also love!

I currently lead two software development teams for four systems as a part of the Landsat Data Continuity Mission (LDCM). These systems all interface with each other, but in many ways they are also like separate projects, each with their own schedules and budgets. Each of my two teams works on two systems.

Each morning, after a few minutes to get myself ready for the day I have a regularly scheduled daily stand-up (based on agile scrum) with one of my teams at 8:45 AM. We are all located in the same building, and so we have a physical kanban board near my desk we stand in front of as we go around the group and ask the three standard questions in a daily stand-up.. 1) What did you work on yesterday, 2) what will you focus on today, and 3) what obstacles are in your way?

If I do not have a scheduled meeting afterward, I will work on my own kanban card items. I keep a personal kanban in addition to my teams' kanban boards, because many of the things I need to do are in support of development but not directly enough that I would want to muddy up the team's board with them. For my items on the teams' kanban boards, I replicate

them on my own personal kanban board.  That is what I work from.  It is a mixture of tactical activities for the short-term, and strategic activities such as looking into questions about future releases or our approach as a team.  Technical activities also factor in, especially when it comes to new technologies and I want to gain at least a basic understanding of the technology and approaches so I can better serve my teams.

At 10AM, the daily stand-up with my other team happens.  This team has some remote members, so instead of using a physical kanban board near my desk, we have an electronic kanban board and get on the phone instead.  The same questions are asked, with the same flow of conversation as the face-to-face daily stand-up.

I attend scheduled meetings as necessary and work off the items on my kanban board.  As new items arise, I add them to my personal kanban board in the backlog.  The number of meeting I attend is limited... I require clear defined purpose for any meeting and do not waste my time in meetings that I can't add value to or get value from.  I will also step out of meetings politely when I know the portion I care about is finished.  I let the meeting organizers know I will be doing this ahead of time.  In some cases, I ask someone in the meeting to ping me via Instant Messaging when I should come in.  Some of the meetings I attend are programmatic in focus (the scope/schedule/budget stuff) and others are technical in nature.  About half are meetings I organize myself, as a part of day-to-day project communication like the daily stand-ups or to tackle specific decisions that need to be made, planning or strategy sessions, etc.

I check email 2-3 times per day.  No more.  Email can be a complete distraction if you check it too much.

I also value my teams' time, even more so than my own.  I keep a "conversations" column on my personal kanban board to capture questions, announcements, and anything else I need to discuss with my team as a whole or with individuals.  If it is something I need to talk to the whole team about, we normally finish our status updates in about 7-8 minutes and the rest of the time is for any other items anyone wants to discuss.  I queue up team conversation topics for this time.  If I need to talk to an individual about something, I try to do this immediately after our daily stand-up...before they get started on other work so I am not interrupting their focus and flow.

P. Taylor

You know this is the really great thing. There is not typical day to talk about. It is always different, always new and what turns up as your next project often a surprise.

But here's a tip from my book The Lazy Project Manager. The Pareto Principle or 80/20 rule can and should be used by every smart but 'lazy' person in their daily life. The value of the Pareto Principle for a project manager is that it reminds you to focus on the 20 percent that matters.

Woody Allen once said '80% of success is showing up', I'm not so sure about that, I have seen projects where there was a physical project manager around but you would never have believed that looking at the project progress, or lack of progress. No, better I believe to appreciate that of the things you do during your day, only 20 percent really matter. Those 20 percent produce 80 percent of your results. So, you should identify and focus on those things during your working day.

So each day, at the start, on the way to work, over that first caffeine intake - think about what you should focus on today, what is important, what is going to give you the greatest return on your personal investment, what is going to move your project forward the most. Then, concentrate on these actions first and then deal with the rest.

It will make each project day that much better I am sure.

Another tip is to get those communication skills well tuned. Depending on what you read 70% - 80% - or more of a project manager's time is spent in communication so make sure your communication is really effective. You will have a lot of communication to do each day so don't make your life any harder by doing 'bad' communication, it only adds to the workload.

