



www.pmi-snc.org

Project Charter

Serving Southern Nevada's Project Management needs for over 10 years

June 2008

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Our Mission

Provide an active forum for promoting Professional Project Management knowledge and standards in Southern Nevada.



President's Message

Thanks to the hard work of our volunteer Julia Lazareck and VP of Programs Paula Ellsworth, we had a wonderful family day! The Springs Preserve tours and lunch at Wolfgang Puck were great! We had 27 participants. Wish more of you could have joined us!

All of you should have received a survey from our VP of Education Lynn Carlson. We have over 50 responses so far. It takes less than a minute to respond to the survey. So, please help us find the right class for you by responding to the survey.

The next PMP Prep Class is tentatively scheduled for September 6 to October 11. If any of you experienced and PMP certified Project Managers are interested in teaching a PMP Prep class, please contact Lynn Carlson (vpeducation@pmi-snc.org) for details.

Have you visited our website recently? Annie McDonald our VP of Public Relations has been upgrading the website. So, please check it out @ www.pmi-snc.org. Please send your suggestions for improvements to Annie McDonald (vppublicrelations@pmi-snc.org).

Remember we are always looking for volunteers. So, if you are interested in getting involved with the chapter, please contact us.

Swadha Rath, PMP 2008 President – PMI-SNC

2008 Programs At A Glance

January 25	
February 28	Scott Hove, "Problem Solving in Project Management"
March 20	Gary Cawn, "Managing the Mega-Project"
April 17	Mike Lane, "Introducing a PMO into an Online Business"
May 15	Julie Grabb, "Enhancing project performance: by asking the right questions"
June 19	Raquel Speers-Shohet, "Setting Standards in the Construction Industry"
July 17	Greta Blash
August	Dark – No Meeting
September 18	Rick Duggan
October 16	
November 13	

All programs are held at: Palace Station Hotel & Casino
2411 W. Sahara Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89102

For information, contact: vpprograms@pmi-snc.org

Important Message on PDU Reporting for Dinner Meeting Attendance

Beginning May 2007, the board will no longer automatically report the one PDU earned for attending the PMI Monthly Dinner meetings. Although it was a great idea at one time, the reporting process was not "automatic" - and has been performed manually by coordination among VP of Finance, VP of Education and PMI National. Registration of the dinner meetings on the Acteva did not automatically update the PMI Records database with PMI National. A lot of rework was involved to mine the attendance log collected from Acteva and the meeting walk-ins. All of this has been extremely time consuming and problematic. Please report your meeting PDU. Instructions are on the home page of www.pmi-snc.org.

May 15, 2008 Program

Our May 2008 dinner meeting was held at the Palace Station Casino. The speaker for this session was Julie Grabb, PMP, who presented a presentation on "Enhancing Project Performance: by Asking the Right Questions."

A copy of her presentation has been posted on the website on the Programs page!

Meeting Winners:

Copy of Julie's Book:

Peter Dihgee

PMI Binder:

Frederic Samelian & Jason Sadow

PMI-SNC Hat:

Tina Howell & Richard S.

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June 19, 2008 Program

Our meeting will again be at the Palace Station Casino. Our speaker will be Raquel Speers-Shohet, who will be presenting "Setting Standards in the Construction Industry." We look forward to seeing you there.

Education Survey!

Help us help you! We want to know what type of educational opportunities you need!

Remember to complete the PMI-SNC Education Survey that was sent to you.

Volunteers Needed!

The strength of any organization lies with its volunteers. The board of directors continues to look for help with various activities that will keep our chapter growing, and continue to make it a worthwhile organization.

We are looking for help with this newsletter, the website, mentoring, and special events.

If you have some free time and are interested in making your chapter even better, please see our website for an application and contact information.

