



THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT STANDARD

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

by Robert (Robb) Gries, P.E., CCM, PMP, Chair

Are we there yet?

Anyone with children knows that familiar question asked when you're traveling in a car for any extended period. The frequency of hearing the question can sometimes make you wish that you had never left. However, when you remind yourself that the reason they ask is that they're excited and don't have as much patience, it makes it easier to accept their questions. Moreover, everyone seems to focus on the "fun" once you arrive at your destination rather than the journey itself. Sure, some will joke about certain events along the way, but over time, those "bumps" will seem smaller and smaller. The same can be said about the changes with industry and our organization.

I have been active in PMI for over eight years, and I have witnessed many changes. In the past five years, I have seen many changes within the DPC SIG Leadership Team, between the DPC SIG and PMI® Global Operations Center (GOC), and our industry. Adjusting to some of the changes has been challenging and others have been extremely stressful. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that through the efforts of many outstanding people at all levels, we have been able to adapt accordingly to most of the challenges. The latest challenge facing us is our ability to foresee the trends of our industry and take the necessary steps to prepare our project management practitioners.

Continued on page 4



Mark your calendars now to attend the DPC SIG's Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 18 from 1-3 PM MDT at the Colorado Convention Center, Room 113. See page 3.

DPC SIG ELECTION – THE RESULTS ARE IN!

**by Andy Powers, P.E., PMP,
First Vice Chair**

I would like to thank all of the members that expressed an interest in serving as DPC SIG Board members for the 2009-2010 term. We had an excellent response to our election this year and I am pleased to announce our successful candidates for the 2009-2010 Board Member terms. I am including a short biography about each winning candidate in this article to introduce them to you.

Chair – Robert (Robb) Gries, P.E., CCM, PMP

Robb returns to the DPC SIG as the Chair for the next term. He has over twenty-two years of progressively successful and challenging experience in engineering, management, planning, and administration. For the past fifteen years, Robb has worked on a wide variety of construction projects (~\$500 million US) for the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In 2003, Robb was selected as the National Society of Professional Engineer's Federal Engineer of the Year for NOAA. He is Project Management Professional with PMI as well as Certified Construction Manager with the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). He has served as the CMAA – DPC SIG Liaison and Vice Chair of Membership 2003-2005, and more recently as the DPC SIG Chair since 2005. Robb is also a current participant in PMI's Leadership Institute Masters Class 2008.

Vice Chair Communications – Gary Vandiver, PMP

Gary is a Project Management consultant with his company Expert Project Management, LLC. He is currently managing the design of sulfuric acid plants worldwide for MECS, Inc. Gary has experience with virtual projects and working with many clients in Asia where communications issues must be addressed on an on-going basis. Previously, Gary served as the Vice Chair Communications for the DPC SIG from November 2003 through 2006. During that time the DPC SIG began development of the Monthly Bulletin and improved the content of the DPC SIG Newsletter. These changes, started during his tenure, have come to fruition over the last 3 years. While Site Manager at a Superfund site from 1993 through 1998, Gary was responsible for communicating to the community and the other stakeholders via a quarterly newsletter, speaking engagements, meeting with the Community Action Group and meeting with local governments and legislators. While at Solutia, Gary was the Leader of the department safety team and responsible for safety communications. Gary was also the primary author of a Project Safety Manual. Gary worked for Monsanto / Solutia for 29 years in Project and Engineering management before starting his own consulting practice.

Vice Chair Projects – Lee A. Barco

Lee is General Manager, Construction for APM Terminals North America; providing project management and engineering support for construction of the largest, most highly automated, privately financed, deep draft container terminal in the US, which opened in September 2007. Previously, Lee was a Manager with KPMG/BearingPoint, with responsibility for strategic sourcing studies of public work functions, facility management, construction management, and engineering program management functions.

