



Management & Information Technology Department

Center of Excellence in Project Management

Spring 2012

Volume 2, Issue 1

Of Special Interest:

- Save the Date Research Forum
May 11, 2012
- Silver Lining of Uncertainty
- The Powerless Project Manager
- National Geographic Genographic Project

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2nd Annual Practical Project Management Forum

The Business Side of Project Leadership

The Center's Second Annual Practical Project Management Research Forum will be hosted at Steven's Institute in Hoboken, NJ on May 11th.

The theme of the Forum is **"The Business Side of Project Leadership"**. We are going beyond the basics of scope, schedule and budget management to discuss theories, concepts and methodologies that will maximize business value.

The Forum will feature presentations by both PM researchers and PM practitioners. Academic leaders will present research findings that can help you find your own "best practices." PM practitioners will challenge the theories and discuss current trends in PM.

SAVE THE DATE
Friday, May 11, 2012
10 am—4 pm
Practical Project Management Forum
\$50 includes lunch and reception

[There are 25 free passes available. First come, first served. Email: bedington@sfc.edu]

PMPs can apply for 5- PDUs
Location:
Stevens Institute
Howe Center, Bissinger Room

Featured speakers include:

- Beverly Magda, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Technology Management, Georgetown University
- Don Zack, Project Management Office Director, Broadridge Financial
- Richard Turner, Distinguished Service Professor, Stevens Institute of Technology
- Thomas Lechler, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Stevens Institute of Technology

The Forum is \$50; it includes coffee, lunch, snacks and a reception following the presentations. PMPs can earn up to 5 PDUS.

For more info: Sharen.Glennon@stevens.edu

Directions to Stevens

Stevens is easily accessible by bus, subway, PATH and ferry. Parking is available in several local garages. Maps, driving directions & public transportation information are here: <http://>



Teresa Ashley, PMP
Senior Business Analyst
Contractor at SouthStar
Energy Services in
Atlanta, GA

The Powerless Project Manager

Last issue I discussed how a Project Manager can sometimes feel powerless. When a Project Manager feels this way it has an overall impact on the project team and the success of the project. There are times when a Project Manager is put into this leadership role without a “Project Manager” title, adequate project management training and little respect from team members. It is clearly up to the Project Manager to ask for the appropriate title, seek out the proper training courses for the skills that are lacking in order to gain confidence about the project and subsequently gain respect from team members. As a former Project Manager with a Project Leader title, it was very difficult walking into a meeting without “Manager” in my title and

expecting team members who did not report directly to me to provide feedback or a project status on tasks. Although I was feeling this way, I had to do something to gain the respect of team members so the project could be successful. I realized that others would perceive me how I perceived myself. Some of the necessary tips I found useful when feeling powerless are:

- Have an understanding of all the pieces of the project.** A Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) is mandatory. When you are transitioned to a project that is already in mid-life cycle and there was no WBS created, make sure you create a Work Breakdown Structure and understand all the details of the project.
- Organize every meeting.** Do not invite people to a meeting without an agenda that clearly spells out why they need to attend. Make sure everyone who is invited to the meeting can get

something out of the meeting. **Feel confident throughout the meeting.** When you do not know an answer to a question, take it as an Action Item and follow up after the meeting. **Have someone else take notes** in your meeting and send meeting notes with Action Items to each meeting participant no later than the next day.

There can be so many other tactics to use to make you feel more powerful. It is up to the Powerless Project Manager to earn the respect of the team and naturally develop confidence in order to increase the potential for a fully satisfied stakeholder base. Feeling and acting in a powerful manner means accepting responsibility for your actions and the team’s deliverables and this will motivate the team to work cohesively toward the common goal.

Cool Project of the Month....

Did you know that this project can help you trace your global DNA history?



National Geographic’s Genographic project allows you to trace your genetic history and build the information database on the migration of the human species!

<https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/genographic/lan/en/index.htm>

Current Research – Film and TV Industry—Need participants

The Center of Excellence is involved in a research project about the arts and entertainment community. We need your help.

We are looking for participants who work or have worked in the film industry. We are particularly in need of individuals who have worked as directors, assistant directors or line producers in any type of film or television production.

We would need about 2 hours of your time via phone or in person for a detailed interview. All information is confidential. No individual or corporate names will be used. This is for academic research purposes.

If you would like to participate with our research team, please contact the Director of the Center, Barbara Edington, at this address:

bedington@sfc.edu



Does Uncertainty Have a Silver Lining?