And enjoy each day.

## R. Menon

A Project Manager will tell you, jokingly yet realistically, that his or her day is nothing but a day full of meetings, which leaves less time to get any real work done. On the other hand, the people on the outside looking in will tell you that Project Managers don't do any

real work, all they do is attend meetings and find ways to delegate work to others. I have been on both sides of that thinking.

My days revolve around meetings. Unlike when I was a new PM, I now have to option to pick my meetings (atleast most of time). Meetings include the one with my clients during Central American Time and with my team during India Standard Time. Yes, I work two time zones.

In the early project management days, it was a lot more pressing to be available during the better portion of both times zone. Back then, it was a new project and my team and I had to prove our worth, our mettle. As years go by, and processes settle in, and delivery becomes measurable and consistent, the time zone overlaps for me, the Program Manager, becomes more controlled. Even so, there are those days every now and then when the onsite manager's work hours seems 24 hours long.

If you ask me what I like the most of my cross-cultural IT project management day, it's when the issues arise. In a steady-state program which is mostly on auto-pilot, the crisis that needs to be management every once in a while, when a developer codes incorrectly or the peer reviewer misses to check that key requirement was met, or when there is a possible security mishap that needs resolution, that's when my day becomes brighter, when I slip into my superhero costume, look chaos in the eye, battle him to save the day.

## R. Kelly

My usual day may shift depending on the given point I am in my projects and has been a little different depending on the firm I have been working at.  On some projects, I feel like I am doing market research for days on end (New Product Development), then stuck in document/template land for endless hours, followed by prepping for some executive presentation.  It all begins to blur, so I will focus a bit on my current assignment.

I almost always start and end my day reviewing my inbox and calendar.  For the past 3 years, I have been working in a WW Services Sales & Marketing group at one of the largest computer manufactures in the world, so my teams have consistently been comprised of resources in Australia, China, Milaysia, India, Bratislava, Italy, UK, US, Canada, and Brazil.  So I am never sure at what time I may have a meeting or a request/issue comes into my reader.  It is not unusual

to have a 6am call to get my folks in the UK and Beijing on the call together, while jumping on a 10pm call with my folks from Australia. Once the challenges of multiple time zones are out of the way, I open my project schedule and review what is coming due in the next 1-5 days. Nothing should be a surprise, but it keeps it in the front of my mind. Now that I am aware of my schedule of meetings, email has been addressed, and I know what is coming due I move into two categories...

- Tasks I own - What do I have to complete for the day? Approve a document? Provide input to a new/older version? Setup calls or meetings? etc I focus on the getting those things done as early as I can in the day.
- People - While I have weekly team meetings and send meeting minutes with actions, etc etc etc I find it always better to walk around and talk to local resources or call those remote resources. See how everything is going...not just with their tasks. How is your new boss? I heard you lost John Doe, how has that affected your workload? Anything I can do to help? How is little John Doe doing in soccer? Essentially, trying to build report with the team members and understand the pushes and pulls of their daily schedule. I don't do this everyday, with everyone but I certainly make it a conscious effort.

There is one fact of being a Project Manager that no one can get a way from and that is meetings. You can make them more relevant and efficient, but they are certainly present....in-person, WebEx, teleconference, whatever! A large portion of my day is spent in meetings. Everything from me hosting a weekly team meeting, to a vendor selection meetings, to a vendor performance meeting, to an executive prep meeting....meetings, meetings, meetings. All of my document/template work, people/team building, and so forth gets worked around my meeting schedule.

## S. Aidane

The overall guiding principle for prioritizing my daily activities is to focus and resolve the top 3 issues or decisions on my project. If I do nothing else during the day, I should at least resolve or make significant progress towards addressing the top 3 issues.