Please go to the website to see a list of Volunteer Opportunities and the application
volunteer@pmi-snc.org

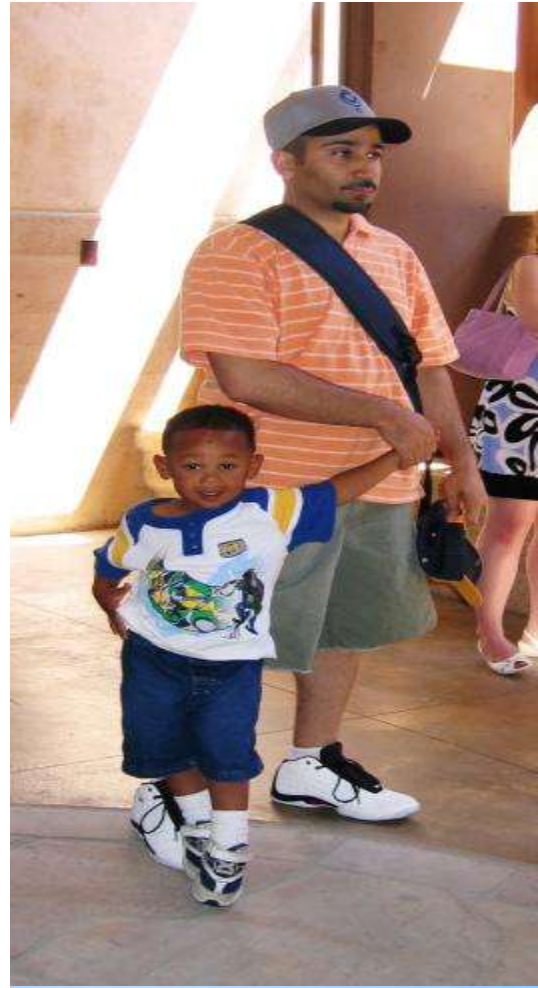
PMP Study Group Forming

Contact Info: Pete Vazquez: neruda1968@gmail.com

[Check out the PMI-SNC Lending Library](#)

- Borrow PM/Leadership books
- PMP Self Study Resources

Family Day at the Springs Preserve - May 31
In pictures.....



PMI Name Badge

Members may order a PMI name badge for \$25 each.



Membership Update

The current membership report finds 373 members in the PMI Southern Nevada Chapter.

Welcome New Members as of May 16, 2008

John Aadland
Patricia Ayala
FNU Gibson
Matthew Hankins
Diana Higgs
Charles Holton
John Lancaster
Faith MacPherson
Pearlene Mitchell
John Murch
Stephen Simmons
Rob Vass

Education Update

The students have completed the Spring 2008 PMP Prep Class and are preparing to take the exam. [Theresa Lee](#), [Richard Neel](#), [Robert Rosas](#), [Anthony Santivasci](#), [Mary Taylor](#), [Lenin Chaturvedi](#), [Jeremy Lusk](#), [Jerry Scott](#), [Faisal Ahmed](#), [Patricia Flint](#), [William Harris](#), and [Richard Schlueter](#).

Good Luck Students!



Interested in Joining the Microsoft Project Association? We are looking for members to start a Las Vegas chapter. <http://mpa.lasvegas.googlepages.com/>

Do you have something to say? We're always looking for good articles to share with the chapter membership. Send your suggestions to:

vpcommunications@pmi-snc.org

Part 2 of 2

DO YOU HAVE THE GREATEST PROJECT MANAGEMENT ABILITY?

The ability to anticipate is by far the greatest project management ability.

By Dr. James T. Brown PMP, President of SEBA® Solutions, Inc.

We have been discussing anticipation as the greatest project management skill. I stated in the last newsletter that TOP (Training, Observation, Practice) provide the ability to anticipate and the confidence to act. The importance of training was outlined and in this issue we will define the role of observation. The importance of continuous training to maintain the ability to anticipate is only one piece of the puzzle. The next component is Observation.