Continued on next page

DPC SIG ELECTION RESULTS CONTINUED

Lee had a Coast Guard career spanning over 20 years that included multiple project and program management positions in engineering, construction, and financial management, including:

- National Program Manager for design, construction, civil engineering, real property management, vehicles, and public works functions.
- Chief Financial Officer for the Engineering Program (\$500M annual budget) which encompassed civil, marine, and aviation engineering functions and related logistical support.
- Deputy Chief, of the United States Coast Guard's largest Civil Engineering organization.
- Supervisor of three 50 person civil engineering field offices.

These three leaders bring tremendous expertise to our Board, and we look forward to continuing the great work already underway at the DPC-SIG.

DPC SIG to Hold Annual Membership Meeting at PMI® North American Global Congress



Mark your calendars now to attend the DPC SIG's Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 18 from 1-3 PM MDT at

the Colorado Convention Center, Room 113.

Please RSVP to let us know if you plan to attend the meeting, administrator@DPCSIG.Org

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR CONTINUED

One approach we are taking is the collaborating with other associations. Last year, I mentioned that we were working with the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) and the Asociación Española de Dirección Integrada de Proyecto (AEDIP). I am pleased to report that PMI® and CMAA will conduct the first Construction Leadership Roundtable 20-22 November 2008 in Sante Fe, New Mexico, USA. About 6-8 representatives from each organization will meet to discuss common areas of interests to include certification, education, and industry trends. Additionally, the group will discuss how to conduct similar Roundtables internationally and which organizations/associations should participate in future sessions.

Another association we have established a rapport is the Construction Owners Association of America (COAA). Currently, we are promoting COAA's Owner's Training Institute (OTI) as an effective method of meeting PMI's training requirements for the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) credential. Additionally, we are promoting COAA's conferences and events.

A little closer to home, the DPC SIG is promoting outstanding achievements at the practitioner level. The DPC SIG is proud that the Donald S. Barrie Award is the only PMI® award of any kind initiated and sponsored by a virtual community. The award, along with \$500 (US), is given to the best paper for advancing the project management body of knowledge in the field of design, procurement, and construction. With the assistance of the PMI® Education Foundation (PMIEF), a panel of distinguished judges from industry and academia select the recipient(s) for the award.

I could go on and on, but my point is that the DPC Leadership Team is continuing its efforts to identify the issues that our project management practitioners need to know. Are we there yet? No, because unlike a car trip with the family, the adventure is the journey itself.

HAVE A PM QUESTION?

**WE JUST MAY
HAVE THE
ANSWER!**



The DPC SIG has enlisted the support of Subject Matter Experts from around the world to address your project management-related questions. Questions and answers will appear in upcoming issues of the DPC SIG newsletter and monthly bulletin.

Submit Your Question

email your question to VCMarketing@dpcsig.org. Be sure to include your name and contact information in the email.

Request a DPC SIG Membership Lapel Pin



As a token of the DPC SIG's appreciation for your participation in the SIG, we would like to send you a lapel pin. We encourage all members to wear the pin at PMI® chapter and international events and to look for, and network with, other DPC SIG members wearing their pins. Show your pride in the DPC SIG! Send an email to administrator@dpcsig.org.

Be sure to include your mailing address.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT: BALANCING ART AND SCIENCE

Michael Vinje and Michelle Burke , Principals - Trisential

Is project management an art that you're born with or a science that you can learn? The truth is, it's both.

The artistic aspects of project management include leading, enabling, motivating and communicating. An artistic project manager can direct the team when work priorities shift, resolve issues when they arise, and determine which information to communicate when and to whom.

The science side of project management includes planning, estimating, measuring and controlling the work. The science who-does-what-when issues and requires a solid schedule and budget to be managed using tools and techniques.

The end goal is to answer sponsors' Big Four project questions:

1. How done is the project?
2. What does the project cost so far?
3. When will the project be done? and
4. What is the total cost of the project?

Project managers at the top of the food chain have both art- and science-based skills. When subjective situations arise, a project manager needs soft skills to discern the appropriate course of action; different employee styles and different scenarios require different management tactics.

So too, project managers need factual and objective data to manage an initiative and recommend corrective action. Project managers who are not well rounded—those who excel at the art or the science, but not both—are less effective than project managers with a combination of skills.