My typical day is divided into three types of activities:

- Scheduled meetings : These are typically re-occurring meetings such as status meetings or standup meetings. They can also be planning sessions or escalation meetings to troubleshoot and resolve issues.
- Unscheduled meetings : These are unplanned interactions to address matters that cannot wait. This can be intervening to resolve a conflict between project team members or an escalation of an issue to a sponsor.
- Relationship building and sustaining activities : These are activities that may or may not have a direct relationship with project work but can benefit the project. Example would be talking to a project team member about their weekend, children, or a sport game. It can also involve taking a project team member or a stakeholder to lunch.

Investing in this last category of activities is so critical yet many project managers ignore it. Building and sustaining relationships is like an insurance policy that you can depend on in time of trouble. Having invested in relationships with people, I have a chance to will be willing to help me when I need them.

## Chapter 3

## What you should know about the profession

*"Data is like garbage. You'd better know what you are going to do with it before you collect it." Mark Twain*

## A Splett

Project Management is hard work! It's not only controlling and checking on other people's work and performance. It's more supporting along the line to archive the best output.

If the project fails it's the project managers fault. No discussion - as PM you are responsible and accountable for the success of all assigned projects. You always have the chance to escalate a threat.

You need more than knowledge of project management knowledge but this will help you to survive when other already quit.

Never quit!

There is always a way through troubled water but you have to fight for the passage. If you leave the boat you should go at last and not leave your project crew behind you.



Communication is more than writing an email a month. Provide as much information as needed at the right time to the right people. And think about the way you communicate before talk.

Social skills are essential. You are part of a team even if you lead the team. They have confidence in you and so should you.

Every project is different. Don't try to solve a problem straight away the same you did before. Ask questions, listen to ALL stakeholders, and

take time to scout out the situation before developing solution nobody need.

Plan! Most people want to start right away. But in a good project you analyze the situation and plan before acting. This saves a lot of time and enables you to react to changes and Murphy.
Block time in your calendar to get things done. Don't waist all your time with meetings you need to get the work done (i.e. risk analysis, task tracking, schedule planning, preparing reports, coaching team members...).

Ask for mentoring programs - they always help to learn a lot about a new industry and a new employer.

## D. Koshy

When you are in a project managers role, the crucial factor for success is leadership and people management skills. Leadership and people management skills because you are dependent on people to reach your goals and sometimes have to get things done from people you have no formal authority over.

I learned that in this role technical expertise does not matter so much as the following, though it is useful:

- how good you are in tapping the resources you have
- identifying resource requirements
- managing your boss and peers to get the resources you need
- optimal utilization of resources
- developing the people and communicating constantly
- being open to your team and building trust so that they keep you appraised of issues

In short, you take a step back, and let your team do the job while keeping you appraised of what's going on. You have to be a true leader - making people understand their role, developing them, being able to stay out, being able to step in and understand technical issues. You need to know technology and processes to the extent that allows you to ask the right questions, and drive people to find solutions.

## E. Harrin

Here are five tips:

To paraphrase Russell and Feldman in their book IT Leadership Alchemy, people and processes make technology useful. Don't be a slave to technology, and always remember that projects are done by people, not Gantt charts.

Communicate more than you think you have to.

If it helps, take the blame yourself. It's a great way to diffuse tension and help people move on to constructive problem solving.

Don't forget that you are a project stakeholder too: you should always get something out of a project in terms of career development.

It's too late to fix problems if you wait until the post-implementation review. Constantly review how things are going so you can make changes to the project management processes as you go.

## G. Crane

As easy as I made it sound in the previous section, managing projects is a tough job. It's never hard when things go right...but when things go wrong your mettle gets seriously tested. And something (usually lots of things) always goes wrong.

The PMI likes to package project risk management up in a nice box with a pretty little bow...I think that's fine as a learning tool, but PMs quickly find out that that little box has some nasty surprises inside (with sharp teeth and claws)! When things start to go badly, you'll find out all about the uglier side of people. Stakeholders will try to pressure you, salespeople will try to get you to make promises you can't keep, team members will stop talking to each other and behave like children...all the best analytics in the world won't save you, or keep your integrity intact. That's when you need to reach deep down inside yourself and remember who you are. If you're someone who can stare all the aforementioned ugliness in the face and continue to lead by example, you'll go far as a PM.