Observation – Going beyond the basics to the collection and mastery of little things also involves observation. Once you accept the fact that there are little pieces of knowledge that when applied strategically together you are always on the hunt for them. People often make the mistake of limiting their hunt for knowledge to whatever field or discipline their in. If you take one thing away from this newsletter take the following point.

Excellence at anything is worthy of your careful observation and study.

Opportunities abound to study excellence. Books are a very good tool for studying excellence. Autobiographies of people who have achieved greatness are worthy of your time. Personal interviews are worthy of your time. You are panning for gold.

Occasionally I will stay at the Ritz-Carlton. Their service is usually extraordinary and when there I will inquire about their excellent service with anyone from the bellman to the manager. What they view as a conversation is in fact an interview, for I am always on the hunt for tips that contribute to excellence and achievement at high levels.

This year while in South Florida I came across the famous jazz guitarist George Benson sitting alone at the hotel bar prior to an evening show. I introduced myself and once he was done laughing at my name (he said he had been good friends with the late singer James Brown), I asked him what he did to play guitar at such a high level? How did he practice? What and who influenced him? We had a nice twenty minute conversation as he played air guitar and talked to me. George Benson probably doesn't know much about project management, but he knows a lot about excellence.

Excellence has common threads

Obviously you should talk to every project manager you view as excellent, but achievement at high levels goes beyond a particular discipline. If the grocery store you shop at is well run, talk to the employees and the manager. Not only are there common threads in excellence but often you will identify parallel applications or inspiration from what you learn from an expert in any unrelated field.

Now that we have discussed Training and Observation and their role in obtaining the skill of anticipation, we will discuss Practice, the third and final element of TOP.

What good is knowledge and theory without application?

Practice –A leader whose style and methods I hold in high regard is Ron Dittmore. Ron is a former Space Shuttle Program Manager who

is now a Vice President for Morton Thiokol. Before he left NASA I interviewed him and here is one of many valuable things I took away from our conversation. He stated "You know, I have been a counselor of people, of youth and youth groups, of adult organizations and most of my experience in how to deal with people comes from those situations and not from work. I apply all the lessons that I have learned through 27 years of that experience to deal with a lot of the challenges that I face in the work place."

I marvel at young professionals who say they want big project leadership opportunities at work yet take no opportunity to lead outside of work. They say they just can't get good experience when we have a world crying out for people willing to lead.

Take Every Opportunity to Lead

If you can lead people and projects to success in a volunteer setting, where people are not getting paid, you can certainly do it in a work setting (where some act like they are not getting paid). Identify an issue you are passionate about and take the opportunity to work and lead for the benefit of your passion. It will be a direct carry over to your effectiveness in the work environment.

Excellence – A lot of little things done right

As you work projects (practice) you must try to apply the little things you have garnered through training and observation. Some will work very well others may not. Keep track of what succeeds and don't abandon what fails or what seems to have failed to soon. Analyze, analyze, analyze. Trying different things is a form of stretching yourself.

Do not be afraid of change. Any golfer can tell you how Tiger Woods has changed what was a very successful swing to a new one while getting a lot of "He shouldn't have messed up a good thing" from pundits before they were proven wrong. Tiger also practices a lot. Tiger is not afraid of change, practices and analyzes his performance. He also sets the expectation that he will be better next year than he is today. I come across many people who are content with their leadership ability to the point they have zero initiative when it comes to self development and improvement. Change, initiative and self evaluation are also necessary to your continual growth to ever exceeding greatness as a project manager or leader.

Once you start to develop great anticipation skills I guarantee others will marvel at how effectively you succeed in the uncertain environment of projects. They will marvel because they won't be able to nail it down to just one thing and the results will be the summation of a lot of little things you have honed to a sharp edge through training, observation and practice over time. The wise observers of your success will engage you in a conversation that is really an interview because they know excellence is worthy of careful observation and study.