One manager we observed, for example, had great scientific skills, but he managed projects from his keyboard. His status reports demonstrated that he was a whiz with earned value, but was afraid to work his team. He communicated only by email. The group didn't respect him and team members weren't as efficient as they could have been with face-to-face interaction. If this project manager had known how to motivate, his team could have finished the project a month early. Lacking the art hurts the project.

On the flip side, another project manager we observed correctly negotiated the triple constraints of time, cost and quality with a sponsor. She allowed the sponsor to choose his priorities – quality and time – and she had flexibility with the cost aspects of the project. Unfortunately, she didn't monitor and control the work and didn't sound the alarm when the project took longer than originally expected. She lost credibility with her sponsor because she failed to keep the project on schedule. Lacking the science won't work either.

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT: BALANCING ART AND SCIENCE CONTINUED

Then there's the individual who embodies both the artist and the scientist. We observed a project manager who collaborated with her team to create a project schedule with all the critical information: tasks, efforts, resources, and dependencies. Then an easy-to-read Visio timeline for executives depicting the sponsor's Big Four.

When the executives challenged her to get it done sooner, she had the conviction to defend the right plan, but also worked with the team to develop alternatives in an attempt to meet the request. Six months into the project, the team was three weeks behind schedule and she reported the project was lagging. She had the courage to report the truth, which is essential to the art of project management.

The key is choosing the right person to occupy the project manager: someone who practices both art and science. One without the other is like a car with an accelerator, but no brakes. Your project may get to its destination, but you will leave a trail of dead bodies behind you.

Michael Vinje and **Michelle Burke** are principals at Trissential, a management consulting firm based in Minneapolis, MN. Write to them at ProjectExpert@ciodecisions.com.

PMI Launches New Credential: The PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)SM

In October 2007, PMI announced the development of a new credential within the specialty area of project risk management, now formally introduced as the PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)SM. PMI is excited to announce the global launch of this new credential.

PMI is offering an inaugural incentive for eligible candidates to become one of the first PMI-RMP credential holders. The first 100 candidates who sit for the examination between 29 August and 31 October 2008 will receive 50% off the price of the examination as well as be entered into one of four regional drawings for US\$1,000. Candidates can begin applying and scheduling now.

To qualify for the PMI-RMP examination:

- applicants must have a bachelor's degree or global equivalent
- have 3,000 hours of project risk management experience within the last three to five years
- 30 hours of formal education in project risk management (including seminars, conferences, classes and more)

Those with a high school diploma or global equivalent need 4,500 hours of project risk management experience and 40 contact hours of education in project risk management.

To maintain the credential, PMI-RMPs must acquire 30 Professional Development Units (PDUs) per 3-year cycle in the specialty area of project risk management.

Please visit www.pmi.org for more information.

ACHIEVE PROJECT SUCCESS WITH SPONSORSHIP AND CLEAR VISION

Elizabeth Larson, PMP, CBAP and Richard Larson, PMP, CBAP , Principals – Watermark Learning

According to the Gartner Institute, 50 percent of all projects are delivered late and/or over budget. We all know how difficult it is to achieve project success. Many things can hinder this success, such as little or no executive sponsorship, lack of project management support, unclear vision, no project plan or weak processes for handling change.

This article offers success factors to address common problems encountered when managing projects.

Success Factor 1 - Acquire Project Sponsorship

According to a Gartner Group study, lack of executive sponsorship is often a major contributor to project failures. One way to assure executive support is to clearly define roles before the project begins.

When roles are not assigned, project managers often feel responsible for the project's vision and scope, and can end up making decisions they shouldn't. Sponsors, on the other hand, should initiate projects and create charters, helping to ensure their involvement during project planning and execution.

Success Factor 2 - Support Project Management

Every organization conducts "projects," but the most successful ones follow a formal project management process. Here is a checklist to evaluate whether an organization fully supports project management as a function:

- Does a sponsor write a formal charter to begin projects?
- Does a formal process exist for selecting projects prior to the project initiation?

- Is there a prescribed method for executing the phases of a project?
- Are there reusable templates for planning, estimating, tracking, reporting and closing projects?