## J. Nankivel

While I try to minimize interruptions to my team as much as possible, I make it clear that I am 100% available to them should they need me at any time.

I see my role as a support role to my team. I think that is the only really healthy and productive way to look at it. If someone on my team runs into an obstacle of any sort, they don't have to wait until the next daily stand-up. I will spend about an hour or so per day, on average, answering questions from my project teams or if I don't know, knocking on doors to go find the answers. My time is well spent if I can remove an obstacle and allow my team members to be productive.

I am there for my project team and stakeholders, not the other way around. If you will be leading project teams, I suggest you adopt a similar perspective. It will help create an environment where your teams follow you not because they have to, but because they want to.

Lessons Learned and Dealing with Failure
A key lesson I have learned over the years is that I would rather make a decision and course-correct than stall progress by scrutinizing that decision in too much detail.

Ironically, this approach leads to failures. The great thing however, is that the failures are small and manageable if you have feedback loops in place and approach them with the mindset that you will course-correct along the way.

Another lesson I would like to share is the benefit of adopting the "just do it" motto when it comes to continuous improvement. I keep myself and my project teams on our toes because I'm constantly pushing the boundaries of what we do and how we do it. We experiment a lot on my teams. We keep and adapt what works, and throw away what doesn't work. Mistakes are encouraged. That's the way to do it. If you demand perfection, you may get the appearance of it because people will stop taking risks and just get by...but you miss out on so much potential and opportunity that way.

## P. Taylor

Well if you have 26 years to spare I will tell you everything that I have learnt… only kidding.

There is so much that you should know but the best advice I can give you is to make sure that you give yourself the opportunity to learn all the time (I still am despite the 26 years) and never stop talking to your peers and colleagues, customers and stakeholders. Manage your time so that you are not 100% committed - use your project team well - plan and anticipate - and prioritize.

And try and find a mentor out there in project management land who will be there to listen to you from time to time and gently point you in the right direction when you need help - such a person will be invaluable to you in the early days of being a project manager.

## R. Menon

I am a Project/Program Manager by profession, a Writer/Speaker by passion. In 2008, I started a blog to share my leadership experience, about the lessons I have learned, the stories I have heard and the people I have met. I have had to opportunity to travel as a Leader/Manager to various cultures and witness many different leadership styles. With my blog, I was able to connect with others who have similar stories to tell, so as to collaborate with them, and learn from one another.

My blogging led me to Toastmasters, a non-profit organization that focuses on confidence building and improving public speaking. Today I run the local chapter of Toastmasters in the city I live in, and through it I have improved not only as a speaker but as a leader.

Why is this important to know? At the core of every manager, there is a leader. We need to tap into what makes us tick as a Leader in order to excel as a manager. For that to happen, we need to open our minds to new horizons and explore our strengths and weaknesses. We

need to connect with people. We need to find an avenue, an outlet where we can our leadership styles. Toastmasters was my option to grow as a leader and communicator. What is yours?

## R. Kelly

Project management is an evolving discipline that is often implemented and revered in so many different ways in the corporate world. If you are going to be successful and enjoy what you do, then you need three things...

1. An entrepreneurial spirit - We deal with so many unknowns, that you have to enjoy the 'chaos' that comes with that unknown. You need to be able to rally the troops and convey a vision, as well as hold that vision through changes that come with projects.
2. Self-Esteem - If you think you are going to get all the praise for the new cash management system saving the firm millions, think again. Sometimes you do and often you do not. If you are waiting for a pat on the back for solving the business process issue, think again. Coming from another angle is project cancellation. Sometime you will be down the road on a project and the funding is pulled. You need to understand that it just happens. It isn't your project or your leadership of that project. Corporate strategies shift, market conditions changes, and a host of other external factors that having nothing to do with your PM abilities.
3. Teach-ability - I am a much better project manager then I was 10 years years ago...geez, better then last year. That is only because I am constantly trying to read the latest book, blog, article on project management approaches, tools, techniques. I started a blog to be challenged in my thoughts, not to simply spew them. I am open to new ideas and being told there is a better way. Being teachable is key to growing as a PM.