[Dr. James T. Brown PMP](#) is president of [SEBA® Solutions Inc.](#) a Registered Education Provider with the Project Management Institute and is the author of [The Handbook of Program Management](#) published by McGraw-Hill. He provides project management training and keynote speeches worldwide and may be reached at jtbrown@sebasolutions.com.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AS A PROJECT DELIVERABLE

Which came first, the application or the business need?

By Rick Yount, PMP

With alarming frequency, it happens to most Information Technology (IT) project managers. A new project is created; a customer requests immediate installation of their favorite application or "tool" (today, we'll call it WizBangWare© version 5.1). Their justification: they have had WizBangWare© since version 2.0., and they like it.

On face value it appears the customer has a specific product that makes them happy, so why rock the boat with questions? Doesn't the customer know their needs better than a project manager?

Focus on the Familiar

Customers (or clients) are people, and people tend to be creatures of habit. The justification above doesn't link to the overall or department strategic goals, but rather describes attributes of the tool they are used to using. They are focused on the tactical (or things they touch), rather than the strategic (which increases business value by helping the department support the management-desired direction).

In other words, they want to stick with what works for them. But does it really work well?

Adaption to Pain

In my experience, many clients tend to deal with their software tools in much the same way they do when they suffer a minor injury. When we are injured we tend to work through our discomfort by adapting. We may limp when our knee aches, or may minimize turning movements when our backs ache. What we tend to miss is that these pain-induced limitations transfer stress to other parts of our body (or adapt), making them work harder than necessary to compensate for the weaker area.

So it is with software tools. Typically, a client quickly purchases and installs WizBangWare© version 2.0 in year one. Then they realize it performs three of their four key tasks very well, but doesn't address their fourth job requirement at all.

The typical response is to adapt to the situation. These responses could include hiring new staff to manage the final task, creating spreadsheets or databases to capture information, or adding new processes to their already overburdened staff.

As it is with an injury, this adaption has a cost. The additional burden from the weakened part is transferred (as stress) to another part. This makes the entire organism (whether a body or a business) less efficient; just as a limp slows a person, an adapted business practice creates drag on the entire company.

If only they remembered the way to stop the limp (get things back to optimal state) is to stop the pain.

Ignorance is Bliss

True ignorance should not be confused with stupidity (lack of intelligence), but rather stems from the fact that each of us knows only what we know. Client managers usually know they have ongoing demands on their performance, and that the combination of the tools, people, and processes they have help them meet those demands. So when they come to us, they believe they would be happy with the solution they are requesting.

But do they really know their true requirements?

Fast forwarding five years later, the same customer is now quite familiar with the benefits, shortcomings, and quirks of the WizBangWare©, and wants to continue on with version 5.1. In the interim, there have been three department managers, and 90% of the staff is new. WizBangWare© is familiar and it's been there forever...that's why they want it.

Unfortunately, it may be the wrong tool. It's wrong because the client doesn't know the best alternative (Software-in-a-Box v.2.0) is the second highest rated

tool in the industry, would satisfy 99% of their needs, would be better aligned with the IT architecture, and has a lower total cost of ownership (TCO) than WizBangWare©. It's the wrong approach because the department is still limping with inefficient processes, and the excess (or overburdened) staff is reducing the profitability of department. It's also wrong because the department now has to perform six key processes, and WizBangWare© still only performs three of those key tasks very well, but leaves the final three requirements unsatisfied.

The Cost of Poor Planning

Today's business environment is tough. When a department is running at less than optimal conditions, its ability to meet the needs of its customers is diminished. When several departments are so affected within a company, their customers will sense it and react, many times by switching to a competitor and/or cutting your contract profits.

Business gets really tough when the resulting reactions include layoffs, increasing demands on the remaining workforce, loss of key contracts, and/or potentially closing the business altogether.

How Can Project Managers Help?

Most IT departments have a feasibility study process, and many require business cases that help focus projects on providing business value; but these measures are not enough.