Project managers can work with executives to encourage them to demonstrate support by offering rewards for successfully managed projects. They can also encourage executives to identify risks and risk strategies throughout the project.

Success Factor 3 - Articulate and Link Business Need to Vision

When managing projects, if the core or underlying business problem is not clearly articulated, the right solution can be delivered for the wrong problem. Identifying the real need as part of project planning helps project managers ensure their project delivers value to customers. The way to get at the real business need is by asking questions such as:

- What is the current situation?
- What is causing business pain?
- What are the business consequences or lost opportunities if the project doesn't take place?

As the project gets underway, assure that all components of the project are tied directly to both the project and business vision, as articulated by the sponsor.

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ACHIEVE PROJECT SUCCESS CONTINUED

Success Factor 4 - Define A Clear Project Plan

A common project management pitfall is not taking the time to develop tasks and timelines at the beginning of a project. Usually this occurs when a sponsor or boss says, "Here's what we want--when can you get it done?" Or worse yet:

It is critical to identify and document project deliverables, tasks, ownership and time frames of the project prior to project initiation.

Success Factor 5 - Match Changes to Vision

The project vision is critical to its success. Without project vision, managing inevitable changes is difficult.

Good project management requires stakeholders to agree and sign off on all project change requests. The stakeholders should be required to tie change requests to the overall project vision. If requests not linked to the vision are included in the project, the scope of the project has begun to creep.

Of course the sponsor, not the project manager, has final decision on changes. This brings us back to the vision: Vision gives impetus to doing projects in the first place. Vision drives the project plan. And, vision can help guide the project along on its way through changes that occur, without sidetracking or derailing the project.

In summary, projects are successful for many reasons. There are no "magic ingredients." But sponsorship, project management support, clear vision, a clear project plan and successfully handling change are five of the major factors attributing to project success

Elizabeth Larson, CBAP, PMP and Richard Larson, CBAP, PMP are Co-Principals of Watermark Learning watermarklearning.com, a globally recognized business analysis and project management training company. Each has presented numerous workshops, seminars, and training classes to thousands of participants on 3 different continents. They regularly speak on business analysis and project management topics at Business Analyst World conferences and Project Management Institute (PMI) Global Congresses. Elizabeth and Richard are frequent contributors of articles to international trade publications such as CIO; ComputerWorld; BA Times; PMI PM-Network Magazine; the University of Houston book, IT Project Management Readings; Certification Magazine, ICFAI Professional Reference Book – Project Management-Emerging Perspectives; and many others. Elizabeth and Richard are also contributing to the Fourth Edition of the PMBOK in a section on collecting requirements.

We're Looking for Book Reviewers and Books to Review



Is there a new project management book you would like to read or do you have a project-management related book you would like reviewed? The DPC SIG is offering a book review program. We will be receiving single review copies of books from publishers. Members will be given the opportunity to volunteer to read a book and write a review for *The Project Management Standard*. In exchange for the review, you'll get to keep the book you reviewed.

If you would like to volunteer to review books, or have a book you would like members to review, please send an e-mail to administrator@dpcsig.org and we will notify you of titles as they become available.

LOW-HANGING FRUIT TO AVOID SCOPE CREEP

Bruce Beer Global Knowledge

What issue consistently appears in the top ten causes of project failure, and what is the easiest and arguably most effective measure a Project Manager can take to virtually eliminate that issue?



The answers are "Scope Creep," and "Change Management," respectively.

Without a solid definition of scope, scope creep is almost inevitable, and implementing change management is like trying to swim up the Colorado River in full flood!! However, if the PM and their team do a good job of identifying and documenting scope requirements, then scope creep can be virtually eliminated by a good change management plan and unyielding execution.