## S. Aidane

The biggest challenge you will face in transitioning to the role of Project Manager will be managing yourself.

That is the start of everything. Your project management skills matter

but your mindset rules.

You need to remember that, when you become a PM, success will no longer depend on your technical skills. It will depend on how well you can create an environment for others to shine and do their best work. This is hard for those of us that come from a heavy technical background. It takes a lot of painful experiences before we come to this realization.

When I transitioned to be a PM, I wish someone told me then that success in the long run will depend on me leaning how to:

1. Be comfortable with not being the smartest person in the room
2. Check my ego at the door and learn to say "I don't know"…a lot
3. Pick my battles carefully and not try to win every battle
4. Be comfortable with not being everyone's friend. Project Management is not a popularity contest.
5. Admit when I am wrong…Fast. And say I am sorry…a lot.
6. Not blame others for my mistake
7. See conflict and politics as normal part of a healthy project and organization. You will learn that Project management is a contact sport.
8. Be comfortable with Failure… and not take it personally
9. Not hog the Spotlight or claim credit for other's accomplishment
10. Ask for help…a lot

Once you master these principles, everything else that will come your way will be manageable. Otherwise, even the smallest problems your will experience in your new role will initially appear to be insurmountable.

# Chapter 4

## Failure- Lessons Learnt and Moving On

*"If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing."*   *-W. Edwards Deming*

## A Splett

Most titled senior staff will tell you don't to waist your time with lessons learned. But this is essential for an organization. The organization can only learn and develop. Invest the time to listen to your stakeholders (incl. the team members) and value their feedback by changing behaviors and general project conditions next time.

Be honest to yourself and the team. Even if it's not easy take the chance to give an open feedback that includes thinks that went bad.

## D. Koshy

I have been fortunate enough not to have any failed projects as such. But my biggest lessons learned have been in relation to stakeholder and people management aspects.

The major lesson learned for me was that i am not alone in this. The project team, top management, customer or vendor (if applicable) are all stakeholders in this. I did not have this mindset when i started off. I had thought it was all on me to make this happen. I took on more than what i should have. The results were amazing, but i lost out on building ownership amongst team members and in making my boss feel engaged. But the experience and this realization has enabled me to make positive changes to my personality which has helped me personally as well.

Another great lesson learned was the need to manage perception. You can alienate your team if you give a feeling that you are too good at this. This is where the stepping back comes in handy and it helps in building engagement. In short, give your ego a shot. Because what matters at the end of the day is that you are a successful PM and you have achieved your goals and the people you lead are happy to be led by you.

## E. Harrin

Keith Richards, one of the UK's Agile experts, said, "If you are going to fail, fail fast." I agree. Mistakes happen. Things go wrong. It is how you deal with it that counts.

A project manager who makes mistakes and owns up to them early will

find people willing to help get things back on track. These projects are late at the beginning but tend to make up the time later. A project manager who hides mistakes, crossing her fingers until the project is nearing its due date, will find that people will - for the most part - rally round to help get things back on track. But this will be because there is now little choice about pressing on. These projects are "on track" until near the end but then have been shown to take, overall, twice as long.

So, own up to your mistakes, and put things right as soon as you can.

Another way to deal with professional failure is to have something outside of work that you care about, that helps put things in perspective. Carry out Murray's Deathbed Test (named after a colleague from a previous job who had a very sensible outlook on life). Think forward to when you are old and dying. How will you complete the sentence, "I wish I had spent more time..."? I very much doubt the answer will be "completing my issue logs" or "updating my Gantt chart". Work hard, be professional, but keep your work in perspective and move on from mistakes quickly.