Project managers, you are in a unique position in most companies. Depending on your organizational structure, the "first responder" to their need could be you. Take some time to talk with your customers:

- **Seek first to understand the need they are trying to solve.** Ask about customer-client expectations, supplier interactions, and processes involved. Ask about legal, financial, or contractual obligations that require them to take specific steps.
- **Ask them to walk you through their process, and take notes.** Look for abrupt changes in process flow (such as having to reference a spreadsheet or database, having to manually store physical records from a customer interaction, etc.) These are opportunities to find missed requirements.
- **Question all parts of an application.** One project I previously managed involved many tools the client had previously purchased. By taking the time to speak with the customer, we learned that their requirements weren't quite

right. Several application tools they originally purchased had not been used at all (in fact, they didn't know they had bought them!). By reviewing and redefining their requirements, we discovered they could save over 50% of the quoted support and license fees simply by reducing the number of tools and licenses they would renew.

- **Enlist Help.** Many organizations today have an office that specializes in process engineering or improvement. Many use industry standard techniques such as Six Sigma™, lean, and various other approaches that can help your client reengineer their processes. Include these specialists in your professional network, and your clients are likely to thank you later.

What About Added Time and Associated Costs?

It takes additional time to discuss requirements in depth, and this translates into additional costs. Some IT organizations have less tolerance for doing this, as they see these activities as adding time for limited returns. For small efforts or lower risk, perhaps this perspective has some merit.

But for medium-sized or higher risk projects, I suggest these organizations perform some analysis on their potential returns. Doing this analysis may add 40-80 labor hours to your project. At a hypothetical flat burdened labor rate of \$150, this translates roughly into \$6-\$12K. For this investment, consider the potential returns:

- **Application Costs.** Few would argue that using a screw driver to drive a nail into a wall would be wasteful, but most clients don't apply the same logic to application purchases. Help your customer reexamine the best way to do business with a software tool, and many times they will realize themselves they need to change the application. Whether this change results in a tool that meets all their needs for a lower TCO than the latest version of WizBangWare®, or it increases their department's output efficiency by 25%, there is a tangible cost savings that makes the entire company more competitive.
- **Staffing.** Labor costs are always a major company expense. If a new application can encompass a department's needs better than the existing WizBangWare®, it may translate into reduced labor costs. These reductions could come from reducing (or eliminating) overtime, less use of contract workers, consolidation of many similar functions, or other

reductions in staff. These cost savings can justify purchasing a more expensive, yet more applicable, department software application. Bottom line: A more competitive company.

- **Closer Alignment to Company Goals.** It is said that the word "team" can be an acronym for "Together Everyone Achieves More". Common sense tells us that a company that is moving forward in a unified direction will always achieve more than one that is moving at a different pace in several directions. Sometimes we get so caught up in the day-to-day project struggles it's hard to see the company leadership shifting their direction, or be able to change processes to match the new strategy and still meet your timelines. Your clients are probably no different, so spend some time helping them get the project requirements right. Your company will be more competitive, and your job more secure.
- **Perception is Reality.** At various places I've managed projects I've frequently asked my clients about their perspective on their last project. Many times, they didn't immediately remember the traditional measurements we project managers live by, such as schedule, budget, or scope. What they tend to quickly recall in vivid detail is the way the project was managed.
- For better or worse, IT project managers leave impressions that reflect the *perceived* value of our profession long after we've physically left the project. Leave them with a poor tool (whether you just went along with what they asked for, or the vendor down selection process gave you the lowest bidder and poorest tool), and they will be a vocal adversary of all IT project managers. But if you help them shine in their manager's eyes, they will be one of our (and the IT department's) strongest advocates.

So the next time you are assigned a project where a customer requests "ACM WizBangWare® version 5.1", think about the potential benefits of "rocking the boat" with some questions and spending some valued-added time understanding your customer and their needs.

Rick Yount, PMP has managed projects for sixteen years at Northrop Grumman Corporation, the United States Air Force, and a Department of Energy contractor.