So - assuming the Project Manager and team have started scope definition with a deliverables-based Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and have then broken these deliverables down into activity definition, they will end up with a list of activities required to complete those deliverables. Great start! However, we all know that before the ink is dry on the scope definition, some kind soul will usually want to change it. Does this cause disruption to the Project Manager's karma? Not if there is a good change management plan in place that has been communicated to all stakeholders and is being enthusiastically followed. Change is good and healthy for a project provided:

1. The entry point for change is the PM (without exception)
2. The change required has been well defined
3. All ripple or knock-on effects within and outside the project have been evaluated
4. All impacts on time, cost, functionality, risk, and quality have been assessed and documented on the change impact analysis
5. The customer (or entity paying for the project) approves and authorizes the change

If any one of the above does not happen, your project is in serious jeopardy. Let us look at each element in turn.

The change request is given to the PM

Without exception, the change request's path to glorious implementation starts with the PM who first receives it, logs it, then allocates it to a team member best suited to assess and evaluate that request.

It is well defined

A change is like any element of scope definition - if it is not well defined, neither the PM, the team, nor the customer can be clear or unified on what needs to be delivered - a grand opportunity for different interpretations by all concerned.

Continued on next page

All ripple or knock-on effects have been evaluated

Once the change is received, the position of the affected deliverable on the WBS can be determined, and potential impacts on other areas can be assessed. Following this first assessment, a qualified team member can evaluate what other areas of the project may be affected. For example, lengthening an address line field from 25 to 35 characters on an input screen and database record may have impacts on many other areas such as invoice printing, search engines, etc.

All effects on time, cost, functionality, risk, and quality have been assessed and documented on the change impact analysis

This is the crux of the impact analysis and is what the customer needs to understand before they authorize or reject the change. This may not only affect the baselines for scope, time, and/or cost, but other areas such as risk. The customer should also be able to assess the business case for potential effects of implementing the change before authorizing.

The customer (or entity paying for the project) approves and authorizes the change

If the customer does not approve the change, the decision is logged and the change request filed with no further action by the PM or team. If the customer does approve the request, this formally recognizes that they accept all the implications and impacts of that change, particularly to the triple constraint baselines. This will be logged by the PM, who will provide authorization to the team to implement the change.

Summary

Once a change management process is defined and communicated, the next task is for the PM to review it thoroughly at the Kick-off meeting so that the team is in no doubt of the process to follow if anyone asks them to implement a change, or if they want to propose a change themselves. It should be heavily stressed that no change at all will be implemented without approval by the PM. It is also advisable, for the PM's longevity in the job, to emphasize that not adhering to this process would be a career limiting event!!

Why is this easy to implement? Because it just needs one standard process, communication of that process to all stakeholders, and strict adherence to the process during execution.

What if there is no impact to time or cost baselines - do we still need to go through the process? **Absolutely yes!!** Supposing a minor screen change is requested that will re-arrange the appearance of fields on the screen and maybe add a new easily accessible field - none of which will take additional time or money to implement because it was requested before there has been any work done on that deliverable. When it comes to acceptance, the acceptor will look at the specification, then look at what is delivered, and say, "Lo! Verily this is not good!!," and will fail acceptance because the specified deliverable and the actual deliverable are not identical. However, if there is a formally authorized change request to explain the difference, the acceptor will say, "Lo! Verily this is good," and will place a tick in the right box.

One common issue with this process is that the optimum resource to assess a change request is often working on a critical path activity, and time taken for evaluation may affect the timeline of the project. This has many project dependent solutions which could be the source of a further paper!

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Barbara Bulleit, Global Knowledge

Communication

We communicate all the time, every day. Sometimes we're even aware of it! We communicate through gesture, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice as well as through the words we speak. These variables can be joined in a variety of ways in our communication. Add to this mix: language; cultural and social differences; educational background; physical proximity; and individual fears, insecurities, strengths, and weaknesses. No wonder communication is complex! There is a huge amount of information on communication and different methodologies for improvement. The following offers one perspective on communication.

First of all, being successful in business requires effective communication. This paper focuses on effective business communication, although the information can be applied generally. To untangle the mix described above and to improve communication, we can focus on several key elements:

- Purpose
- Style
- Listening

Purpose

In business, when we communicate we usually have a purpose. Sometimes we have not considered that purpose sufficiently before beginning the dialogue, which can lead to confusion and mixed messages. So, first we must clarify our purpose. What do I want as a result of this communication? What would be a successful outcome?