## G. Crane

I had the pleasure of working on a one billion dollar program that wound up completely tanking and getting cancelled after the federal government stepped in and said "enough is enough". It was a frightmare. New complexities arose every morning so the plans I'd worked out on the drive in were obsolete as soon as I parked the car. A partner at my firm had to put "not for the faint of heart" on all new resource requisitions, as we ate people up and spat them out monthly. Pharmaceutical companies couldn't produce Xanax fast enough to keep pace with my personal consumption.

When things fail...and they will (it's only a question of time and number of projects under your belt)...it's crucial to keep the failures in perspective. An early mentor was on the exchange floor during the stock market crash of 1987. She told me people were just taking their headsets off and going home, writing their resignation letters when they got there. Those traders who stayed were screaming at her, "what do we do?" Her response: "just keep trading". I've carried that motto with me ever since.

Failure's a tough thing...there will be lessons to learn and consequences

to bear. But you don't lose if you don't give up.

## J. Nankivel

A key lesson I have learned over the years is that I would rather make a decision and course-correct than stall progress by scrutinizing that decision in too much detail.

Ironically, this approach leads to failures. The great thing however, is that the failures are small and manageable if you have feedback loops in place and approach them with the mindset that you will course-correct along the way.

Another lesson I would like to share is the benefit of adopting the "just do it" motto when it comes to continuous improvement. I keep myself and my project teams on our toes because I'm constantly pushing the boundaries of what we do and how we do it. We experiment a lot on my teams. We keep and adapt what works, and throw away what doesn't work. Mistakes are encouraged. That's the way to do it. If you demand perfection, you may get the appearance of it because people will stop taking risks and just get by...but you miss out on so much potential and opportunity that way.

## P. Taylor

'As we know, there are known knowns; There are things we know we know
We also know there are known unknowns: That is to say we know there are some things we do not know
But there are also unknown unknowns: The ones we don't know we don't know'

- **Donald Rumsfeld (Department of Defence news briefing).**

That is one crazy set of words but actually there is a lot of sense in the whole thing. Here you are at the end of the project. It has been a success or, at the very least, is has not been a complete failure, and you are about to head off to the next project. But wait, do you really honestly know everything? Do you really believe that your project team told you everything that went on in the project? Do you know what you don't know? Well of course you don't, you can't possibly. So don't fool yourself that you do!

So what do you do about it? Well what you do about it is to do something

about it - now is the time to conduct a retrospective of your project, a review, a considered and open activity that will allow you the opportunity to learn what it is you don't yet know.

Just as at the start of the project, remember 'a brand shiny new project... at a point in time that is full of peace and love and general wellbeing between all parties involved', well the end of the project is a special time as well. It is a time when project team members are far more likely to talk to you openly, equally and honestly. Therefore it is a time you should really focus some effort on to learn how to be more effective next time around.

I talk of two type of project closure. The 'hard' facts through a project close report - you know what you were meant to deliver plus there may have been some approved change requests - so how did you do? How do your project deliverables measure up? These are the hard facts. Then there are the 'soft' facts or the emotions of a project. How people felt (and still feel) about the way you led the project and how the project progressed and delivered. Here a Retrospective is a great idea and a wonderful learning experience. Check out Norman L Kerth's book 'Retrospectives' for this one.

Always find the time to learn from the experience of the project that you have just finished - you will gain enormously from the effort.

And this applies to dealing with failure. Most of my learning experience has come from failures - in my book all of the case studies are my personal lessons learned from when I just got it wrong. But I learned and I improved my own skills through those very experiences.

## R. Menon

Failure is the path to success, which is the foundation of how I lead. This belief became a core principle for me with each lesson learned, with each failure.

One of my early failures occurred in my first project as a Leader. It was the project that led me to higher responsibilities that of a manager. It was a 2 year long project which ended with the plug being pulled. The project failed at every level - requirements were vague and open to scope creep, risks were not identified or tracked, issues were reactively managed, team motivation took a nose dive as the project progressed, customer relationships became strained, and a lot of unhealthy cut backs were needed to keep the project on budget until one day a tough decision to pull out seems inevitable. Though such project failures occur due to mis-management at multiple levels, I was in the midst of it all, the key link. I failed to see it that way. Call it inexperience, stressful circumstances or whatever, at the end of

the day I failed to hold it all together. The project taught me leaders are the black boxes of the project, who are continuously learning when the events unfold and will provide answers when clarity is needed.