At the recent Westchester Chapter PDD, Dr. Thomas Lechler, from the Stevens Institute, spoke about the silver lining of unknown-unknowns, or as they are more often referred to, uncertainty. Most PMs get a little nervous at the mere thought of encountering an unknown-unknown because there is no way to plan for it, so when it occurs, the PM must improvise the management of the event without the luxury of a contingency plan. So where is the silver lining? Dr. Lechler’s research suggests that uncertainty (or the unknown-unknown) is inextricably linked to the ability to maximize project value. Opportunity exists

within the uncharted waters of uncertainty. While it is easy to see the negative aspects of uncertainty, the positive or opportunity component is within that same uncertain environment; it just needs to be found. What types of opportunity? Uncertainty can often cause the PM to revisit the project scope and explore the possibility of either enlarging or decreasing scope to accommodate the variation forced by the uncertainty. This may provide a new direction, or slight twist to the project which could increase the value to the organization. Dr. Lechler also pointed out that the PM’s mindset is critical to whether or not the

extra value can be achieved. For example, a PM who is only managing the project to the deadlines and budget will most likely not be predisposed to look for the positive opportunities associated with unknown-unknowns. A PM with a thorough understanding of the business environment is better equipped to find the silver lining in the uncertainty than is the PM who only manages the triple constraints of time and budget. Dr. Lechler will be presenting his work at the 2nd Annual Practical Research Forum sponsored by the Center and hosted at Stevens Institute.



Dr. Thomas Lechler,
Stevens Institute

Book Review by Marie P. Bresnahan

Managing Projects: Pocket Mentor Expert Solutions to Everyday Challenges

In need of a short, easy to read guide to Managing Projects? The Harvard Business School Press publishes a series of books that offer solutions to common challenges that managers face on the job every day. Each book in the series contains tools, self-tests and real-life examples to help you hone your business skills. The “Pocket Mentor” on Managing Projects is an easy to read, how-to guide in planning, executing and evaluating a project. The initial stages of project planning are laid out and defined. This phase includes: defining the real problem, identifying the stakeholders, setting the objectives,

preparing for tradeoffs and defining the activities. The key concepts are defined and examples are used throughout. In addition, each chapter contains a “what would you do?” section. After reviewing key concepts that are generically at the heart of the solution to each “what would you do” dilemma, the mentors provide their guidance and suggestions for tackling the real life problem that had been presented. The book also contains sample tools including a grid for defining your project, developing your Work Breakdown Structure, preparing progress reports and conducting a project phase-out analysis. This book

is much less technical than the PMBOK, and is smaller and much more portable. It provides useful information in an easy to read format. I’d recommend it for students as well as seasoned Project Managers as a useful resource for lining up resources, setting deadlines, monitoring budgets and working to keep your project on course.

Managing Projects: Pocket Mentor Expert Solutions to Everyday Challenges by Harvard Business School Press

Marie P. Bresnahan, MPH has worked in non-profit management for more than 20 years. Her people skills combined with her PM training has afforded her opportunities to lead projects at various charities, health foundations and at the NYC Department of Health



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Email:
bedington@sfc.edu

St. Francis College
Management and Information Technology
180 Remsen Street

We offer weekend
executive style classes
so you can earn your
Graduate Level Project
Management Certificate
while you work.

*Do not repeat the tactics which
have gained you one victory,
but let your methods be
regulated by the infinite variety
of circumstances*

- Sun Tzu



For more information on the Graduate Level Project Management Certificate:

<http://www.sfc.edu/academics/Graduate/projectm#ProjM>

How Can You Participate?

The Center of Excellence in Project Management is always looking for new ideas and input from all members of the community.

Here are a few of the ways you can participate. Please forward your comments, suggestions, proposals to:

bedington@sfc.edu

- ◆ **Volunteer to write an article for the next newsletter.** We are open to a broad range of topics associated with the general principles of project management. If you have an example, an idea, an experience you would like to share, send us an outline.
- ◆ **Participate in the Film Research Project**—check page two for details. It would only take two hours of your time and can be completed via phone or in-person.
- ◆ **Conduct a workshop or seminar** on a topic in your area of expertise. We will work with you to develop a short (one or two day) interactive learning opportunity. Send us a proposal with the topic, your expertise in this area, and your ability to help generate an interest in this seminar.