As an example let's consider dialogue with an employee regarding a new assignment. Initially, we may look at the assignment and consider that its successful completion is the purpose. But let's break this process further down into smaller steps, with handing off the assignment being the first step. Our desired outcome FOR THE MEETING to hand off the assignment might be:

- Employee fully understands the assignment
- Responds to questions to ensure understanding
- Is able to paraphrase assignment requirements
- Is aware of consequences of completing or not completing assignment
- Employee has an idea of how to proceed
- Articulates next steps
- Identifies problems, etc
- Or we and employee discuss together
- Employee knows resources available
- Employee knows where to go for help
- We and employee agree on a follow-up status check meeting

Continued on next page

3 KEY ELEMENTS CONTINUED

If we have been successful in this first communication regarding the assignment, we have already established a paradigm for communication during the assignment work, including follow-ups to check status, make corrections, and to compliment upon completion. Clarity in the initial communication makes a huge difference. And to back up one step, clarifying our purpose before starting the communication can separate effective communication from that which is unclear, does not have sufficient detail, leaves no room for questions or advice, or does not ensure the employee can gain access to sufficient resources.

A clearly identified purpose can mean the difference between success or failure, and while thinking through a purpose may take time initially, we will eventually form a consistent habit of clarifying desired outcome - which usually leads to better results.

Style

Style has to do with who we are and how who we are affects our communication. We may engage in dialogue with little knowledge of the impact of individual differences. Some of us may have a higher awareness of style differences and still not use this awareness when communicating. Others of us become aware of stylistic differences only when having a problem communicating. Let's stop for a moment and further define "style".

Style is influenced by many factors, some of which were defined at the beginning of this article. A longer list might include culture, upbringing, religion, gender, age, education, language, race, politics - and this is not a total list. Some of the influences of our early years are mitigated or enhanced during our growth and experience. In all, we become who we are, and who we are influences our communication.

Direct and Assertive/Aggressive	Passive and Indirect
"Take charge" attitude; may have aggressive tendencies	More laid back tendency
May interrupt or tend to dominate the dialogue	May hesitate, wait to speak up, or have to be drawn out
Does not always seek dialogue; instead "tells" a lot	Lack of response does not necessarily indicate agreement or approval; has to be probed
Does not always see the other person's side; may be perceived as close-minded	Sometimes prefers for others to make decisions
May assume that passivity indicates agreement	Passive style may not indicate true feelings and attitudes
Non-verbal clues easier to detect since they are more openly expressed	Non-verbal clues follow passive characteristics and require more careful attention
Tends to decide or answer quickly	May need time rather than having to respond immediately

Let's stay at this level of detail and agree that generally at work we do not sit down and tick off this list every time we communicate with someone! Then how do we overcome some of our differences in order to communicate effectively? We consider style: mine and theirs. Some of us tend to be more direct and/or assertive, or even aggressive. Some of us tend toward being indirect and/or passive. Listed above are some characteristics of each type.

This simple table provides a general understanding of two basic styles. It's easy to see how communication may break down between these two types. Most of us do not easily fall into these simple categories but may have characteristics of each, which may change or vary on different days. All of this adds to the complexity of communications.

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3 KEY ELEMENTS CONTINUED

Having some knowledge of a person's style can help us. To try to break down the complexity we can use the elements in the table to formulate helpful questions, such as the following.

- Generally, what is his attitude: take charge or laid back?
- Does she comfortably engage in dialogue with others?
- Does he add comments and ask questions?
- Is it necessary to draw her out, to solicit her opinions?
- Does she listen to others or have a tendency to interrupt?

We can see how to use this style information to gain a better understanding of the person with whom we want to communicate. For example, if Sally's style is to be assertive or aggressive, she might have to work hard to hold back some of that take charge mentality and her tendency to speak up, dominate, and not read non-verbal clues. If Sally's style is passive and indirect she might have to make more effort to participate in a discussion, to voice her opinions or misgivings, and to ask questions.