## R. Kelley

So many project managers think of a red project status as a bad thing. "Oh no, if I call this out they are going to think I am a bad project manager." Early on I always thought I could call a meeting and get it fixed in time for the next checkpoint. What I have found is that if you have an issue on a project, then call it out and call it out quickly. Your executive team or project sponsor really does want the project to succeed...really.

There is a difference between saying we are over budget by X and I have no idea why and "We are currently tracking at X with a projected over-run by Y. The reason is because the price of Part B went up X%. We could choose to increase out budget to this and stay the course or we could go with alternative B to keep the costs at the original plan"

## S. Aidane

Here are the three key lessons I learned from my failures:
- It takes a village to fail a project- If an organization's leadership is truly committed to the success of a project, it is nearly impossible for it to fail. Without such commitment, it is a miracle when it actually succeeds.

  When that happens, it is usually due to the tenacity and determination of a stubborn project manager, core project team, and few other committed stakeholders.

- Resistance to change is a reality that we can't ignore. Just like the human body has an amazing immune system that protects it from what it thinks are harmful threats, organizations have their own immune system that defends the "as is" and preserves the status quo. And just like the human immune system can sometimes turn against its own body and attack it, your organization can see your project as a real threat.

- **Failure is in the eye of the beholder** - As a project manager, you will live a life of misery if you expect everyone to have the same definition of success and failure, no matter how hard you try.

  You have to invent your own definition of what constitutes success to you personally. I am not worried about your organization, project stakeholders, or project team. This is about your own definition of your success.

  Whatever your definition of success is, it should never be tied to the outcome of your projects. Instead, it should always be about your continued development and growth.

  Are you continuously moving forward? Do you keep raising your game? Are you taking your performance to the next level with every project? That's what really matters at the end of the day.

- **There is really no such thing as failure, only feedback**
  If you are afraid to fail, you will not take the risks you need to take to learn and grow. Only when you venture outside your zone of comfort, will your real learning begin.

  As you lead more and more complex projects, enter each project prepared to face failure. You will be operating at the edge of your competence. You will need to be emotionally prepared to deal with the fear of failure and cope with its aftermath.
  Some things you will try will work and some will not. Sometimes the failure will be small tactical errors. Sometimes they will be spectacular messes.

  Think of yourself as work in progress and under construction. Only through your successes and failures will you get the feedback you need to continue raising your game and taking your performance to the next level with every project you lead.

# Chapter 5

## Inspiration

*"He has half the deed done who has made a beginning."*
*Horace*

## A Splett

Take all opportunities you get to read and learn from others. I personally like the #pmot (project managers on twitter) just search for #pmot on twitter it will give you quite a variety on inspiration each day. As part of an online community that never met in real life but exchanged quite a few thoughts on project management I'm still surprised on the quality and quantity of feedback I get on questions.

I also like to read a lot of books and discuss problems with colleagues and friends. And an answer comes soften from an unexpected side.

Also take some time off. Go get a coffee in the café on the next corner or just sit and watch the strangers passing by. Get new ideas by relaxing and trying not to be available for all people.

## D. Koshy

My inspiration is my dream to learn, discover, grow and contribute. I love to read leadership and management blogs and books. I am inspired by people who work hard to bring out the best in them and who excel in this process.

## E. Harrin

I like learning, so I'm inspired by new things. I believe that to be a good writer you have to read, so I read a lot. I'm pretty good at choosing books, so I rarely read things that I don't learn something from. I like being able to put this to good use by pointing other people in interesting directions if I see something I think they will find useful.



And snow.  I do like a good snowy landscape.

## G. Crane

I've had the great privilege of working for some incredibly brilliant people, each of whom have taught me a different lesson.

The first lesson I learned was as stated above, "no matter how bad it looks, never give up".

