



Center of Excellence In Project Management

Project Management Newsletter

Summer Edition -2015

Guest Editor - Salvatore Funaro

**Read more about our guest editor
following his vacation project story.**

Hello fellow PM-ers,

Remember the words from that famous song....."Summertime and the livin' is easy"? Sometimes it feels like summertime is a crazy, busy time of the year especially when the kids are out of school, you are still working your 10-hour days, and you are trying to plan for vacation! Where is that easy livin' that the song references!?!?

Planning for vacation is a real project and if you plan it from a PM perspective it might be a little less stressful. Your family or travel-mates are part of your team so be sure to delegate tasks and updating responsibilities to them. You don't have to do all of the work, you need to manage the integration of the tasks.

You may not be planning a ski vacation at this time of year, but I think this story might bring to light the parallels between the family project team and the traditional project team. A successful vacation project is a team project!

Stress-less (almost) Family Vacation

Since I can remember, my family and I have been taking an annual ski trip. It started in the early 90s, and my parents would always be in charge of planning the trip which was typically scheduled for President's Week. The trip became an annual tradition that my cousins and I always looked forward to. The President's Week holiday comes in February making it the perfect time to go on the trip. Our parents set up the trip each year, but now the young adults have taken on these responsibilities.

Whether we agreed to travel to Vermont or Upstate NY, it was always a trip we looked forward to. By taking over planning duties, it took the stress off of our parents. I assumed the role of Project Manager but planning the trip wasn't as simple as I thought it would be. It required a lot of planning and proactively managing potential risks.

Planning was just the beginning phase of this ski trip project which included collecting money from people for lodging, determining transportation logistics, preparing food, renting ski equipment, and buying lift tickets. This planning phase was expanding each year, and it eventually overwhelmed me. I knew there had to be an easier



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way to plan the trip. One of the strategies that came to mind was to write it down on paper and use a more methodical planning method.

Although I didn't use all of the techniques that I later learned about in project management classes, I did use my own version of a few of those techniques. I used a Work Breakdown Structure, which helped me to plan out each part of the trip in a more organized fashion. By using this technique in the planning process, I was able to identify many of the tasks that I had previously forgotten. Writing it all down on paper, with summary tasks that included, planning, food arrangements, equipment purchasing/rentals, traveling, and feedback for future trips was helpful. Food arrangements had to be planned ahead of time since family members had agreed to cook the meals throughout the vacation. We were traveling by car, so we needed to plan who would be driving and how many passengers would be in each car. Individual schedules needed to be accommodated since departure times varied and could change at any time if a work situation creates a delay. Not every person on the trip owns their own skis or snowboard so planning ahead allowed for ordering rentals online which

greatly speeds up the processes since ski shops are very crowded during the holidays.

When traveling with a group even the simplest tasks take on the potential for risks. On the mountain skiing together, we always carry a phone or a walkie-talkie to stay in contact just in case of an emergency. Even when we are traveling up to the mountain, we stay together so that no one gets lost or has to face car trouble alone. Two risk techniques that can be used to improve the ski trip project are a Risk Assessment and Risk Matrix. Using an excel spreadsheet, I could document the potential risks, assess them and then prioritize how we could develop a contingency plan for each of those risks. For instance, if there is a snowstorm, some cars may not be able to make it up the mountain, so a contingency plan could include alternative lodging that would allow us to wait out the storm on safer ground.

A Risk Matrix improves the planning process by providing a description of a risk, the probability of it occurring, and the impact it will have on the trip. Once this risk matrix is put into place, it is easier to put together contingency plans for the most critical risks. These techniques



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can be used on each and every ski trip, minimizing risk and increasing the enjoyment. Skiing on the mountain and traveling on snowy roads include many risks. But if plans are put into place beforehand, it will certainly work out better in the long run.

Some tasks on the work breakdown structure occur when we are back home after the ski trip. I need to make sure that the security deposit on the house is returned to the group. When we all return home, I send a text message, thanking everyone for coming, and asking for their opinion about the lodging and the trip so I can use the feedback to improve the next vacation.

It may take more time to use these risk techniques but, it will be worth it in the long run. The truth is, we never know what unknown risks Mother Nature has in store for us regardless of the season we are traveling.

About our Guest Editor

Salvatore Funaro is a student at St. Francis in the Project Management graduate level certification program and currently works at The Christian Post as a Social Media Manager. In his spare time he enjoys sports and just being with his family. His work experience requires him to stay abreast of the latest trends so that he can deliver news in a fresh and original way – a crucial aspect

of corporate social media. His dream career would combine Sports and Project Management. "I will go above and beyond to one day reach that goal".

From the Editor –

Many thanks to Sal for sharing his learning experience.

Project management techniques aren't just for the office, they provide many useful tools for managing any type of project from planning a social event, to organizing a new venture or simply motivating a team of people to accomplish a goal. Whether you are planning a wedding or organizing a local block party, think about using a simplified version of the work breakdown structure or the risk prioritization matrix to help you get it done on time and budget! --- B. Edington, PMP

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St. Francis College, Department of Management and Information Technology offers the following project management education:

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A minor in Project Management

Required Courses

Fundamentals of Project Management
Project Risk Management
Finance for Project Managers
Optimizing Project Management Teams

For Graduate Students:

Certificate in Project Management

The Graduate Certificate in Project Management is designed for individuals who want to develop or enhance their project management skills through an intensive executive level program. This program emphasizes the role of project management as an essential tool for the working professional and creates a richer perspective of the challenges and opportunities present in a project-based environment. We offer weekend executive style classes so you can earn your Graduate Level Project Management Certificate while you work.

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

For more information on project management education at St. Francis College:

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