It's easy to see how we can use this same information to gain more insight about our own style. After all, it takes at least two people to communicate and we are part of that formula. So we have to apply these questions to ourselves as well.

- Am I more aggressive or laid back?
- Do I ask questions of others?
- Is my tendency to accept in the moment then voice my opinions later?
- Do I consider other people's opinions, do I ignore their input, or do I just withdraw?

Once we've determined our style and the style of the other person, we have to consider the dynamic of the two. Two aggressive people may have to each work harder at allowing the other to talk and voice opinions. Two passive people may tend to come to conclusions too quickly, or may not uncover issues or differences. One of each will have to be very aware of the other's differences and make the effort required to accommodate those differences. Taking the time to think about our own style, then to consider the style of the other person, generates huge returns in communication. These returns include:

- Increased ability of the passive/indirect person to express
- Increased ability of the aggressive/direct person to listen
- Ability to allow and work out differences
- Realization that we each offer strengths as well as weaknesses
- Achieving more together than possible as individuals

Recognizing style or personal characteristics is key to successful business communications.

Listening

Active listening takes energy; it's work. To actively listen to someone means the following:

- Focus eyes and mind on the person speaking
- Indicate listening through eye contact, note taking, and body language
- Respond appropriately with comments, questions, or paraphrasing

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The first step is the most difficult: focusing solely on the person speaking versus thinking of what we want to say next, beginning to analyze, or even coming up with a solution! We can minimize these tendencies by making good eye contact with the person speaking so that our focus is only on that person. Quelling the desire to analyze, problem solve, etc. means we have to WORK hard. It takes a strong effort to halt or slow down these urges. If we don't stop them, then our focus is not on the person but is on our own words and thoughts, and we are not getting all of the information they are telling us. Short circuiting active listening means we short circuit them and ourselves. When this does happen and we're aware of it, we can stop the person and ask him or her to repeat what they said. We might say, "Would you please repeat that so I will have a full understanding," to cover our embarrassment for not listening!

Making eye contact with a person may depend upon style or culture. Some cultures prefer not to have direct eye contact. Our style assessment will help us to determine whether or not that is true for the person with whom we are dealing. Our assessment will also help us to establish which other mechanisms to use to indicate we are truly focused on what the person is saying.

Responding appropriately is a real indication of active listening. When we talk with teenagers we might ask them to repeat what we just said. If they repeat verbatim we know they heard us and can "parrot." If they paraphrase or explain what we said in their own words, we know they really listened and understood. The ability to paraphrase is a powerful tool to use with our fellow employees. If we have any doubt of their understanding, having them paraphrase is a good way to check it out.

Another appropriate response is to ask questions. If we are listening to the person, asking appropriate questions helps that person to know we are really listening. It works the other way as well. If an employee or colleague does not ask us questions or does not respond appropriately, we know we need to review again, repeat using different words, draw a diagram, or whatever else we need to do to help that person understand.

Active listening is not something we need to do all the time; in fact, we could not. What's important is to determine when to use active listening. A good measurement is to say that we should actively listen anytime not listening could result in damaging or hurtful consequences.

Summary

Behind our communication is a purpose. That purpose may be assigning a new task, asking an employee to solve a problem, or providing feedback on performance. Our next step is to understand style: that of the employee and our own, which helps us to modify our own style and better understand how to work with the employee's style. As we talk with the employee we can use active listening to ensure that we are getting complete information and to ensure the employee is listening to us. The next time we are ready to communicate let's make sure we do the following:

- Clarify purpose - what we want as a result of the communication
- Consider style, theirs and ours, to facilitate effective communications
- Make a conscious effort to actively listen

Continued on next page

3 KEY ELEMENTS CONTINUED

Clarity of purpose, identifying style, and active listening are tools to facilitate communication in any direction: with employees, with peers, and up the chain.

LOW-HANGING FRUIT CONTINUED

The moral is to identify, communicate, emphasize, and strictly adhere to a change management process - it could save the project, and with it, the PM's career aspirations (but only where there has been a good initial scope definition).

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