The second lesson was, "nobody cares about reasons...only results."

The third, "projects are about people and everything else is incidental."

And finally (and probably most importantly), "get over yourself, Geoff. The world's not going to come to an end because of anything you did."

## J. Nankivel

I learn a great deal from many people, books etc. However, these are resources, not inspirations. My inspirations are the people who provide the desire for me to always strive to be better tomorrow than I am today.

I am inspired every day by the new and aspiring project managers I coach and converse with at pmStudent and in my online training programs. These bright, talented people are the ones who keep the fire going that makes me want to continue teaching and writing.

My other source of inspiration are my project teams and stakeholders. Every day, these people drive me to get better at serving their needs. Continuous improvement of a process in project management means nothing, unless it is inspired by the feedback I receive from the people I work with. The challenges, successes, and everything in between that I experience every day with my project teams and stakeholders are a key source of inspiration for me to continuously strive to do better.

### P. Taylor

My early inspiration came from the two managers who I guess saw some potential in me and encouraged, supported and guided me through my first few projects (not all of which were good projects).

My current inspiration comes from the fantastic network of contacts I have around the world who are always happy to engage in great project management debate, offer a word of advice or support my latest initiative. You have some great names on this e-guide and trust me there are many more out there. Just check out the podcasts and the blogs and the website and the webinars and the books and the training …. I could go on and on but you get the picture I am sure.

### R. Menon

There is a leader in every one of us.

Leadership is evident in every job, every role, and every action. I have made many connections through my journey as a son, a student, a brother, a friend, a spouse, a colleague, a mentor and a leader. With each connection came conversations. I have learned from those conversations and my inspiration to be better at everything I do comes from each of those connections.

### R. Kelley

This is so difficult, because I have been blessed with so many great people in my life.

- My father was a U.S. Marine and served in the Vietnam War and such a self-motivated, driven man. To keep this short, here is an example: He moved to Hendersonville, NC, USA after he retired. While driving around, he saw a bunch of white, wood boxes on someone property. He went and knocked on the door and asked the gentleman what those were. With a chuckle "Yankee, those are bee hives. You wouldn't know anything about those." My dad went to the library and read everything he could about bees and bee-keeping. Within weeks he got his first order of 30,000 bees and within a few years he was the President of Hendersonville's Bee Keepers Club (several dozen locals and 1 Yankee)

- **My Mom** - My parents divorced when we were young and my mother truly stepped up.  It wasn't until I had children of my own to realize the inspiration and impact she has had on my life. She worked every job she could (substitute school nurse, bus driver, etc) to put us through private school while going to college at nights for herself.  Every breathe she took was to make sure her children were happy, had opportunity, and never went without.  She is truly an amazing inspiration.

- **My Wife** - If I shared my wife's upbringing with you, it would bring many to tears and that isn't what this is about. Believe me when I say my wife created opportunity and built her life with bricks of hope, faith, and forgiveness for others.    Today, it is hard to find anyone that doesn't say "I love your wife.  She is so fun and just a bundle of joy!"  She never made excuses, she never became a victim of circumstance...she pushed on, she kept moving, and she has succeeded.

## S. Aidane

I am inspired by stories of people who manage to achieve more than what they thought they were capable of.

I want to know what transformation they had to go thru to develop the mental toughness to overcome their self-doubt and anxiety in the face of uncertainty. This is definitely a skill that all PMs must develop. I truly believe that project management skills are necessary but not sufficient.

There is a whole body of knowledge that is undocumented in the PM literature that we need to acquire to lead complex projects and teams in today's turbulent business environment. I call these deep skills of self-mastery. Many people call these "soft skills". But I call them deep skills because they deal with the inner game of leadership. Examples of these skills are developing confidence, resilience, and emotional regulation to name a few.

# Thank you

I hope you enjoyed the E-book today. Spread the word and the e-book with your friends.

If you have learnt from this- thank you very much.

There will be lots of new e-book coming soon. Keep checking *the blog* for latest updates.

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